

**Investigating socio-cultural
influences on Saudi shoppers'
perspectives towards sustainability
and ethical practices**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how cultural, religious, and institutional factors shape the way Saudi consumers understand and practice sustainable consumption. Most of existing literature on sustainable consumption is based on Western, individualist models that focus on environmental concern, and personal responsibility. However, these models do not fully reflect non-Western contexts such as Saudi Arabia, where social norms, religious beliefs, and government influence are deeply connected to consumers' everyday choices.

The research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach based on social constructivism. In total, 40 participants took part in this study — 30 semi-structured interviews and a separate group of 10 shop-along interviews were conducted, all with Saudi citizen-consumers. Data were analyzed thematically using Lochmiller's five-step method. Two main theoretical perspectives guided the study: Practice Theory, which focuses on the role of social routines and shared behaviors, and Multiple Modernities Theory, which emphasizes that different societies modernize in culturally specific ways.

Findings show that Saudi consumers prioritize affordability, need, and product quality over environmental concern. Many participants linked sustainability to Islamic teachings such as avoiding waste and practicing moderation. Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia's national transformation plan, emerged as a key driver of sustainability efforts, highlighting a strong reliance on state-led transformation rather than the individual or community efforts that were often the focus in earlier research.

This study contributes to sustainable consumption studies by offering a culturally grounded understanding of non-Western consumers' perceptions on the role and responsibilities of various stakeholders for sustainability. I make a novel theoretical contribution in combining Practice Theory with a Multiple Modernities perspective to analyse non-Western consumers' shopping practices in relation to sustainability concepts. The thesis argues for a more inclusive, context sensitive approach to sustainability research and policy that considers culture, religion, and structure not just individual attitudes.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Economic growth and environmental management are becoming increasingly out of step with each other due to ongoing worldwide and local development (Bradley, Parry and O'Regan, 2020). As development increases, so does per capita consumption, and the likelihood of further detrimental effects upon the environment (Bidabad, 2019). Conventional consumption follows a linear model, beginning with resources and raw capital and ending with waste. The overuse of natural resources, the escalating effects of climate change (due mainly to emissions from fossil fuels), and environmental contamination from various forms of pollution (such as plastic pollution, industrial waste, and water pollution) are all consequences of unchecked consumerism. Such practices are a reflection not only of environmental neglect, but of deeply rooted cultural values that equate consumption with progress and personal success.

In response, sustainability and sustainable consumption (SC) are becoming more and more widely acknowledged as key global goals, needed to ensure long-term social and environmental health and well-being. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), sustainability involves meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable consumption refers to using goods and services in a way that meets basic needs and improves quality of life while at the same time minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials, and the emission of waste and pollutants (OECD, 1994). These ideas call for systemic changes that seek to reach beyond individual behaviours in order to solve the important problems associated with mass consumption, such as resource depletion, social inequity, and climate change. Sustainability, however, presents

a particularly challenging problem, due to its interconnected causes and complexities, which require long-term, coordinated, and collaborative solutions (Crowley and Head, 2017).

As indicated above, traditional consumption follows a linear system, beginning with raw capital and resources, which then ultimately end up as waste. One way to lessen the negative environmental impact of waste and allow for continued consumption is by using a circular system. This process reduces the need for raw capital and resources by re-introducing waste products into the production system, through re-use and recycling (Bidabad, 2019). The adoption of a circular economy offers a step towards sustainability. Studies focusing on the behavioural elements of sustainable consumption, however, have identified the importance of both individual-level and sociocultural variables (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2008; Zhao *et al.*, 2014; Dabbous and Tarhini, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2019). These findings support the need for further research into how social relations, especially with respect to culture, contribute to sustainable consumption.

Chillakuri and Mogili (2018) and Zheng *et al.* (2021) indicate that there have been very few studies on the relationship between culture and sustainability. Such studies as there have been, moreover, are limited to exploring the impact of culture on sustainability or the awareness of sustainability. Zheng *et al.*'s research (2019) investigates the role of culture in supporting countries to achieve the United Nations Vision 2030 sustainability goals. Their study analyses more than 300 publications on culture and sustainable development goals, reporting that the former mediated the achievement of the latter. Miller (1995) highlights the transformative role of consumption in anthropology, emphasizing that material goods and commodities are central to cultural identity and social relations. This underscores the need to embed sustainability within cultural practices, since consumption patterns significantly shape both individual and societal values. Similarly, Wilk (2017) explores the way cultural metaphors and folk concepts, such as “consumption as fire” or

“consumption as eating”, influence moral judgments about resource use and overconsumption. He argues that reframing sustainable consumption in terms of values such as justice and fairness can foster broader cultural alignment with ecological goals.

However, the diversity inherent in global consumer cultures presents significant challenges to establishing a unified vision for sustainability. Sassatelli (2015) notes that cultural differences can both support and hinder sustainable practices. Her examination of alternative food networks highlights the importance of localized, culturally sensitive approaches to promoting sustainability, which challenge neoliberal market ideologies by redefining consumption as a relational and ethical practice. [What all the perspectives reviewed above collectively demonstrate is that culture serves as both an enabler and a barrier to sustainability. While particular cultures can instil enduring habits that support ecological goals, the diversity of cultural frameworks means that careful strategies are often required to navigate conflicting values and practices (Tanner, 2014).

Despite the global complexity and worldwide scope of sustainability challenges, sustainable consuming habits have often been discussed in a way that assumes their universality. This reflects a historical bias in the field of consumption studies. A large proportion of the discourse surrounding sustainable consumption has been structured around Western cultural norms and socioeconomic institutions (Ger and Belk, 1996; Karababa and Ger, 2011), in which consumer responsibility has become institutionalized due to particular social, economic, and policy pressures. For instance, in Western economies, SC is often promoted through individual responsibility initiatives (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014) that encourage green purchasing, recycling, and reduced consumption of non-renewable resources. These efforts are underpinned by theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which emphasize individual intention and behaviour as key drivers of sustainable consumption. The Theory of

Planned Behaviour (TPB) suggests that behaviour is a function of behavioural intention, which is influenced by three main factors: attitudes, subjective norms (i.e. perceptions of social pressure), and perceived behavioural control.

Rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all model for sustainable consumption, there is a growing need for deeper cross-regional understanding of consumption practices, particularly within diverse cultural and economic contexts such as the MENA region and other developing economies. These regions may operate under different value systems, infrastructural constraints, and institutional logics, which can all shape how sustainability is understood and practiced. Thus, there is a need to study sustainable consumption as a socially embedded practice that reflects regional realities, rather than approaching it solely through a Western theoretical lens.

The focus of this study shifts beyond the Western-centric lens to explore how SC manifests in non-Western cultural regions. It acknowledges that SC is deeply embedded within cultural and institutional contexts, which shape its adoption and practices. This research specifically examines the Saudi Arabian context, to consider how sociocultural and institutional factors influence consumer behaviour there. Saudi Arabia provides an important case for studying SC, due to its unique position as a collectivist society with deeply ingrained cultural values that is undergoing rapid socioeconomic transformations under Vision 2030.

The concept of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, Riedel and Sachsenmaier, 2002; Eisenstadt, 2020) forms the theoretical basis for this study. This theoretical perspective challenges the idea of a singular, universal path to modernity, defined as the social, economic, and cultural transformations associated with industrialization, secularization, and rationalization (Giddens, 1990). It begins instead from the premise that non-Western cultures and societies adapt and extend modern ways of life and values, such as consumerism and sustainability, to fit their particular

historical and cultural contexts (Jafari *et al.*, 2012; Vighnesh *et al.*, 2023). By using this perspective, the study will fill important gaps in the literature, and add to a more comprehensive body of information on sustainable consumption by offering a nuanced understanding of how SC is conceptualized and used in Saudi Arabia.

1.1 Research Context: Saudi Arabia

As an oil producer and exporter, Saudi Arabia is a very important geo-political actor in the area of global sustainability. The country has positioned itself as being committed to incorporating sustainable practices within its development models. Although there is an understanding that a sustainable community serves all individuals, differing opinions exist regarding the meaning of sustainability, including how it can be achieved. In the Saudi Arabian context, Almulhim (2022) observes that the concept is connected to limiting ecological degradation and improving economic growth to solve issues such as sprawling cities, high unemployment rates, and the scarcity of arable land. Thus, sustainability in Saudi policy discourse is primarily viewed as the integration of environmental and economic factors to achieve long-term solutions to national state issues. Consequently, investing in non-oil sectors will ensure that the country's development goals promote economic growth while protecting the environment.

Vision 2030, launched in April 2016, aims to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy away from oil. Economic divestment was proposed in the early 2000s, but Vision 2030 had made it urgent, and simplified government efforts (Almulhim 2022). Although the state is the primary stakeholder in Vision 2030, businesses and citizens are crucial to its success. All stakeholders must collaborate to protect the environment and use natural resources sustainably (Rana and Alayed, 2018, p. 4). For five years, the Saudi government has developed a strategic plan and vision for non-oil sectors, including processes and timelines. Vision 2030 urges Saudi Arabia to prioritize infrastructure over

oil. Programme implementation includes research and development, manufacturing, and public-private partnerships (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2022). To facilitate private mining, Vision 2030 seeks to invest in infrastructure and licensing (Al Mudaifer, 2021). Saudi Arabia will invest in mining, employment, foreign direct investment, and exports in order to diversify from oil.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has experienced significant institutional and societal changes in the past five years. For instance, since Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS) was crowned in April 2017, he has pursued a change in Saudi's position regarding sustainability, initiating several sustainability initiatives, including the launch of Saudi Vision 2030 in April 2016. Overall, the Vision 2030 blueprint seeks to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy by exploring new frontiers and reducing oil dependence.

In addition, MBS has undertaken a number of socioeconomic and political reforms, including female empowerment and the launch of mega projects, such as the city of "NEOM", a smart city designed to introduce more sustainable urban spaces to the Kingdom. Ansari *et al.* (2022) argue that grand projects, such as the city of "NEOM", are intended to promote the country's biodiversity. The Crown Prince has also made a demonstrable effort to strengthen the KSA's global relations, with the goal of placing it on the global map as an important destination for trade in the region (Arab News, 2020). These initiatives are projected to revolutionize the KSA economically, socially, politically, and ecologically. An overview of some aspects and details of Vision 2030, along with its KPIs, is provided in the table below:

Table 1. Overview of selected aspects of Vision 2030

| Vision 2030 | Details | Progress |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Renewable Energy Development | Goal to generate 50% of energy from renewable sources by 2030, including investment in solar and wind power | Establishment of King Salman Energy Park (SPARK) in 2018, an industrial city that received a silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification Completion of the Sakaka solar power plant in 2019 and initial operation of the Dumat Al-Jandal wind farm at the end of 2021 |
| Environmental Protection | Net-zero emissions by 2060 Reduction of all types of pollution Safeguarding and rehabilitating the environment | Establishment of the National Center for Environmental Compliance (NCEC) in 2017 and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) Coral Restoration Initiative in 2021 |
| Water Resource Management | Increase of water conservation methods, including development of desalination projects, water recycling technologies, and efficient agricultural practices | Gradual replacement of older, less efficient cogeneration plants with modern desalination technologies, including the innovative pilot plant for seawater desalination (Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, n.d.) |
| Energy Efficiency | Promotion of energy-efficient infrastructure Incentivization of industry to adopt energy-efficient technologies | Launch of the Saudi Energy Efficiency Program (SEEP) in 2012 Fiscal Sustainability Program averts estimated 164 million tons of CO ₂ emissions between 2016 and 2018 (Belaïd and Massié, 2023) |
| Sustainable Agriculture | Invest in innovative agricultural technology and promote sustainable farming practices | Proactive efforts in fodder and wheat production reduce use of non-renewable groundwater from 19 billion cubic meters in 2015 to 8.5 billion cubic meters in 2020 (Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, n.d.) |

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is a socioeconomic strategic initiative aimed at stimulating a wide range of reforms in social and economic sectors across the Kingdom. A study by George

(2017) investigated the perceptions of Saudi citizens regarding sustainability, with an emphasis on green marketing. This research focused particularly on consumers' cultural meanings and practices in relation to sustainability, concentrating on a small Saudi Arabian city, Ha'il. Significantly, however, there has been no investigation to date of the perspectives of Saudi consumers in general on sustainability. Thus, this study will contribute to the literature by looking at the entire country. The study builds on previous research to examine Saudis' awareness of sustainability and the relationship between consumer and purchasing decisions and sustainability. The findings also demonstrate how cultural practices and meanings shape the viability of sustainability initiatives. Overall, the results will be of significance to planners of sustainable development, by providing a deep insight into (non-Western) consumer culture, which is vital to sustainability.

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions to demonstrate this social and political phenomenon:

1. What do Saudi citizen-consumers designate as sustainable consumption practices, and what factors impact these designations?
2. What is the relationship between religious and cultural contexts and sustainable consumption among Saudi citizen-consumers?
3. To what degree, if any, are Saudi citizen-consumers aware of Saudi Vision 2030? What impact, if any, has it had on their consumption practices?

1.3 Research Objectives

- To provide a comprehensive framework for investigating Saudi consumers' perception of sustainability through major sociocultural institutions.

- To critically evaluate the impact of Saudi government policies and religious doctrines on SC.
- To explore the sustainability dynamics within collective and patriarchal cultures by considering the influence of societal structures and communal events.
- To critically assess the relevance of the prevailing Western-centric theories of SC in the Saudi Arabian context, and thereby improve cross-cultural understanding of consumption attitudes and behaviours (Rahman *et al.*, 2023).
- To provide context-specific recommendations for culturally sensitive sustainability interventions that align with Saudi societal dynamics, to contribute to a more sustainable future.

1.4 Theoretical and Empirical Contribution

Attempting to generalize findings from Western research to other contexts ignores the lived experience of non-Western citizens and the link between shared culture and traditions, and behaviour. Evidence has been found, for example, of a disconnect between the willingness to protect the environment and green consumption behaviours among Egyptian consumers (Hammad *et al.*, 2019). Existing non-Western studies have highlighted the importance of attitudes (Zhao *et al.*, 2014; Dabbous and Tarhini, 2019; Elhoushy and Lanzini, 2020), social influence and norms (Wang *et al.*, 2019; Elhoushy and Lanzini, 2020), religion (Elhoushy and Lanzini, 2020), and economics (Dabbous and Tarhini, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2019) in relation to sustainable consumption. This study will continue to fill this critical knowledge gap regarding non-Western motivations for sustainable consumption by providing unique insights into Saudi citizen-consumers' consumption patterns. The study's theoretical contributions seek to address the current gap in sustainability theories that has arisen from a Western-centric focus, and facilitate the development of culturally

sensitive interventions for promoting a more sustainable future in Saudi Arabia and other culturally similar societies.

The findings of the present study shows how non-Western understandings and practices of sustainable consumption, with a specific focus on the Middle East, vary from Western practices, and how they are embedded in cultural values and religious context. The overarching theoretical contribution of this research relates to the construct of multiple sustainability, drawing upon Eisenstadt, Riedel and Sachsenmaier's (2002) construct of multiple modernities. This theory challenges the idea of a singular, Western model of modernity, arguing instead that modernity involves a complex interplay of cultural, historical, and social factors. Thus, there is not a single Western model of modernity, but different modernities, which exist across different historical and cultural circumstances (Eisenstadt, Riedel and Sachsenmaier, 2002).

In addition, this study is informed by Practice theory, which serves as a guiding theoretical perspective. Practice theory shifts the focus from models of individual decision-making to the routines, norms, and shared social meanings that shape consumption practices. It emphasizes that consumption is not just the result of individual attitudes or values, but embedded in culturally situated practices and carried out within specific social and institutional contexts. This makes practice theory particularly relevant for understanding sustainability in a collectivist and religiously influenced society like Saudia Arabia.

The theoretical contributions of the study can be used to guide the development of a robust framework for appraising sustainability perspectives, attitudes, and behaviour among consumers in Saudia Arabia and other culturally diverse, non-Western societies through their socioeconomic institutions. Studies pertaining to sustainable consumption most often take place in Western countries, and thus provide insights into a Western-focused approach. There is a critical need to

broaden the scope of existing research and its generalizability to non-Western countries. Sustainable consumption involves the need for a nuanced approach that embraces societal structures and communal events. By adopting a cross-cultural analytical framework, this study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of sustainable consumption, one that takes into account regional values, collective traditions, and variations in institutional influences across different cultural settings.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the existing literature related to the research topic. It explores the key theories and concepts, previous studies on sustainable consumption (all largely Western-centric and focused on the individual), and alternative socio-cultural or collective frameworks. The chapter also examines consumer behaviour research in the Middle East, paying particular attention to cultural, religious, and institutional influences on consumption practices. By critically analysing the existing scholarly work, the review highlights any significant findings, identifies the research gaps, and establishes the context for the current study. This includes the limited representation of non-Western contexts in sustainability literature and the need to recognize diverse, culturally embedded consumption practices. This chapter ultimately supports the development of the research framework and justifies the need for further investigation.

2.1 Sustainable Consumption

The concept of sustainable consumption (SC) has received significant attention from scholars and practitioners across the globe. The first issue necessary for exploring the concept of SC is an understanding of the idea of consumption. According to Wilk (2017), consumption is a folk category with a history, rather than a strictly defined phenomenon. In other words, consumption is a context-specific term. Haider, Shannon and Moschis's (2022) review of studies from between 1976 and 2021 reveals that research interest in this field has increased since 2015. The significant attention shown by different stakeholder constituencies towards SC reflects its perceived potential as a driver for sustainable development. Quoquab and Mohammad (2020) argue that sustainable consumption involves the use of products in a socially beneficial, environmentally safe, and economically viable manner throughout the course of their life cycle. In

other words, SC consists of using goods and services in such a way as to reduce any adverse impacts on the environment, meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising those of future generations. Accordingly, Haider, Shannon and Moschis (2022) argue that taking advantage of sustainable consumption's potential requires reforming the consumer's mindset to develop a propensity for ecologically safer products.

2.1.1 Mainstream Consumer Behaviour in Relation to Sustainable Consumption

Mainstream consumer behaviour research into sustainable consumption frequently adopts psychological frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) to understand individual motivations and actions. TPB posits that behaviour is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural controls. In this analysis, sustainable consumption is driven by personal intention, and can be motivated by environmental concern, social influence, or self-efficacy.

Much of the research on sustainable consumption has focused on Western countries. In this thesis, the term Western countries refers to economically developed nations in Western Europe and North America, which are generally characterised by individualism, secular political systems, liberal democratic values, and capitalist economies (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Western cultures have historically placed a strong emphasis on individualism (Hofstede, 2001), and this perspective has greatly shaped the discourse on sustainable consumption. In many Western societies, sustainability has been framed in terms of individual moral responsibility. Giesler and Veresiu (2014) assert that moralistic governance regimes mould consumers into conscientious consumers. Through the P.A.C.T. routine (personalization, authorization, capability, and transformation), consumers assume responsibility for societal issues such as sustainability. Neoliberalism encourages ethical decisions and market-based solutions, such as "green consumerism".

Customers are supposed to choose ethical brands and lessen their carbon footprints, with sustainability seen, in this situation, as a personal duty, as opposed to a systemic shift (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014).

Instead of dismantling the framework of responsibilities, consumers actually often reinforce it when engaging in collective actions, such as challenging marketing claims or deflecting accountability. Döbbe and Cederberg (2024) illustrate how, rather than rejecting the notion of individual responsibility, consumers may adopt and reshape it in ways that align with their resistance strategies. Their study shows how responsibility and resistance interact, as consumers actively redefine their moral roles within sustainability discourse. This nuanced situation, in which customers both critique and emphasize personal accountability in sustainability initiatives, highlights the limitations of the individualistic approach.

These two studies demonstrate that Western sustainability discourse is dominated by individualistic paradigms. While Döbbe and Cederberg (2024) show how collective resistance falls short of rupturing these paradigms or offering alternatives to individualist and responsibility-based frameworks, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) critique the moralization of consumer responsibility. This dual analysis makes evident the way that culture and social structure support the individualistic green consumerism narrative of Western societies.

Other studies have focused on different strategies for encouraging sustainable behaviours, such as normative appeals, habit formation, and educational interventions. For instance, Gonzalez-Arcos *et al.* (2021) note that behaviour-focused sustainability interventions often rely on mechanisms like the SHIFT framework, which leverages social influence, habits, feelings, and tangibility to promote change. However, these approaches have faced criticism for their narrow focus on individual behaviour, and consequent neglect of the broader socio-cultural and structural

factors that shape consumption practices. Moreover, the responsibilities embedded in these models can lead to unintended consequences. Consumers may resist interventions that they perceive as unfair or overly burdensome, as illustrated by the backlash against the Chilean plastic bag ban analysed by Gonzalez-Arcos *et al.* (2021). Such resistance highlights the need for more holistic approaches to SC that address the interconnected systems influencing consumer behaviour.

Although helpful for understanding individual decision-making, theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour do not take into account the complex and nuanced ways in which institutional frameworks, social structures, and cultural norms affect consumer behaviour. This is similar to the criticism already made about applying Western-centric frameworks universally, without making adjustments for cultural situations that are not Western (Eisenstadt, 2020). Furthermore, the focus on personal accountability may put consumers themselves under unnecessary strain, while ignoring the structural causes of unsustainable consumption, such as economic disparity, a lack of sustainable substitutes, or the power of businesses and governments to influence consumer behaviour (Zhao *et al.*, 2014; Dabbous and Tarhini, 2019). This aligns with the argument of Carrington, Zwick and Neville (2015), who critique the responsibility placed on consumers within the neoliberal economic model, arguing that this perpetuates systemic contradictions and shifts the focus away from corporate and structural accountability for sustainability challenges. Thus an individual-centred approach may deflect attention away from the need for more extensive structural and societal change to solve environmental issues.

A limitation of the Western-centric approach to sustainable consumption is that it often assumes the universal applicability of concepts such as ethical consumerism, green purchasing, and environmental activism. While these practices may resonate with individuals in a Western context, they do not necessarily align with the culture, values, priorities, or circumstances of

consumers in other parts of the world. For example, in many non-Western societies, consumption patterns are shaped by collective values, religious beliefs, and the different economic and political realities, all of which influence how sustainability is perceived and practiced. The assumption that Western models of sustainable consumption can be applied universally ignores these critical differences, leading to a limited understanding of sustainability that fails to address the complexities of culturally diverse settings.

2.1.2 Socio-economic Perspectives on Sustainable Consumption

The concept of sustainable consumption emerged as the global community began to comprehend the damaging impacts of industrialism and consumerism on the environment (Burton, 1987). Sustainability can be understood as a process that allows the present generation to meet its own needs without compromising the potential for future generations to meet their needs as well (Brundtland, 1987). This entails reducing negative effects on the environment, protecting natural resources, and improving quality of life for everyone (Ari and Yikmaz, 2019). The circular economy approach, which emphasizes the continuous use of goods and services to meet basic requirements and improve quality of life while reducing waste and pollution and conserving natural resources, is an example of sustainable production and consumption (Ari and Yikmaz, 2019). This procedure reintroduces waste materials into the manufacturing chain through recycling and re-use, thereby lowering the need for raw materials and capital (Bidabad, 2019).

Socio-economic perspectives on sustainable consumption, however, and particularly those informed by Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), provide a critical lens for examining the neoliberal responsibilities of consumers. This body of literature argues that market actors are increasingly positioning consumers as moral agents responsible for addressing environmental and social challenges through their consumption choices. Scholars like Giesler and Veresiu (2014) articulate

the way in which moralistic governance regimes create “responsible consumer subjects” through mechanisms such as personalization, authorization, capabilization, and transformation. These processes shift responsibility away from corporations and governments, placing the onus on individuals to solve systemic issues like climate change, poverty, and health crises.

Eckhardt and Dobscha (2019) highlight the discomfort and resistance consumers often experience when tasked with addressing societal problems through their individual choices. Their study on conscious pricing at Panera Cares reveals that such strategies can provoke scepticism, resistance, and philosophical discomfort among consumers. Similarly, Van Laer and Smith (2024) examine the “net-zero hero” narrative, which casts individuals as key agents in achieving emissions reduction goals. This narrative often fails due to the disconnect between consumer actions and broader systemic challenges, ultimately creating a “tragic subject position” for consumers. Collective counter-conduct further illustrates how consumers resist responsibilities. Döbbe and Cederberg (2024) document instances of consumers actively challenging truth claims in sustainability campaigns and demanding broader systemic changes rather than individual action. These critiques underscore the limitations of neoliberal responsibilities, which often oversimplifies complex issues and obscures the structural barriers to sustainable consumption.

2.1.3 Sustainable Consumption in the Middle East

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), is vulnerable to a wide range of threats to sustainability, including widespread pollution, drought, water scarcity, increased industrialization, biodiversity loss, and irresponsible consumption patterns. However, the research on sustainability in the region has traditionally emphasized production – such as oil dependency and industrial output – and there has been comparatively little focus on consumption practices. This reflects a broader bias in social science

research, where developing economies tend to be examined primarily through the lens of economic productivity rather than mass consumption. This oversight has inhibited a comprehensive understanding of sustainability challenges in the region.

Saudi Arabia is the largest economy in the MENA region, with an industrial sector that accounts for 60% of the country's total GDP (Gerged, Cowton and Beddewela, 2018). It has often been studied through the lens of economic output, rather than in terms of the consumption patterns of its citizens and institutions. However, sustainable consumption (SC) is emerging as a relevant topic, especially in the context of climate change, resource scarcity, and the Vision 2030 reforms.

Other studies of SC in the Middle East, however, argue that many of the models for sustainable consumption derive from Western contexts and may be ineffective or culturally insensitive when applied in this region (Elhoushy and Lanzini, 2020). Proponents of this school of thought argue that consumer behaviours in developed countries do not replicate those of their counterparts in developing economies. Scholars in the Middle East, concerned with such disagreements and uncertainties, have investigated SC implementation in the region the light of this situation. For instance, Elhoushy and Lanzini (2020) analyse the empirical evidence on the factors affecting SC behaviour in the MENA region. The results of their study show that most of the sustainable consumer behaviour (SCB) models adopted by policymakers in the region have assumed a specific model of end-user rationality. Added to this, they are anchored in the traditional concept that SCB is just a function of environmental values, and thus ignore the role played by habits and socio-demographics. These findings point, therefore, to a considerable gap in the models, given that sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, culture, education, and social and economic status, significantly influence people's purchasing decisions and consumption behaviour. Sweidan (2021) examines the policies applied in the GCC to protect the environment

and support sustainable consumption. The results suggest that most institutions tasked with implementing the concept are unable to realize the desired outcomes. However, Bahn, El Labban and Hwalla (2019) establish that the idea of sustainable consumption can significantly benefit the region if appropriately practiced. Therefore, despite its central importance to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12), which focuses on ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, the implementation of SC in the Middle East is currently characterized by culturally insensitive models and weak policy institutions.

Several intricately connected factors influence Saudi Arabia's approach to sustainable consumption. These include the country's broader cultural background, Islamic beliefs, and legislative initiatives. Initiatives such as the government's Vision 2030 help support efforts to foster an atmosphere that encourages more environmentally friendly purchase patterns (Selim and Alshareef, 2024). However, Saudi Arabia may face obstacles to the broad adoption of sustainable consumption practices due to its heavy reliance on oil earnings, consumer-driven economy, and ongoing transition from traditional to modern consumption patterns.

The lack of SC theories tailored to non-Western contexts has resulted in the repeated application of Western frameworks, which often fail to account for region-specific cultural, economic, and institutional influences. Most existing research focuses on sustainable development and often overlooks SC, which involves the distinct interactions between consumers, products, and services. This gap also reflects a broader bias in social science research that tends to examine developing economies primarily through the lens of economic production – such as industrial output or GDP growth – while largely neglecting issues relating to mass consumption. Arabic countries like Saudi Arabia have also received only limited coverage in the SC literature, undermining a holistic understanding of their SC behaviours (Fischer *et al.*, 2021). The prevailing

conceptualization of SC does not incorporate the key sociocultural factors that are unique to Arabic societies, despite their significant influence on consumption habits and patterns. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, major sociocultural institutions, such as the government (Khan and Thomas, 2023) and religion (Elshaer *et al.*, 2021), influence consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours with regard to sustainability, yet current SC models either exclude these factors or address them only superficially. Consequently, further scholarly inquiry is needed to examine how Saudi Arabia's political ideologies and government policies shape its sustainable consumption culture (Mathur and Moschis, 2022).

Sustainable consumption is an emerging concept in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, there has been only limited research into the phenomenon. Sahab (2019) conducted a doctoral investigation into SC behaviours regarding indoor domestic soft furniture consumption in Riyadh, KSA. The research findings indicated religion to be a driver of Saudi consumers' sustainable behaviour. Nonetheless, the concept of sustainable consumption has not gained significant popularity among end-consumers. Banjar's (2018) work suggests that awareness creation can improve people's perceptions and attitudes towards the idea of sustainable consumption. The research, involving 784 participants from the Makkah region of Saudi Arabia, revealed that about 78% of the consumers believed that education could help improve consumption behaviour in the Kingdom. Furthermore, 80% thought that the creation of incentives would encourage SC habits among the citizenry (Banjar, 2018). The results also establish that strategies, such as green policies, could potentially promote sustainable consumption behaviour within the framework of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, while still supporting the achievement of its sustainable development goals. The KSA is not suited to agricultural production due to its unfavourable climate. The region is characterized by hot temperatures, a lack of arable soil, low rainfall, and diminishing water resources. Despite

the inadequate agricultural production in the Kingdom, Baig *et al.* (2022) observe that food waste is prevalent across the country. Most households do not observe sustainable food consumption. The estimated average food waste per capita stands at 250 kilograms per annum. Baig *et al.*'s (2022) review of the existing literature on sustainable consumption establishes the paucity of relevant research on this topic. Furthermore, most of the existing studies focus on providing knowledge about the challenge posed by food waste in Saudi Arabia, rather than generating appropriate solutions. Thus, the situation with the KSA shows a lack of sufficient literature on the current state of sustainable consumption in the country.

Previous studies have also investigated the critical drivers for sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia. Baig *et al.* (2022) observe that the country's difficult climatic conditions and lack of agricultural production are pushing its people to embrace sustainable consumption practices. However, research shows that food waste is considered to be a significant threat to sustainability across the GCC countries. Baig *et al.* (2019) identify food waste as one of the particular challenges relating to food security in the KSA. In a developing country like Saudi Arabia, embracing sustainable consumption is essential in order to save rare resources. However, the existing literature suggests that the concept of sustainable consumption has yet to be adopted by most households and businesses across the Kingdom. These findings indicate the importance of scholarly inquiry into the influence of Saudi Arabia's political ideologies and government policies on SC culture. A country's political system and policy framework can play an influential role in fostering sustainable consumption. There is also currently a research gap on the complex interplay between cultural environments and sustainable consumption, especially within patriarchal and collective societies such as Saudi Arabia. The latter issue, in particular, is an unexplored subject, according to Das and Albinsson (2023). Thus limited scholarly investigations exist in the area,

necessitating further studies. Overall, this section sets out a nuanced approach to sustainable consumption research by challenging broad generalizations and advocating the need for an in-depth understanding of the diversity of cultural dynamics.

2.2 Culture and Institutions

Culture, institutions, and sustainability are interrelated components that have a significant impact on the formation of consumption patterns and consumer behaviour. Culture, as a foundational element of society, exerts a significant impact on consumer attitudes, values, and preferences with regard to sustainability and ethical activities. Socio-cultural frameworks, encompassing norms, beliefs, and traditions, have a profound influence on how individuals perceive and participate in sustainable consumption behaviours. Organizations, including educational institutions and cultural establishments, can also play a role in promoting sustainability by implementing projects that cultivate awareness of and engagement in sustainable development. In order to promote more environmentally sustainable societies and encourage positive changes in consumer behaviour, it is essential to fully grasp the intricate relationship between sustainability, culture, and institutions (Niedlich *et al.*, 2020).

2.2.1 Saudi Arabian Culture

The country's Islamic heritage, Bedouin traditions, and historical role as an ancient trade centre lie behind the culture of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, this culture is inherently traditional and conservative. Saudi Arabia subscribes to the Islamic faith and has a majority Muslim population (Alodhayani *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, Islamic culture shapes the social life of Saudi Arabians, including their consumption habits. The Arab-Muslim culture influences citizens' perceptions of the environment, their beliefs about consumer products, and their understanding of sustainability. In addition, Islam informs the country's cultural norms, which shape its citizens' identities,

attitudes, ways of living, behaviours, and practices. As Binsahl, Chang and Bosua (2020) point out, with Saudi Arabia's culture being gender-segregated in the way that it is, men make most of the household decisions, including what kind of consumer products to purchase. As Saudi Arabia moves towards modernization, commentators believe that its strong Islamic culture may start to fade, as its citizens come to think of themselves increasingly as global citizens and take on new approaches to consumerism. Some scholars have investigated this controversial phenomenon. For example, Al Dossry (2012) explores the opportunities and constraints associated with consumerism and their effects on the socioeconomics and culture of Saudi Arabia. The research results indicate that Saudi Arabian culture is still significantly influenced by Islam. Therefore, Islamic culture still influences food-related decision-making processes and consumption patterns in the country.

Wasta is an Arabic term that refers to the practice of using personal connections, networks, or influence to gain advantages or special treatment, often in the context of employment, business dealings, or political favours. It can involve nepotism (favouritism shown to family members) or patronage, where individuals leverage relationships to secure resources, opportunities, or positions, rather than relying on merit or formal processes (Weir, Sultan and Bunt, 2019). This practice is deeply embedded in Saudi Arabian society, and reflects broader cultural values such as loyalty, hospitality, and a strong sense of community, which influence social, environmental, and economic decisions.

As of 2018, nearly half of Saudi Arabia's consumers were under 30 (PopulationPyramid.net, 2018). This young demographic is transforming Saudi consumer culture. Young Saudis connect and engage with global trends on Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat, and this is influencing their preferences and purchases. High-speed internet and smartphone use allow

this demographic to shop online, blurring local and global markets (Stanger, Alnaghaimshi & Pearson, 2017). Saudi supermarkets have also changed in response to these changes. They follow global retail trends by offering online shopping, home delivery, and digital payment options to tech-savvy customers. In order to cater to the desire of younger customers to shop and unwind, these supermarkets also feature cafes and social areas. This intersection of evolving retail formats and digital connectivity shows how youth culture is influencing retail and consumer behaviour.

The government of Saudi Arabia, as an Islamic state, emphasizes the importance of pro-environmentalism ideologies, drawing upon the teachings of the Quran (Gulzar *et al.*, 2021). The Quran is Muslims' primary source of morals, guiding their interpersonal interactions and relationships with nature. Islamic teachings underscore the oneness of Allah with everything on earth and in heaven, and emphasize Muslims' responsibility to preserve the environment (Quran, 4:126). Despite Islam's division into different branches and subsects, there is a consensus on the significance of environmentalism, with scholars such as Seyyed Nasr highlighting the ethical and spiritual crises resulting from environmental degradation. Islamic environmentalism, influenced by Quranic and Sunnah ecological principles, emphasizes the interconnectedness of life and nature, encouraging Muslims to live in harmony with their environment (Koehrsen, 2021). Saudi households in Dammam City are increasingly embracing environmentally sustainable practices, such as sorting solid waste, indicating a growing awareness of the importance of ecological preservation (Labib *et al.*, 2021). This shift reflects a broader societal norm in Saudi Arabia, where individuals understand the adverse effects of pollution and align their behaviour with perceived benefits and religious beliefs on environmental protection.

2.2.2 Religion, Culture, and Sustainability

The convergence of religion, consumption, and sustainability is a multifaceted and dynamic field of study, and the literature has explored the influence of religious beliefs on consumer behaviour and perspectives towards sustainability. Studies have examined the impact of consumers' religious orientation on their motivation and dedication to recycling, and emphasized the way religious belief may influence individuals' drive, commitment, and affection for nature. Although many reviews indicate that religious affiliation alone does not necessarily result in increased environmental consciousness among consumers, there is ongoing discussion regarding the influence of religion on individuals' attitudes towards sustainable behaviours (Orellano, Valor and Chuvieco, 2020).

Saudi religion and the patriarchal cultural system influence the consumer behaviour of the country's citizens. Awareness of the details of the lifestyle cycle assessment increases their ability to make informed purchase decisions. In particular, Elhoushy and Lanzini's (2020) study focuses on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to analyse sustainable consumer behaviour in the region. The results reveal that women in the MENA region are likely to engage in sustainable purchasing patterns due to the structured nature of the society, which makes them responsible for nurturing roles. In the Saudi Arabian context, women have a substantial impact on product selection and quality, as they combine Western items with Islamic and traditional beliefs (Al Dossry, 2012). Additionally, if MENA consumers trust that the brand they purchase from is committed to green initiatives, they are more willing to buy products labelled as sustainable (Elhoushy and Lanzini, 2020). Such findings are further contextualized by the assertion that Asian communities, including MENA, subscribe to collectivistic conformance; therefore, their willingness to adopt a particular purchasing pattern is influenced by group acceptance. Thus, the

normalization of sustainability concepts, such as Islamic environmentalism, could be used to develop Muslims' willingness to undertake green purchase decisions.

Research in the field of Islamic perspectives on environmental stewardship has mostly sought to understand the impact of Islamic principles on consumer behaviour and attitudes towards sustainability. This study highlights the need to investigate the intentions of Saudi Arabian consumers regarding the purchase of environmentally friendly products. Saudi Arabia, although a prosperous nation, is facing many environmental issues and has an emerging market for green consumers, who prefer to base their purchasing decisions on environmental sustainability. Because of its environmental awareness and cultural values, this Saudi Arabian market segment is moving towards more sustainable consumption. Focusing on an area that has received limited research attention, this project seeks to provide significant insights into the factors that affect green purchasing intentions in relation to food and personal care goods in Saudi Arabia (Patel, 2010). It highlights the importance of integrating Islamic viewpoints into sustainability efforts, so that these align with the values and convictions of Muslim customers (Patel, 2010).

The impact of Islam on consumer behaviour and attitudes towards sustainability is particularly notable in Saudi consumer culture. The Saudi government has been actively working towards transforming the kingdom from a culture that mostly consumes goods to one that is more sustainable. The goal is to decrease dependence on environmentally harmful products and foster the growth of an economy that is environmentally benign. With Saudi Arabia striving for sustainability advancement, it is essential to understand the influence of Islam on consumer culture, and the promotion of sustainable consumption behaviours in order to achieve long-term environmental objectives and cultivate a culture of moderation and sustainability (Assad, 2006; Alghamdi and Agag, 2024)

2.3 The Islamic Influence on Saudi Culture and Consumer Behaviour

Islam has a significant influence on Saudi culture and its people's behaviour. Religion constitutes the central aspect of daily life in the country, influencing its governance and legal systems. About 90% of Saudi citizens are Sunni Muslims, while 10% subscribe to the Shi'a Islamic faith (The Sunni-Shia Divide, n.d.). The country's inhabitants also include expatriates with a variety of religious backgrounds. Algumzi (2017) investigates the impact of Islamic culture on Saudi Arabia's business ethics, with a particular focus on the practice of Wasta. The results indicate that Islamic beliefs dominate the various aspects of Saudi society, including the workplace. Furthermore, research has shown that the Islamic culture and its associated values influence the Saudi consumer's perception of advertising and brand loyalty. For instance, Bajaber (2020) explores the impact of cultural values in advertising on consumer loyalty in Saudi Arabia. The results indicate that Saudi consumers show a negative attitude towards products associated with adverts that reflect anti-cultural values. This shows that culture influences consumer loyalty in the country. According to Al-Hyari, Alnsour and Al-Weshah (2012), purchase behaviour is not limited to social, economic, and political factors. The consumer buying decision pattern is also influenced by the cultural environments in which a person lives and trades. An examination of the relationship between religious beliefs and consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia shows a significant positive connection between Arabic or Islamic collectivistic culture and consumer behaviour, especially in the boycotting of anti-cultural products (Al-Hyari, Alnsour and Al-Weshah, 2012). In addition, cultural norms have a collective influence on the purchasing decisions of Saudi consumers, especially where international brands are involved. Thus, these findings demonstrate the significant mediating and moderating roles of the Islamic culture in consumers' purchasing behaviour in Saudi Arabia.

Islamic teaching regarding consumer behaviour is rooted in concepts like halal (permissible), haram (forbidden), Amanah, Khalifah, and Wasatiyyah. All of these frame the ethical and moral boundaries of consumption practices in Saudi Arabia. Sustainability is regarded as an extension of the consumer's faith, making it an act of worship or a duty to Allah rather than simply a consumer trend. It is also worth noting that the idea of Wasatiyyah is based upon religious values that encourage moderation in consumption and discourage wastefulness and excess. However, Orellano, Valor and Chuvieco (2020) assert that commitment to sustainability has a dual nature in Saudi Arabia, as it promotes values like hospitality, generosity, and collective care for ethical consumption, but can also fuel overconsumption and brand-centric purchasing driven by social obligations.

Additional literature exists to show the extent of the influence of Islam on Saudi culture and people's behaviour. Abalkhail (2019) observes that the Islamic religion in Saudi Arabia shapes people's beliefs and knowledge, impacting their attitudes and decision-making processes at both the individual and societal level. For instance, at the individual level, Islamic teachings on modesty and ethics influence personal choices relating to consumption, in such areas as food, clothing, and entertainment, guiding individuals to select products that align with religious values (e.g., halal products, modest fashion). At the societal level, Islamic principles guide broader consumption patterns, such as the prohibition of interest (riba), which influences banking practices and encourages ethical consumerism, or the observance of Ramadan, which shapes seasonal buying behaviour. Islam and Arabic traditions also determine social norms and shape public opinions in the country. In other words, religion sets out the guidelines for acceptable consumption behaviour in the country. For example, under Islamic culture, certain goods and services, such as pork and alcoholic drinks, are prohibited in the country. However, despite the religious teachings, there is a

growing luxury market in Saudi Arabia, with many consumers purchasing high-end products and services. While some studies from Muslim-majority markets, like Indonesia, suggest that Islamic consumers might perceive luxury consumption as sinful or as making them ‘guilty’ in God’s eyes (Abalkhail, 2019), this view is not universally held in Saudi Arabia.

The younger generation, in particular, are increasingly embracing luxury goods as symbols of status, wealth, and success, often under the influence of global trends and the desire for modernity. This reflects a more complex relationship between faith and consumer behaviour, where religious teachings coexist with contemporary desires for luxury and prestige. Moreover, Islam also dictates how marketing is conducted in the country. Khan’s (2021) study shows in order to have an impact, advertisements in Saudi Arabia must consider the target audience’s sociodemographic attributes, including age, gender, marital status, income level, social class, and education. Additionally, the design of adverts must factor in the relevant cultural values, such as religion, traditions, language, manners, customs, attitudes to women, social institutions, and political values. Overall, therefore, while Islam significantly influences Saudi culture and its people’s behaviour regarding consumer products, there are cultural and practical limits to its influence, especially among younger and more affluent consumers who may view luxury as a mark of personal success.

Preliminary scholarly investigations into the link between sustainability and culture show that end-users’ pro-ecological behaviours vary across nations, regions, and cultures (Liu and Segev, 2017). Nash *et al.* (2020) state that a consumer’s culture shapes their relationship with the environment, their ecological concerns, and their attitude towards pro-environmental initiatives, such as “green marketing”. Consequently, culture can motivate or demotivate a person’s adoption of sustainable consumption behaviour. Ives and Kidwell (2019) claim that sustainability is shaped

by deeply embedded religious, cultural, and social values. Research has also confirmed that individuals participate in sustainability for varying reasons. Rahman *et al.* (2021) believe that consumers' engagement in sustainability is influenced by their cultural backgrounds. Cultural values, religious beliefs, and social norms all have an effect on meaning in Saudi Arabia, while competences encompass the knowledge and abilities needed for sustainable consumption. Researchers need to find out more about the factors that encourage and discourage sustainable consumption, and learn how to create more effective solutions by analysing the interplay between these factors.

2.3.1 Institutional Influences

Governments, as pivotal institutions, can play a key role in advancing sustainability. The primary function of governments in this respect is to establish a conducive atmosphere for sustainable development through the implementation of laws and regulations that promote sustainable practices. Governments have the ability to shape consumer behaviour by implementing educational and awareness initiatives, as well as by offering incentives to promote sustainable purchasing (Stern, 2000; Jackson, 2005). In Saudi Arabia, the government has a significant influence on consumer behaviour through its various policies and programmes. The Saudi government is seeking to shift its economic dependence away from environmentally unsustainable products towards a more environmentally conscious economy. The economic reforms implemented by the monarchy have rejuvenated the private sector, resulting in a strong and varied economy, which has contributed in turn to the increase of non-oil GDP. In the promotion of sustainable consumption, the literature stresses the need to understand the relationship between governments, consumers, and sustainability. Achieving sustainability requires governments to

intervene and influence consumer behaviour, which in turn points to the interdependence of governments, consumers, and sustainability (Assad, 2006; Alghamdi and Agag, 2024).

The Saudi government has been at the forefront of developing policy initiatives to enable the nation to achieve its 2030 sustainability goals. Saudi Arabia has established a robust economic institutional framework to support green entrepreneurs to achieve their production objectives. Alwakid, Aparicio and Urbano (2020) state that green entrepreneurs are critical for a nation's sustainability potential because they balance profitability and social obligations. The availability of such benefits is often linked to prudent resource utilization measures, such as renewable energy, which have a smaller ecological footprint than traditional alternatives. Omri *et al.* (2019) argue that the Saudi government's economic policy frameworks have enabled the country to achieve significant strides in reducing carbon emissions and increasing economic development at the same time. Even though Saudi Arabia is one of the largest economies in the world to rely on fossil fuel for its economic development, its government is committed to reversing its high emissions to enhance the country's resilience. The diversification of energy sources is enabling the country to reduce its dependence on non-renewable energy and shift towards renewable energy, such as solar. Increasing environmental protection through clean green energy alternatives and the promotion of sustainable consumption is propelling Saudi Arabia towards achieving its 2030 sustainability objectives.

The establishment of population-focused sustainability awareness creation initiatives has increased Saudi Arabia's preparedness for achieving its 2030 sustainable development goals. Public environmental campaigns are critical tools used by governments to inform target populations of the importance of conforming to the tenets of environmental stewardship. Alsaati *et al.*'s (2020) research maintains that Saudi Arabia has enacted multiple awareness-creation

initiatives targeting university students on various subjects, such as prudent water and electricity consumption. The implementation of these measures seeks to encourage sustainability behaviour, essential for reducing environmental degradation, among the country's higher education learners. Alsaati *et al.* (2020) argue that the Saudi government should implement further robust policy initiatives by making sustainability courses mandatory for university students. This recommendation would enhance Saudi Arabia's general population's ability to adjust their consumption and environmental resource use. The study further argues that the effectiveness of similar programmes could be replicated in municipalities to broaden the scope of the targeted populations. It also suggests community-based environmentalism education drives to improve the population's understanding of the dynamics of sustainable practices. The results of this research reveal Saudi Arabia's endeavours to initiate grassroots efforts, and its use of community networks to achieve its 2030 sustainability targets.

Saudi Arabia's sustainability culture has influenced its citizens' acceptance of green entrepreneurship and products. The country has been proactive in empowering its citizens to embrace eco-friendly behaviour, which is essential for facilitating purchasing reforms. Alwakid, Aparicio and Urbano (2020) state that the unique business model of green entrepreneurs aids environmental protection by compelling them to eliminate hazardous byproducts or wastes in their production processes. These trends are taking root in Saudi Arabia due to the increase in the number of businesses utilizing the concept of sustainability in their product development and service delivery. As Saudi Arabia restructures its economy to reflect these sociocultural trends, consumers are becoming more and more aware of the importance of purchasing environmentally friendly products. The availability of these items in local outlets is further reinforcing a transition to forms of production that protect the natural environment. The knowledge that their purchasing

patterns can affect the environmental status of both Saudi Arabia and the globe further increases their ability to make informed buying decisions (Mohammed, Homaid and Alaswadi, 2020). Normalization of these purchasing values is leading Saudis to regard green initiatives as an acceptable choice.

Higher learning institutions have been instrumental in educating the Saudi Arabian population on the importance of practising sustainable development. The emphasis in Saudi Arabian universities on sustainable development (SD) is steadily shaping citizens' purchasing patterns and behaviour. In particular, Abubakar, Aina and Alshuwaikhhat (2020) state that the shift in Saudi Arabian universities towards sustainable development is gradually cultivating among the youth the importance of living sustainably. This behaviour change is facilitating changes in cultural beliefs about the consumer's role in achieving sustainability goals. The findings of their study provide a compelling demonstration of the importance of teaching ecological values to the young, to empower them with the requisite knowledge to make informed buying decisions. The encouragement of environmental consciousness among learners helps cultivate sustainable consumption. For instance, Saudis gaining this kind of knowledge will be more likely to purchase items and services aligned with sustainable production processes, rather than with traditional approaches. As these behavioural changes expand, Saudis will be better positioned to incorporate sustainable measures in their buying habits. The findings illustrate that introducing sustainability information in Saudi Arabian universities empowers the nation's youth, by showing them how their consumption patterns affect national efforts in ecological preservation. Consequently, educating Saudi university learners on sustainability is enabling them to exercise eco-friendly buying patterns.

To summarize, the marketing literature shows that the topic of sustainable consumption, and specifically the socio-cultural factors that influence Saudi shoppers' views on sustainability and ethical practices, is complicated, and has many different aspects to it. It requires an understanding of consumer behaviour, cultural patterns, and the impact of information sources in shaping consumer attitudes. This study emphasizes the need for companies to create sustainable marketing strategies that address the distinct requirements and preferences of Saudi consumers, who are progressively adopting a more price-conscious approach and displaying less brand loyalty. The digital realm offers a vital platform for organizations to understand and connect with their consumers, and the influence of social media influencers on customer engagement and purchase intention is substantial.

Table 2. Overview of studies capturing the impact of culture and sustainability

| Study | Focus | Cultural Focus | Type of Study | Key Takeaways |
|-------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------|---|
| Miller (1995) | Global | Material culture | Literature review | The consumption of commodities has historical ties to culture |
| Sassatelli (2015) | Global | Consumer culture | Theoretical article | Sustainability efforts that focus on establishing a common culture for success may be undermined by ignoring cultural diversity and the way individual cultures respond to sustainability efforts |
| Wilk (2017) | United States | Consumer culture | Theoretical article | Application of 'Metaphor theory' to consumptive behaviour; each culture constructs metaphors to promote its understanding of larger realities |
| Georage (2017) | Saudi Arabia | - | Questionnaire | Evidence that consumers in Saudi Arabia have reasonable knowledge and awareness of green marketing; there is still a great need to |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|---|-------------------|---|
| | | | | understand environmental awareness in Saudi Arabia |
| Zheng <i>et al.</i> (2021) | Global | Constituent culture Functional culture | Literature review | Demonstrates that cultural traits are connected to all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 79% of the SDG targets put forward by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) |

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The concept of multiple modernities, which contests the notion of a single, universal route to modernity, serves as the theoretical foundation for this investigation. According to the paradigm created by the sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt in 2002, modernity is a varied and dynamic phenomenon that is influenced by the distinct institutional, historical, and cultural circumstances of different nations, rather than being a one-size-fits-all term. The notion of multiple modernities draws attention to the various ways that civilizations, influenced by their own cultural and historical experiences, understand and modify contemporary concepts and practices, like sustainability. By using this paradigm, this study aims to investigate how Saudi Arabia's unique institutional, cultural, and religious background influences its approach to sustainable consumption, and thus provide a more inclusive and global perspective on sustainability.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, the theory of multiple modernities provides a lens through which to examine the integration of Islamic values, collectivist cultural norms, and state-led initiatives into the broader discourse on sustainable consumption. By embracing the idea that modernity is not a universal process but one that varies across societies, this study aims to uncover the unique ways in which sustainability is practiced and understood in Saudi Arabia, to offer new insights into the global conversation on sustainable consumption. Combining the multiple

modernities perspective with practice theory provides an even more powerful analytical lens for exploring sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia. This integrated approach recognizes that sustainability is not a Western concept imposed universally, but rather a culturally embedded practice shaped by local traditions, beliefs, and historical contexts.

Practice Theory (PT) argues that cultural behaviours are not simply determined by individual free will, but shaped by social forces and cultural tendencies (Reckwitz, 2002). While consumer behaviour focuses on the study of how consumers make decisions, consumer practice captures the decisions made by individuals and relates these to the factors that are used to make those decisions. Practice theory (PT) shifts the analytical focus to practices themselves, emphasizing the interplay of materials, competences, and meanings as a key factor in shaping behaviour (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). Reckwitz (2002) defines practices as habitual behaviours that encompass a range of interconnected elements, such as cognitive and physical processes, material objects, information, and emotional states (Reckwitz, 2002). For Saudi consumers, materials include the digital platforms that facilitate e-commerce and the availability of eco-friendly products; competences are reflected in their growing knowledge of sustainable practices, such as energy efficiency or waste reduction; and meanings are shaped by Islamic teachings on stewardship and moderation, which emphasize harmony with the environment.

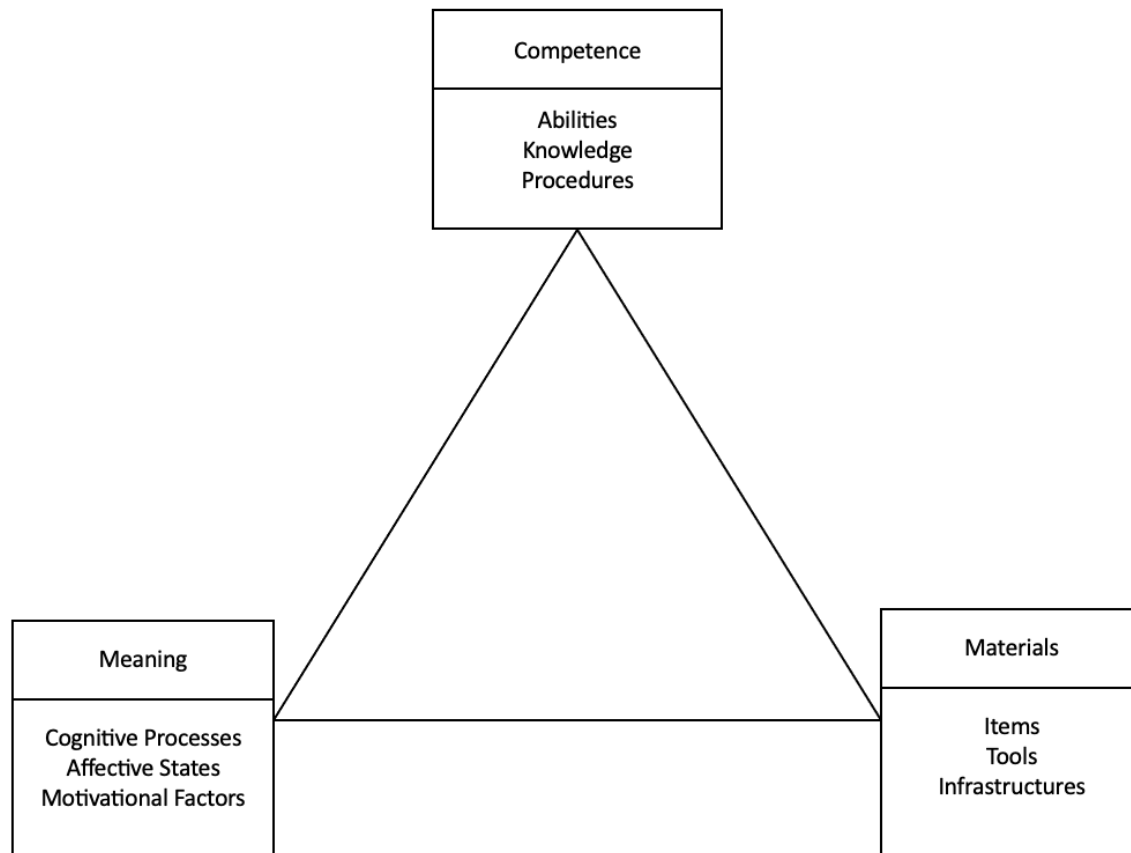


Figure 1. Practice Theory framework (adapted from Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012)

Understanding the connection between these components allows us to explain how behaviour is sustained and carried out in the real world. In the Practice Theory framework, as discussed by Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012), the three components – competence, meaning, and materials – are central to the way practices are developed and maintained. Competence refers to the knowledge and skills required to perform a practice. It reflects the cultural and social knowledge that enables individuals to engage in specific behaviours. In the context of sustainable consumption, this might include knowing how to identify sustainable products and how to incorporate them into daily life. Meaning relates to the psychological and emotional aspects of a practice. It encompasses the values, beliefs, and societal norms that give significance to a practice.

For example, in sustainable consumption, meaning might involve the sense of responsibility individuals feel towards the environment or the social value placed on eco-friendly behaviours. Materials are the physical objects and resources that enable the practice. In sustainable consumption, this includes tools like reusable bags, energy-efficient appliances, and renewable energy technologies. These materials may not only facilitate the practice; they can also symbolize the practice itself, and thus influence the way individuals engage with sustainability. To illustrate, recycling involves competence (knowing how to sort waste), meaning (feeling a moral responsibility), and materials (bins, collection systems, and recycling centres). Together, these components shape how practices like recycling or sustainable consumption are adopted and maintained in society.

The multiple modernities perspective complements PT by acknowledging the diversity of culturally embedded modernities. Jung and Sinclair (2015) argue that modern societies emerge from the interplay between global social imaginaries and local religious and cultural traditions. This perspective frames the Saudi context as a unique trajectory of modernity, where Islamic values guide the adaptation of sustainability to local norms. For instance, Islamic reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries played a pivotal role in shaping “authentic” Muslim modernities. This shows how religious traditions have actively defined modern identities and practices over time.

Jung and Sinclair (2015) also highlight the tension between unity and diversity in the formation of modernities, challenging Eurocentric and linear conceptions of modernity. They argue that Islamic modernities have evolved through inter-civilizational encounters, integrating global trends with local traditions to create distinct cultural forms. This aligns with Casanova’s (2011) assertion that global religions act as imagined communities that adapt dynamically to

globalization. In the Saudi context, this interplay produces a model of sustainability informed by both Islamic ethics and global discourses, illustrating the multiplicity and adaptability of modernities.

In addition, these perspectives underscore the importance of subjectivity formation in shaping sustainable practices. Jung and Sinclair's (2015) discussion of Islamic reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida shows how modern subjectivities are constructed through cultural conflicts and the reinterpretation of religious traditions. In Saudi Arabia, the integration of Islamic principles into modern consumption practices reflects this dynamic, as sustainability becomes a moral and cultural imperative, rather than a purely economic or environmental goal.

By combining PT and the multiple modernities framework, this analysis situates Saudi sustainable consumption within a broader narrative of cultural diversity and global interconnectivity. This perspective both highlights the uniqueness of Islamic modernities, and demonstrates the adaptability of traditions to contemporary challenges. It provides a foundation for developing culturally resonant strategies to promote sustainability, and to ensure that global goals align with local values and practices.

Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a more inclusive, culturally sensitive understanding of sustainable consumption by moving beyond the Western-centric discourse and exploring how non-Western societies, such as Saudi Arabia, interpret and engage with sustainability practices. By expanding the scope of sustainable consumption research, the study will fill some critical gaps in the literature and help inform policy, business practices, and consumer behaviours in both Western and non-Western contexts.

The concept of multiple modernities offers a critical lens through which to examine the complexities of sustainable consumption (SC), especially in non-Western societies. This framework challenges the conventional, Western-centric narratives of modernity and sustainability, by proposing that modernity is not a singular, uniform experience, but a multiplicity of diverse pathways shaped by local histories, cultures, and institutional practices. In this respect, the concept offers a valuable tool for understanding the dynamics of SC in Saudi Arabia, a society that is undergoing significant transformations under its Vision 2030 initiative, while still maintaining deeply rooted cultural and religious values (Meyer, 2010; Eisenstadt, 2020).

In proposing the theory of multiple modernities, Eisenstadt (2002) questioned the widely held assumption that there is a single, universal path to modernity. He argued that modernity, rather than being a fixed or linear process that is universally experienced in the same way, is highly contextual, and varies according to the particular social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances of each society. In other words, while modernity may share certain characteristics, such as the rise of industrialization, urbanization, and the spread of democracy, the ways in which these processes unfold differ significantly across the globe (Meyer, 2010; Eisenstadt, 2020).

Central to the concept of multiple modernities is the idea that each society adapts modern ideas and practices to align with its own historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. As a result, modernity manifests itself in a variety of ways that may not all follow the Western industrialized nations' course. The theory of multiple modernities stresses the agency of societies in creating their own forms of modernity, which may differ in terms of values, aims, and approaches, rather than considering Western models of modernity as the ideal or inevitable trajectory (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Some of the key characteristics of multiple modernities include:

1. **Cultural and Institutional Divergence:** The differences in how modernity appears in various societies is one of the primary traits of multiple modernities. Although Western countries have traditionally set the standard for modernity, other societies, such as those in the Global South and non-Western regions, have created their own models of modernity that take into account regional customs, religious beliefs, and institutional structures (Eisenstadt, 2020; Al-Jayyousi *et al.*, 2022). This difference is especially crucial for understanding how different cultural settings frame and implement sustainable consumption (SC) (Jafari *et al.*, 2012).
2. **An Interplay Between Culture and Structure:** The interplay between institutional structures and cultural values in influencing the evolution of society is another point of emphasis for the theory of multiple modernities. Understanding how individual attitudes and larger social pressures impact practices like SC requires a knowledge of this interaction. For instance, Saudi Arabia's fast-shifting political and economic landscape, along with its Islamic-based cultural norms, are greatly influencing consumer attitudes and actions towards sustainability (Karababa and Ger, 2011). Furthermore, because societies must balance the conflicts between traditional values and contemporary governmental programmes, this interaction highlights how dynamic modernity can be (Meyer, 2010).
3. **Its Non-Linear and Dynamic Nature:** Another crucial element of the idea multiple modernities is the understanding that modernity is not a fixed or preset process; rather, it is always altering as a result of the continual reinterpretation of institutional and cultural frameworks in response to shifting political, social, and economic conditions (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). Accordingly, modernity, and hence, sustainable consumption, is a dynamic, continuous process involves all the unique characteristics of the individual

society, rather than a singular occurrence or definitive result (Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019).

In examining non-Western societies like Saudi Arabia, the notion of multiple modernities provides valuable insights about sustainable consumption. In the West, sustainable consumption is typically defined in terms of personal accountability, moral shopping, and environmental conservation. The cultural, social, and institutional settings of any civilization have a significant influence on consumption behaviours; therefore, this approach is not always appropriate in other contexts. For instance, societal norms, religious beliefs, and institutional frameworks may have a greater influence on sustainable purchasing practices in collectivist cultures like Saudi Arabia than individual consumer agency alone (Jafari *et al.*, 2012).

One of the primary ways in which multiple modernities enhances our understanding of SC is by challenging the assumption that Western models of consumerism, often centred on individualism and market-driven decision-making, can be universally applied. In Saudi Arabia, the interplay between Islamic teachings, social norms, and government policies offers a distinctive context for understanding how sustainability is conceptualized and practiced (Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019). Islam, as the dominant religion in the country, significantly influences consumer behaviour, especially in relation to sustainability. The religion's emphasis on moderation (known as "wasatiyyah") and stewardship of the Earth aligns with the principles of sustainable consumption. In Islam, the concept of *Khalifah* (stewardship) dictates that humans have a moral responsibility to protect and preserve natural resources (Karababa and Ger, 2011). This religious framework fosters a sense of collective responsibility for the environment and the sustainability of natural resources (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Al-Jayyousi *et al.*, 2022).

However, the practice of sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia cannot be reduced to religious teachings alone. Islam promotes sustainability, but how these ideals are actually applied depends on larger institutional structures and cultural norms. Government initiatives that support sustainable development, waste reduction, and renewable energy under Vision 2030, for example, can either help or hurt consumers' adoption of sustainable habits. According to Jafari *et al.* (2012), the incorporation of Islamic values into state-led projects demonstrates the dynamic and contextual nature of sustainable consumption in the Saudi Arabian context. The Vision 2030 project of Saudi Arabia, which seeks to diversify the economy, lessen its reliance on oil, and advance environmental sustainability, is significantly influential in determining actions in relation to SC. Vision 2030 provides institutional support for sustainable practices while also highlighting the importance of waste management, resource conservation, and renewable energy. This national vision reflects a unique adaptation of modern sustainability ideals to the specific political, economic, and cultural context of Saudi Arabia (Eisenstadt, 2020; Al-Jayyousi *et al.*, 2022).

Culture, religion, and state-led sustainability programmes interact to produce a complicated dynamic that influences how consumers behave. Sustainable consumption is not just about personal moral responsibility but also about the institutional frameworks that support or undermine sustainable habits in a country like Saudi Arabia, where religious beliefs and governmental regulations play a significant role (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). This interplay between governmental regulations, religious doctrine, and cultural norms shows how crucial it is to view sustainable consumption in terms of a variety of different modernities (Jafari *et al.*, 2012). As a collectivist society, Saudi Arabia prioritizes social cohesion, family, and community. Given that social norms and group behaviours frequently have a greater impact than individual decisions, this

cultural context is important for understanding sustainable consumption (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

In collectivist societies, aside from personal accountability, community constraints and social expectations may motivate sustainable actions. One way to conceptualize sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia is as a shared responsibility to protect resources for the coming generations. Islamic stewardship ideals are in line with this societal norm, which also reflects a larger cultural setting that favours social cohesiveness and collective peace over individual liberty (Karababa and Ger, 2011). Accordingly, community-oriented practices like group rubbish management, resource sharing, and community-led environmental projects may be a part of sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia (Gollnhofer, Weijs and Schouten, 2019).

Applying the idea of multiple modernities to the Saudi Arabian setting presents a number of difficulties, however, despite the fact that it offers insightful information about the study of sustainable consumption in non-Western societies. The conflict between traditional cultural values and the swift socioeconomic transformations brought about by Vision 2030 is one of the main obstacles. Economic diversification, urbanization, and technical advancement may cause the modernity of Saudi society to collide with religious and cultural customs, resulting in a complicated environment for sustainable consumption (Meyer, 2010; Eisenstadt, 2020). At the same time, though, there is a chance to encourage sustainable consumerism in Saudi Arabia due to the country's increased environmental consciousness and official backing for sustainability programmes. There is the potential for creative solutions that combine contemporary sustainability techniques with cultural values, as the nation looks to establish itself as a global leader in sustainability (Jafari *et al.*, 2012; Al-Jayyousi *et al.*, 2022).

The theory of multiple modernities provides a strong framework for addressing sustainable consumerism in Saudi Arabia because it highlights the way culture, religion, and institutional structures all influence consumer behaviour (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). By using this paradigm, the research transcends a Western-centric perspective on sustainability to offers a sophisticated understanding of how SC is conceived and implemented in a non-Western setting. The dynamic interaction of government regulations, Islamic principles, and collectivist values in Saudi Arabia is shaping its sustainable consumption, showing one particular variety of modernity in a society that is developing quickly (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

The capacity to strike a balance between traditional cultural values and the needs of modernization will be crucial for integrating sustainability into consumer practices as Saudi Arabia continues to undergo significant adjustments under Vision 2030. This study adds to a more inclusive and globally relevant understanding of sustainability by examining the impact of different modernities on sustainable consumption, and emphasizing the significance of context in influencing consumer choices and environmental behaviours (Karababa and Ger, 2011).

The integration of Practice Theory and Multiple Modernities Theory (MMT) in this study offers a novel approach to understanding how Saudi shoppers navigate sustainability and ethical practices within a modernizing society. This combination is novel because previous studies have rarely connected micro-level practice-based analysis with macro-level civilizational modernity frameworks in the context of Saudi or non-Western consumption.

Practice Theory emphasizes the routines, habits, and social interactions through which individuals enact behaviours, providing insight into how sustainable consumption is practiced in daily life rather than only in abstract terms. This allows the study to examine not just what behaviours occur, but how they are embedded in cultural, religious, and social contexts. MMT

complements this by challenging the assumption that modernization follows a singular Western trajectory, highlighting that societies like Saudi Arabia can modernize while maintaining distinct traditions and social norms.

MMT provides a crucial macro-level perspective on cultural continuity, enabling an analysis of how broader societal structures and enduring traditions shape micro-level consumption practices. This dual-theoretical approach is particularly valuable for investigating the influence of collective and patriarchal cultural structures, religious doctrines, and government initiatives such as Vision 2030. It allows for a contextually grounded analysis of how modern influences interact with enduring social norms, producing nuanced insights into the persistence, adaptation, or transformation of traditions within contemporary Saudi consumer behaviour.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies the interpretivist research philosophy and practice theory approach that has been adopted to underpin this research, as well as the qualitative framework that was utilized to gather, evaluate, and interpret the data. Literature research and a pilot study were employed to generate the questions used in the semi-structured interviews. The data analysis process draws upon Lochmiller's (2021) five-step thematic analysis model in order to evaluate, interpret and discuss the findings, and all appropriate actions were undertaken to comply with research ethics. Within the scope of this chapter, the philosophical framework, theory, and methodology that guided the research design, data collecting, and analysis are all detailed.

3.2 Research Philosophy

3.2.1 Social Constructivism

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Schwandt (1997), constructivism is an ontological philosophical paradigm that focuses on how individuals shape their understanding of reality through cognitive processes, and allows for multiple realities to coexist. In this context, social constructivism offers a powerful theoretical paradigm, asserting that knowledge and understanding are created through social and cultural interactions (Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch, 2019). Bevir and Rhodes (2015) claim that individuals develop their understanding of the world through social interactions, shaping their beliefs, behaviour, and perception according to collective societal influences.

Similarly, Sandu (2016) explains social constructivism as a perspective that emphasizes the significance, centrality, complexity, and dynamic character of language, discourse, and social interactions in shaping individuals' knowledge, perceptions, behaviours, and social realities. At its core, this approach posits that reality is dynamic, continuously emerging from human experiences and the interactions between different cultures. Culture is seen as a representation of elements shared across generations or between neighbours (Almuhzzi and Al-Azri, 2019). Specifically, this position asserts that shared meanings and collaborative processes are essential in the process of shaping individual beliefs and behaviours (Amineh and Asl, 2015; Jung, 2019). In the context of exploring the sociocultural influences on Saudi shoppers' perspectives towards sustainability and ethical practices, social constructivism offers a robust analytical framework for focusing on the way the consumer perceptions of individual shoppers are shaped by their culture, social engagements, and contextual experiences.

A key characteristic of social constructivism is its focus on meaning-making through dialogues and interactions. Catlin, Luchs and Phipps (2017) demonstrate that the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability are perceived as being psychologically distinct in both theoretical and practical ways. Thus, within the framework of social constructivism, preconceived fixed meanings are challenged, and an in-depth examination is provided of how various discourses impact cultural identity. In this study, social constructivism recognizes that individuals' perceptions of sustainability and the influence of those perceptions on culture are not fixed or objective, but dependent on the way these concepts are constructed through language and discourse. This paradigm is particularly relevant to understanding consumer behaviour, and specifically so in the case of Saudi Arabia, where cultural, societal, and religious beliefs influence the perceptions of individuals and their ethical decision-making.

This research followed social constructivist principles in its methodology by:

- Focusing on collaborative meaning-making through interviews.
- Investigating the cultural contexts shaping perceptions regarding sustainability.
- Recognizing individual perception as a valid form of knowledge construction.
- Analysing the zone of proximal development in consumer understanding.

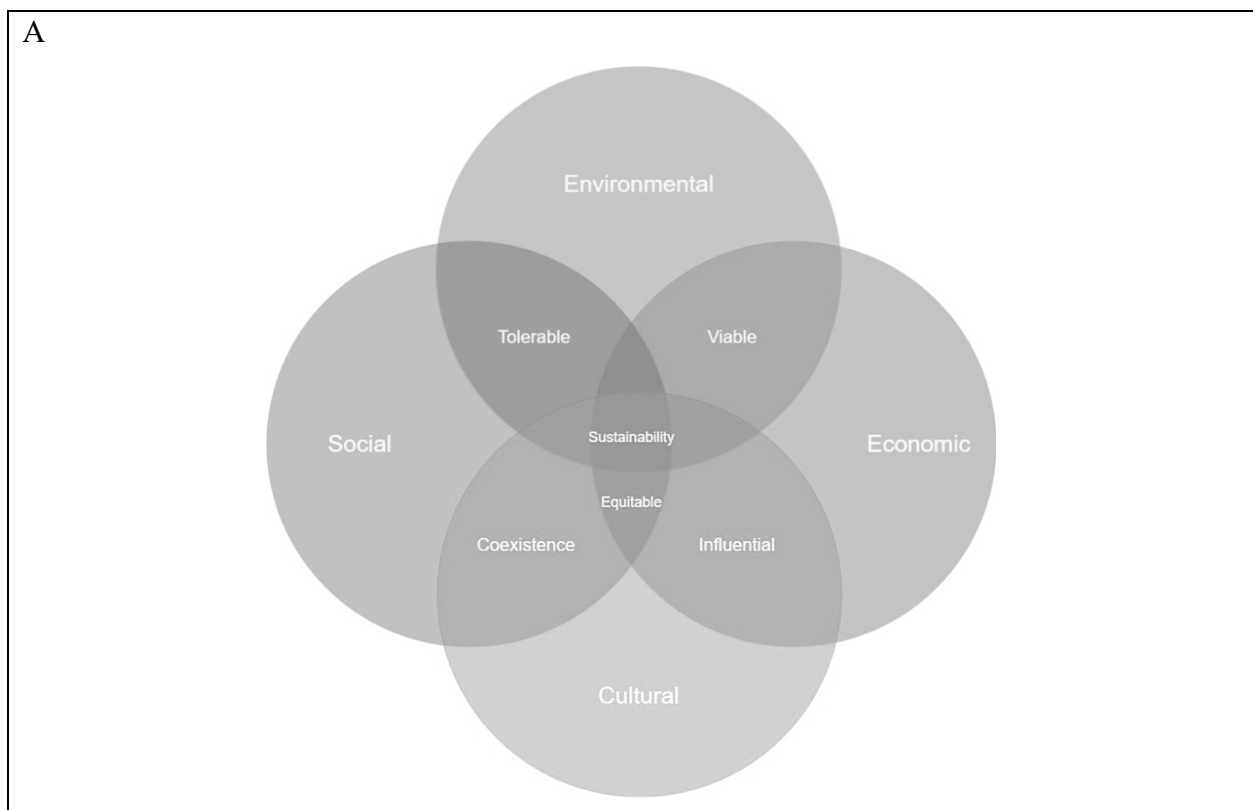
It is imperative to explore the perceptions of Saudi shoppers regarding sustainability not as an abstract concept, but in a way that addresses the socially negotiated influence of the culture, societal norms, religious beliefs, and economic patterns of the KSA. Furthermore, this study also explores how Saudi shoppers construct their perception of ethical practices based on local socio-cultural values, instead of focusing on a universal approach to ethical consumerism.

The use of social constructivism strengthens the research methodology adopted in this study. The ontological assumptions of this paradigm view reality as being both fluid and constructed, rather than either fixed or objective. Thus the collection of qualitative data, as in this study, makes it possible to obtain insights that are connected to the complexities of social realities. This approach strengthens this research and provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics involved by allowing a deep exploration of how social interactions, along with context-dependent discourses and in combination with cultural identity, shape practices and perceptions relating to sustainability. A comprehensive framework that acknowledged the connections between sustainability, culture, and consumer choices among Saudi citizens could be developed through the application of an interpretivist method to this research.

The “how” and “why” questions that are at the centre of this approach are addressed by this study, which places an emphasis on how individuals perceive and interpret sustainability within the context of their cultural environment. In particular, the “how” questions of the study investigate the ways in which Saudi citizens understand sustainability in relation to their cultural setting. People’s way of life is referred to as their culture, which may be understood through the collective beliefs, social norms, attitudes and opinions, and actions of the people within the cultural group (Hall, 1992). Social norms are formed when members of a community adopt behaviors based on their belief or assumption that others in the community act similarly (descriptive norms), and under social expectations about what should be done (injunctive norms) (Bicchieri, 2006; Bicchieri, 2017). This reinforces the establishment of cultural norms. Additionally, the process of knowledge creation is fostered through collaborative construction, which refers to the interactions and collaborations that take place among community members (Amineh and Asl, 2015). The importance of employing an interpretivist research philosophy is highlighted by the fact that there is a relationship that reinforces the connection between the actions of individuals and the development of culture.

Through the use of “why” questions, the causes behind Saudi society’s cultural tendencies, value priorities, conflicts, and motivations with relation to sustainability are investigated. Integrating an interpretivist paradigm here allows for a nuanced, in-depth analysis that is grounded in the lived experiences and cultural surroundings of Saudi citizens. This method contributes to the filling of knowledge gaps by investigating the difficulties in measuring the ways in which Saudi cultural narratives impact sustainable practices. This includes the examination of potential facilitators and barriers to sustainable consumer behaviour. Sustainable development encompasses three core concepts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social

sustainability. All three of these concepts must be represented during development to ensure long-term environmental, economic, and sustainable social equality. Additionally, three main depictions of the correlation between culture and the traditional principles of sustainability (environment, economic, and social) have been suggested, as exemplified below:



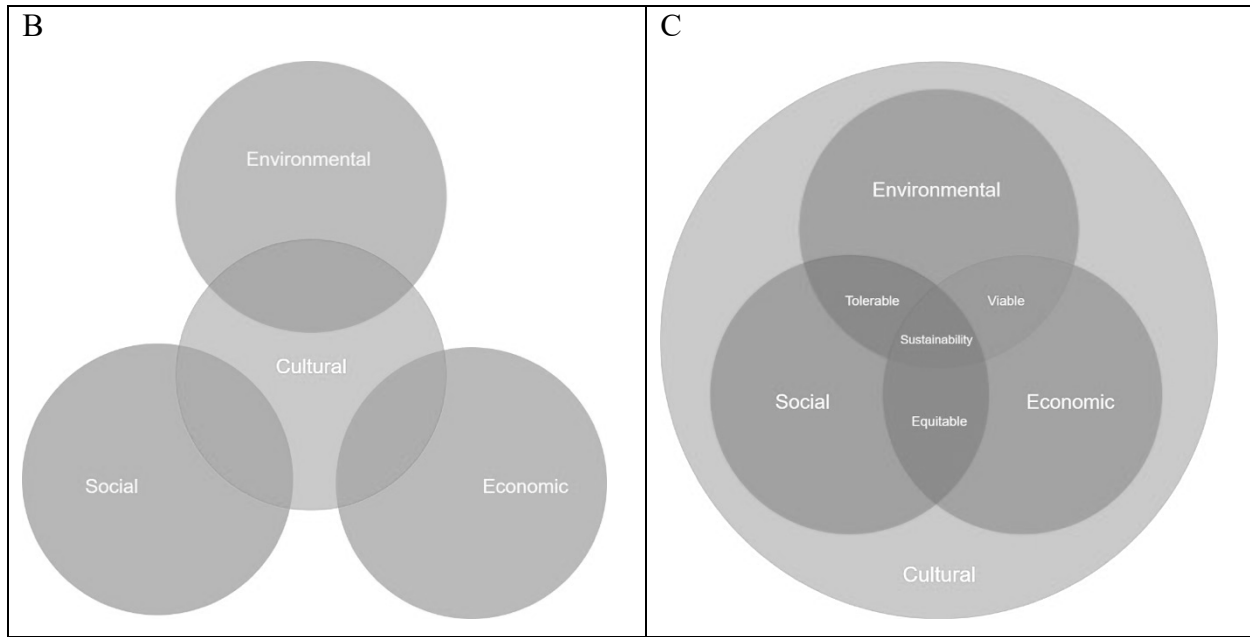


Figure 2. Conceptualizations of the influence of culture on sustainability. A) represents an updated version of the principles of sustainability (adapted from Brundtland (1987) and Wilk (2017)); B) shoes culture as a mediating principle between the traditional pillars of sustainability (adapted from Dessein et al. (2015)); and C) represents culture as the foundation of sustainable development (adapted from Dessein et al. (2015)).

The maintenance of an ecosystem that is both functional and productive must take into account the fulfilment of basic human needs and desires; it is therefore likely that it will require the placing of certain restrictions on economic growth in order to prioritize the protection of the environment (Purvis, Mao and Robinson, 2019). Consequently, a connection exists between culture and the practice of sustainability, because culture encompasses maintaining cultural beliefs and practices while taking into consideration the external changes that are required to achieve sustainable development (Redclift, 1993). Overall, social and cultural factors significantly shape our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. In response to this, social constructivism highlights the ways in which Saudi citizens collectively create and negotiate meanings in relation to issues of sustainability and cultural identity.

This research has a number of objectives, one of which is to identify recommendations that will help to encourage sustainability within Saudi Arabia. The interpretivist paradigm offers a way of exploring individuals' beliefs, motivations, and reasoning with regard to sustainability within a specific culture, with a particular emphasis on the subjective experiences that serve as a mediator of human behaviour. In order to identify the latent social and cultural dynamics that shape individual beliefs and behaviours, there is a need to challenge fixed meanings and put an emphasis instead on deconstructing public discourses (Edkins, 2007). By focusing on the significant role that cultural norms, social interactions, and language play in the development of those communal processes that facilitate sustainable practices, social constructivism serves to complement and add depth to the understanding of the topic. Incorporating social constructivism into practice theory enhances the research design and methodology by using a multifaceted approach to understand the complex and intricate social phenomena associated with sustainable practices.

3.2.2 Practice Theory Approach

Practice theory emphasizes the behaviours that people engage in, as opposed to the mental processes that an individual goes through (Galvin, 2017). Social theory, anthropology, and sociology are the schools of thought that describe society and culture from the perspectives of structure and individual agency. Therefore, the practice theory approach falls under these three aforementioned disciplines. Practice theory emerged in the late 20th century as a response to structuralist approaches in the social sciences. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, one of the key figures in this movement, developed the theory to bridge the gap between individual agency and social structure (Schatzki, 2018). The term "structuralism" refers to the belief that human behaviour and organizational systems are the result of essential universal structures, which describe the mental and cognitive structures that govern societies.

Practice theory places an emphasis on agency, which is the process by which an individual actively participates in the development and reproduction of the social world (Olohan, 2020). This approach assumes that social actors and structures are not independent entities, but rather, co-created. Specifically, people are not driven by their own free will or intentional actions, but by their capacity to act as agents (Olohan, 2021). However, the social structure can either restrict or encourage the way in which individuals work, and this in turn can affect what social actors are able to create, transform, and reproduce (Welch and Yates, 2018). From the theory perspective, data collection is qualitative, meaning that researchers gather information from social actors about how they perceive and influence their cultural setup and the action of community members (Holland and Lave, 2019). Practice theory typically employs a three-step research strategy (Pouliot, 2012) that includes:

1. Access to practices: There are two ways to gain access to practices, either directly, via methods such as interviews and observations, or indirectly, via textual analysis.
2. Reconstructing dispositional logic: The process of reconstructing dispositional logic involves breaking down, via qualitative analysis, the latent (or hidden) reasons and patterns that explain why certain behaviours are the result of particular qualities or tendencies.
3. Constructing the positional logic: This involves creating a framework that outlines the effects of contextual influences on behavioural outcomes.

Practice theory provides a framework for investigating related dispositions and gaining an understanding of how particular contexts influence behaviour. Perceptions of culture and the activities it pursues to adopt and promote sustainability are defined by the thoughts and actions of social actors.

Practice theory is especially relevant in terms of this research, as it provides a framework for the analysis of Saudi consumers' actions and attitudes towards sustainable behaviours. The practices of Saudi consumers are the focus of attention, rather than the more commonly captured internal thought processes. Through this more in-depth understanding of sustainability perceptions, it is possible to conduct a nuanced investigation into the ways in which Saudi individuals integrate those sustainability perceptions into their day-to-day lives. For these reasons, this research is able to investigate how cultural and social practices both shape and are shaped by sustainability initiatives. Additionally, this approach also makes it possible to examine how the actions of Saudi individuals both contribute to and reflect sustainability practices.

The practice theory approach enables the identification of the underlying variables that drive Saudi individuals' practices in relation to sustainability, while also offering insights into the practices that Saudi individuals engage in. The comprehensive understanding provided by practice theory allows for the construction of a suitable framework for examining the way contextual factors impact sustainable behaviours. This can be used to gain a nuanced appreciation of the relationship between cultural identity and sustainable consumption, and of the ways in which sustainability is embedded within Saudi cultural practices.

This study combines the practice theory approach with a multiple modernities perspective, which acknowledges that modernity manifests differently across different societies, as it is shaped by the religion, traditions, and customs of those societies. In Saudi Arabia, modernization intersects in many complex ways with religious beliefs, socio-cultural values, and institutional developments that are driven by globalization and the national vision of 2030. These contemporary economic transformations in Saudi Arabia collectively shape consumer behaviour and perceptions regarding sustainability.

The present study examines how sustainability is perceived, and the ways in which ethical consumption is influenced by religious principles, social expectations, and cultural values. Shopping is not just a matter of personal taste; it is linked with social practices, and thus embedded in the broader societal values of Saudi Arabia. These values intersect with global modernities, such as the influence of global retailers, sustainable practice adoption, ethical practices, and social status. These global forces initiate a complex negotiation with Saudi Arabian shopping practices such as whether shoppers reduce their usage of plastic bags, increase their preference for organic food, or promote sustainable fashion. While shoppers can view sustainability as a luxury (Sun *et al.*, 2021) or something that aligns with global needs and trends, from an Islamic point of view, it can also be perceived as an ethical practice. Rather than acting as passive consumers, Saudi shoppers actively engage in shaping and localizing the meaning of sustainability by integrating both traditional Islamic values and modern global influences into their consumption choices.

3.2.3 Countering Western Bias

Social science research has historically been dominated by Western perspectives, often focusing on economic production, industrialization, or market-driven behaviours, while underemphasizing consumption patterns and cultural practices in non-Western contexts. This Western-centric focus can result in findings that are not transferable to countries with distinct social, cultural, and economic environments, such as Saudi Arabia. Numerous studies highlight this pervasive issue, noting that research samples remain overwhelmingly dominated by populations from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) countries, which often deviate significantly from global norms across a spectrum of psychological and behavioral measures (Henrich et al., 2010). This bias makes a culturally grounded approach essential.

In recognition of this limitation, this study explicitly adopted a culturally grounded perspective to ensure that the research design, data collection, and analysis accurately reflected the local context and consumer behaviours, rather than merely replicating Western assumptions. This perspective involved an initial review of Saudi-specific literature on consumer culture, economic development (e.g., Vision 2030), and social norms (e.g., gender roles in household decision-making). This ensured that initial concepts like 'sustainability' or 'consumption' were framed broadly enough to capture the local meaning, rather than relying solely on definitions derived from Western sustainability reports.

To counter this bias, several methodological strategies were employed. Firstly, the study adopted Social Constructivism and Practice Theory as guiding philosophical frameworks. Social Constructivism emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality, recognizing that knowledge, meanings, and practices are shaped by cultural and social contexts (Adams, 2007). Practice Theory further focuses on everyday activities, routines, and behaviours (Gert Spaargaren et al., 2016), allowing the study to investigate sustainability practices as embedded in the lived experiences of Saudi consumers rather than as abstract economic behaviours. For instance, Practice Theory guided the investigation of specific, observable routine practices, such as food waste management (a common household practice involving large family meals), car maintenance and usage (given the reliance on private transport), and apparel purchasing routines (reflecting social demands for new clothes for frequent gatherings and festivals). Analyzing these practices allowed us to see how sustainability is embedded in established social norms and infrastructure, moving beyond individual attitudes.

Secondly, the sampling strategy was designed to capture the diversity of local experiences. Participants were drawn from multiple regions of Saudi Arabia, with a combination of purposive

and snowball sampling ensuring that individuals with different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds were included. Participants were strategically sampled from the different regions to account for regional variations in climate, access to infrastructure, and distinct local cultural histories. Purposive sampling ensured representation across key socio-demographic factors relevant to consumption, including household income categories (low, medium, high), educational attainment, and the age and gender of the primary household decision-maker. This diversity was crucial to explore, for example, the influence of extended family structures and the often communal nature of consumption decisions, which contrasts sharply with the nuclear family model often assumed in Western studies.

Additionally, the interview protocols and data collection methods were tailored to reflect local realities. Perey (2013) reported that semi-structured interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own terms, enabling nuanced insights into practices of mass consumption, environmental awareness, and sustainability. This approach contrasted with surveys or structured instruments often imported from Western studies, which might not capture the complexities of consumption behaviors in Saudi Arabia.

Similarly, during data analysis, thematic coding and iterative interpretation were conducted with reflexivity, constantly considering cultural norms and local social practices. By contextualizing findings within the Saudi environment, the study minimized the imposition of Western assumptions and provided a more authentic representation of local consumer behaviour. Collectively, these strategies ensured that the research not only produced culturally relevant findings but also addressed the limitations of applying Western-centric models to non-Western contexts.

3.3 Research Approach

Of the three standard research approaches available (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods), quantitative research seeks to produce findings that can be generalized to a larger population by systematically collecting and analysing numerical data in such a way as to quantify the patterns and relationships involved. This approach is particularly relevant for scholarly inquiries seeking to establish statistical correlations, trends, and causal relationships among research variables. By utilizing quantitative methodology, investigators are able to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena of interest, allowing them to draw fully informed conclusions from the data (Barroga and Matanguihan, 2022). Thus, the quantitative approach is essential in any academic settings where a numerical or statistically based inquiry is required.

The qualitative research method aims to understand and interpret the complexities of human behaviour, experiences, and social phenomena. It focuses on exploring the subjective perspectives and meanings that individuals attach to their own actions, interactions, and circumstances (Tomaszewski, Zarestky and Gonzalez, 2020). The qualitative approach brings rich insights into human motivations, emotions, and social dynamics, and is therefore valuable for exploring opinions and experiences that may be challenging to quantify.

The mixed-methods research design involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. This approach leverages the strengths of the other two research methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than would be achieved using either of the other methods on their own. The present research adopts a qualitative approach to explore Saudi citizens' understanding of sustainability and its impact on their culture and purchasing decisions

3.3.1 Rational for Adopting Qualitative Research

This study adopts a qualitative design because of the range of the collected data involved, which includes context-specific data, numeric and non-numeric data, and open-ended questions. The method emphasizes understanding phenomena within the natural context in which they occur. This aim is consistent with that of the present study, in which, in order to answer the research questions, the researcher seeks to gain an understanding of the ways in which social, cultural, and environmental factors influence Saudi Arabia's sustainability and consumption. The study is located within the specific context of Saudi Arabia, and the qualitative design is ideal for capturing cultural and religious influences on sustainability (Tomaszewski, Zarestky and Gonzalez, 2020). The qualitative approach is more flexible than the quantitative approach, as it allows the researcher to gather both narrative and quantitative data. This combination of data allows the researcher to collect rich, in-depth information directly from participants. For this reason, the research makes use of the qualitative methodology, as it seeks to collect information that is both comprehensive and contextual in nature, in order to gain an understanding of how Saudi culture and behaviour may influence sustainable consumption.

In the present study, quantitative research would have involved the utilization of numerical data for the purpose of measuring and quantifying various factors relating to sustainability, culture, and consumer choice among Saudi citizens. However, the decision not to use quantitative research is deliberate. The study opts for a qualitative approach due to its exploratory nature, which seeks to get to grips with complex phenomena that lack foundational insights, existing theories, or frameworks. Qualitative research methods allow investigators to explore complicated phenomena in depth, and reveal underlying patterns and meanings that might not be readily evident using quantitative approaches. When conducting exploratory research, the primary objectives are to

acquire basic knowledge of a phenomena, to identify all the relevant factors, and to propose hypotheses for further investigation. Qualitative research allows for the development of a thorough understanding of the viewpoints and experiences of the stakeholders of interest, which is especially useful when exploring new or under-researched areas within a field of interest. The goal is often to identify trends, come up with insights, and lay the groundwork for further, potentially more structured research. Additionally, the absence of any validated constraints for measurement in this context and the subtle and descriptive nature of the research variables further justify the use of a qualitative methodology in this study.

3.4 Data Collection Method

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face in order to collect the qualitative data necessary for the investigation of social and cultural influences on the perspectives of Saudi consumers towards sustainable and ethical practices. Between 3 August 2023 and 3 December 2023, I undertook two forms of data collection: semi-structured personal interviews and “Shop along” intercept interviews. The participants included men and women, aged 18 and over, and resident in the eastern, western, northern, southern, or central regions of Saudi Arabia. The goal of the interviews was to gain a new understanding of the ways in which culture, ethnicity, and religious beliefs influence the decisions made by individuals and communities in relation to sustainability (Einola and Alvesson, 2020). Due to the complexity of the topics of interest, I used semi-structured interviews, to create the option for multiple follow-up inquiries (Adams, 2015). This allowed for an in-depth collection of information regarding the ways in which Islam and Saudi cultural practices influence the purchasing and decision-making habits of local consumers.

The use of both semi-structured interviews and “Shop along” sessions allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the social and cultural factors that influence consumer behaviour in Saudi

Arabia than might otherwise have been achieved. In-depth inquiries into individual perspectives and attitudes within a larger social group in relation to an under-examined phenomenon can be achieved through the use of semi-structured interviews (Adams, 2015). The “Shop along” interviews provided additional valuable information regarding consumer behaviour in a realistic shopping environment. This information included real-time factors that influence shoppers’ choices and awareness of ethical practices. In addressing a question as complex as the influence of social and cultural factors on sustainability practices, the collection of semi-structured interviews and “Shop along” sessions provided the robust data necessary for interpretivist philosophy and practice theory approaches.

3.4.1 Triangulation

To ensure the credibility and depth of this qualitative study, two forms of triangulation were employed: methodological triangulation and theoretical triangulation. The methodological triangulation involved the use of two distinct data collection methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews and “Shop along” observations. Combining these methods allowed for the validation and enrichment of the findings, by capturing both what the participants said and how they behaved in real-time consumption settings. This approach helped to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the sustainable and ethical consumption practices involved. Theoretical triangulation was incorporated through the use of two distinct but complementary frameworks: Multiple Modernities Theory and Practice Theory (PT). These frameworks offered multiple lenses through which to interpret the participants’ views and behaviours, enabling a rich and nuanced understanding of how socio-cultural influences shape consumer attitudes. The integration of these two forms of triangulation strengthened the trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and analytical rigour of the study, allowing for robust and contextually grounded conclusions.

Additionally, maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) was achieved by recruiting a demographically and geographically diverse group of 30 participants, varying in age, gender, education, and income levels, from across Saudi Arabia's five regions (Central, Eastern, Western, Northern, and Southern). This diversity allowed for the exploration of differing perspectives on sustainability and ethical practices across a range of social and cultural contexts.

3.5 Sampling Method

3.5.1 Study Population

The study population for this ethnographic study consisted of individuals living and residing in Saudi Arabia. It included residents from across the Kingdom's northern, southern, eastern, western, and central regions. The target population for the study was Saudi nationals who had been resident in the country for a minimum of five years. Identifying a target population also involves establishing exclusion criteria to refine the data sample. Individuals who did not match the residence requirement, as well as those who were not nationals of Saudi Arabia, were not considered for the study. These exclusion criteria guaranteed that the sample adequately reflected the Saudi population of interest. The minimum residency criterion ensured that the participants understood the country's culture and development context (Campbell *et al.*, 2020). This meant that they had had adequate time and experience within Saudi culture to provide relevant insights into how the consumption behaviour of Saudi individuals is impacted by cultural identity. Such knowledge was critical for ensuring the reliability of the research findings. The diversity of the participants in terms of social, cultural, and economic background was prioritized so as to capture a broad range of perspectives.

3.5.2 Selection of Participants

Recruitment of participants was based on their accessibility to the researcher, their familiarity with the national situation, and their knowledge of the research topic (Romero, Kwan and Suchman, 2019). Participants were asked to provide a brief background in relation to the research topic as a pre-screening method. Pre-screening techniques are used to select participants who meet the research requirements for a study and are representative of the study's target population. This selection procedure enhances the validity and reliability of research findings by ensuring that the data obtained are relevant and representative of the larger population of interest (Arndt *et al.*, 2022). Thus, this strategy helped enhance the cost-effectiveness of the data collection process, leading to a high response rate. Overall, this approach helped for gathering insights from diverse individuals who could provide a comprehensive range of perspectives on the research questions.

3.5.3 Sampling Technique

Snowball sampling entails asking original interview participants to recommend other possible participants from the members of their own networks and communities. The snowball sampling strategy can increase both the diversity and the number of interview participants, thereby allowing for a wider variety of viewpoints and experiences to be represented. For this study, at least two participants from each region of Saudi Arabia were selected for the snowball sampling, in order to create a geographically balanced sample. To be eligible for participation, all respondents needed to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Be Saudi nationals living in Saudi Arabia for at least five years.
- Be over the age of 18;
- Be involved in personal or household purchasing decisions; and

- Have a basic awareness of sustainability-related issues or practices (e.g., recycling, reduced plastic use, or organic product consumption).

The exclusion criteria covered:

- Individuals under the age of 18;
- Temporary Saudi visitors; and

Individuals unwilling or unable to engage in an interview or provide informed consent.

The inclusion criteria effectively excluded non-Saudis and individuals with less than five years of residency in Saudi Arabia. This criterion ensured that participants had lived in the country long enough to have directly experienced the onset of Vision 2030 and the significant cultural and social transformations that followed. This limitation may have affected the generalisability of the study findings, as expatriates represent a substantial portion of consumers in the Saudi market and may hold different cultural perspectives, levels of sustainability awareness, and purchasing behaviours. By focusing on Saudis only, the research primarily captures local perspectives, potentially overlooking the influence of expatriate consumer patterns on the broader sustainability and consumption landscape in Saudi Arabia.

Despite this limitation, the combination of convenience and purposive sampling, alongside the inclusion and exclusion criteria, provided a diverse and geographically balanced sample that strengthened the depth and relevance of the data collected. However, the exclusion of expatriates should still be acknowledged when interpreting the findings, particularly regarding their applicability to the wider consumer population in Saudi Arabia.

3.5.4 Interview Protocols

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable data collection approach based on their compatibility with the interpretivist paradigm and the practice theory approach. The semi-structured interview is a method that systematically combines a structured approach (i.e. predefined questions) with more flexible methods (i.e. real-time follow-up queries to gather more in-depth information and insights). It is designed to elicit information from participants that is both comprehensive and nuanced. This method places a high importance on capturing the experiences and viewpoints of individuals, as this is essential when investigating complex phenomena such as the influence of culture, religion, and sustainability on consumer behaviour. Belina (2023) states that semi-structured interviews provide a number of benefits that are congruent with the objectives of this research, including the following:

1. The opportunity for the interviewer to probe for additional information on emerging themes and so increase the diversity of the experiences and points of view included in the data collection.
2. The ability for the interviewer to seek clarification on ambiguous or incomplete responses, to ensure that the data obtained is correct and accurately reflects the participants' genuine thoughts and experiences. This increases the reliability and validity of the data.
3. The collection of data that are more detailed and more comprehensive than can be achieved through other data collection methods that limit respondents to a predetermined set of options (e.g. surveys).
4. Access to structured documentation through the recording of the interviews. This provides an accurate account of the data for subsequent analysis.

The semi-structured interview method involves developing an interview guide, which acts as a structured framework and establishes an outline of topics and questions of interest, set out in a tentative order (Adams, 2015). The interview guide typically arranges the predetermined questions in accordance with the most important areas of interest. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview method allows for modification or the inclusion of additional questions based on emerging themes as the interview develops. As a result, the approach encourages participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021), allowing them to develop their responses in more detail. Thus, semi-structured interviews strike a balance between structure and spontaneity, enabling researchers to explore unexpected avenues and expand their understanding of the subject matter.

In a semi-structured interview, the questions are often open-ended. The intention behind this is to encourage participants to share their views and experiences in their own words within the context of the interview. Open-ended questions invite the interviewees to respond with complex replies, and thus potentially disclose insights that the researcher has not previously anticipated (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021). An example of the process is as follows: the researcher begins with a broad inquiry about an interviewee's experience regarding the phenomena of interest, and allows the respondent to reply. The researcher has the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to gain clarification, reveal additional layers about the topic of interest, or provide additional context. While the semi-structured interview method is characterized by its dynamic nature, the use of a structured interview guide serves to maintain rigour. The prepared questions ensure consistency across the interviews, while the follow-up questions still allow for the investigation of areas of unanticipated relevance. This strategy is especially relevant to this

research, as it allows for the exploration of complicated, subjective experiences and perceptions that are highly complex.

The process of developing the interview questions closely reflected the objectives of the study, as well as the contextual relevance of the social environment. The procedure started with a comprehensive review of the existing literature, which served as the basis for the development of the questions. The inclusion of insights from existing research and theoretical frameworks ensured that the questions were pertinent and comprehensive. The synthesis of the literature contextualized the present research within the broader landscape of sustainable consumption scholarship (Naz, Gulab and Aslam, 2022). By highlighting significant themes and identifying gaps, the literature review served as a guide for the development of questions that addressed these gaps, and that could also be adapted to encompass a more diverse demographic or to fit a distinct societal context (Roberts, 2020).

3.5.5 Pilot Testing

The research methodology was further strengthened by incorporating a pilot study, a technique endorsed by Malmqvist *et al.* (2019). This was to ensure that the research design would offer profound insights into sustainable consumption within the Saudi Arabian context. The pilot study effectively validated and refined the interview questions, while providing an opportunity to receive feedback on the interview questions and enhance their alignment with the objectives of the research. The symbiotic interplay between the literature review findings and the pilot study was essential in shaping and fine-tuning the interview questions, ensuring their relevance, depth, and congruence with the theoretical underpinnings of the research. The detailed interview approach employed enhanced the focus and consistency of the research, and ultimately fostered a strong

exploration of the intricate relationships between sustainability, culture, and consumer choices among Saudis.

3.5.6 Sample Size

I conducted a total of 30 semi-structured interviews with Saudi consumers. The number of interviews was determined by applying the principle of data saturation, which is an important component of qualitative analysis (Mwita, 2022). Being guided by the data saturation principle in interview-based research ensures that the data obtained are sufficiently complete to answer the research questions in an efficient manner. Interview-based research is said to have reached data saturation when the information obtained from the interviews stops providing new insights or themes. This indicates that subsequent interviews are unlikely to produce results that are materially different from the interviews already conducted. After 27 participants had been interviewed, the data began to display consistent findings, with little to no new information emerging. The increasing repetition of findings with minimal new information indicated that the data was sufficiently comprehensive to capture the opinions, perspectives, and experiences of Saudi individuals. This study relied on thematic saturation, meaning saturation was judged based on the point at which no new themes or meaningful insights were emerging. To systematically ascertain data saturation, data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection, allowing emerging codes and themes to be identified after each interview. Reflective memos and field notes were maintained to track recurring patterns, and the final three interviews (28–30) were assessed specifically to confirm that no new significant insights were arising. The decision was guided by the stability of the data rather than by a predetermined sample size.

Data saturation supports the robustness and reliability of findings and verifies that the process of data gathering has properly examined the topic of interest. Thus, the achievement of

data saturation in this study lends further confidence to the findings, indicating they are reflective of the range of perspectives within the sample. It also means that the results would not be overly impacted by the continuation of data collection, and that further interviews would have been redundant.

A multi-faceted strategy was employed to approach and engage participants. Leveraging the researcher's personal and professional networks, initial contact was made through email invitations, which extended a warm and personalized request for the recipient's involvement. The email communication included a clear and concise overview of the objectives of the study, and emphasized the valuable insights that their perspective could contribute to the project. An emphasis was placed on a commitment to confidentiality and ethical considerations, in order to guarantee the comfort of the participants. Subsequent follow-ups were administered, tailored to each participant's preferred communication mode, to facilitate seamless engagement and maintain their interest.

I conducted the interviews face-to-face in accessible locations that were conducive to open and in-depth conversations. These included cafes, libraries, and personal offices. Interviews ranged from 30 to 50 minutes, with the respondents determining the pace of the interviews. This allowed for flexibility, and ensured that each participant had ample time to share their own views comprehensively.

3.5.7 Demographic Overview of the Study Participants

The study comprised 30 participants, consisting of 22 men (73.3%) and 8 women (26.7%). The participants' ages varied, with the largest group (53.3%, n=16) aged between 31 and 40. This was followed by the group aged between 21 and 30 (33.3%, n=10), and those older than 40 (13.3%, n=4). Participants also came from different regions of Saudi Arabia. The Central Region was most

strongly represented, with 33.3% (n=10) of the participants, while the Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western Regions each accounted for 16.7% (n=5) of the total.

Regarding income levels, the majority of participants (66.7%, n=20) fell into the middle-income category, while 23.3% (n=7) had a high income, and 10.0% (n=3) were classified as low income. In terms of education, most participants had a Bachelor's degree (43.3%, n=13) or a Master's degree (33.3%, n=10). A smaller proportion had a high school education (13.3%, n=4), and 10.0% (n=3) held a diploma.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of the participants

| Demographic Characteristics | | N | % |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----|-------|
| Gender | Female | 8 | 26.7% |
| | Male | 22 | 73.3% |
| Age | 21–30 years | 10 | 33.3% |
| | 31–40 years | 16 | 53.3% |
| | Older than 40 years | 4 | 13.3% |
| Region | Central Region | 10 | 33.3% |
| | Eastern Region | 5 | 16.7% |
| | Northern Region | 5 | 16.7% |
| | Southern Region | 5 | 16.7% |
| | Western Region | 5 | 16.7% |
| Income level | Low | 3 | 10.0% |
| | Middle | 20 | 66.7% |
| | High | 7 | 23.3% |
| Educational level | High School | 4 | 13.3% |
| | Diploma | 3 | 10.0% |
| | Bachelor's degree | 13 | 43.3% |
| | Master's Degree | 10 | 33.3% |

3.5.8 “Shop Along” Interviews

A “Shop along” is a qualitative research approach that combines aspects of both in-depth interviews and participant observation, resulting in detailed, nuanced, and immersive data (Kinney, 2017). Specifically, a “Shop along” involves accompanying a participant during their shopping experience to gain insights into how they make their purchase decisions, interact with the retail environment, and engage with items. A “Shop along” interview has the capacity to capture the complexity of consumer behaviour in a realistic context, allowing researchers to observe and document decision-making processes as they occur. This is in contrast to traditional interviews which rely on the participants’ retrospective insights and lack an immediate real-world context. The “Shop along” approach was crucial for this research, as it allowed the investigator to observe and interact with shoppers in real-life contexts, providing rich and nuanced data that might not have been captured through the semi-structured interviews alone.

The “Shop-along” interview technique provided distinct advantages over traditional semi-structured interviews by allowing the researcher to observe consumer behaviours in real time, capturing spontaneous decisions, immediate reactions, and interactions with the retail environment. Unlike conventional interviews, which rely on participants’ retrospective accounts, this method enabled the study to examine how factors such as product placement, promotions, packaging, and store layout influenced purchasing choices, offering insights that participants might not consciously recall or articulate (Chandorkar, 2015). Additionally, Shop-along interviews facilitated observation of social and cultural influences during shopping trips, including interactions with family members, peers, or other shoppers, allowing the researcher to explore how cultural norms, personal values, and sustainability-related beliefs shaped buying behaviour in situ. The method’s conversational and interactive nature also enabled on-the-spot questioning,

providing clarification, probing motivations, and understanding situational factors (Wallace, 2024). While formal thematic analysis was applied only to the semi-structured interviews, the supportive observational data from Shop-along interviews enriched contextual understanding, validated findings, and offered a more nuanced, realistic, and culturally grounded perspective of Saudi consumers' sustainable consumption behaviours than traditional interviews alone.

Real-time observation provides useful insights into the ways in which different elements (for example, shop layout, product placement, and promotional materials) impact the choices that consumers make within a store (Kinney, 2017). Walking interviews also provide a unique opportunity to observe participants interacting with other members of their community, and thus offer insights into the social and cultural factors associated with purchasing behaviour (Kinney, 2017). Researchers are able to see how cultural norms and personal preferences affect the interactions that participants have with items and retail settings. The “Shop along” technique offered the potential to provide more information on the ways in which cultural values that are associated with sustainability influence the decisions and behaviours of consumers in relation to specific buying tendencies. During the “Shop alongs”, the researcher engaged participants by conducting on-the-spot interviews. They asked participants in-depth questions that investigated their immediate thoughts and feelings. In conjunction with the direction observations, this dynamic interaction offered a deep understanding of the driving forces behind the actions of the participants.

For the purpose of gaining further insight into consumer behaviour and attitudes regarding environmentally friendly products, I conducted an additional 10 “Shop along” intercept interviews at three major supermarkets (Alothaim, Panda, and Carrefour), to complement the semi-structured in-person interviews. Using the intercept survey method (Flint *et al.*, 2016), I identified potential respondents, introduced myself and my research to shoppers, and requested their participation in

my project. With their consent, I accompanied the participants during their shopping trips. This allowed me to engage in real-time conversations about their views on environmentally friendly products, and to observe their purchasing decisions and preferences regarding sustainability.

These participants were distinct from those involved in the semi-structured interviews. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure diversity in age, gender, and shopping frequency, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of environmentally conscious buying patterns across consumer segments. Data collection during the “Shop along” involved audio recording (with participant consent) and detailed field notes to capture spontaneous remarks and contextual observations. Some logistical challenges arose, such as gaining permission in busy retail environments and addressing participants’ time constraints. These were mitigated through clear communication, flexible scheduling, and concise interaction strategies to ensure meaningful yet respectful engagement.

While 10 “shop along” interviews were conducted alongside the primary data collection, formal thematic analysis was applied only to the 30 semi-structured interviews. The “shop along” served a complementary role, enriching the contextual understanding of consumer behaviour in real-world settings. These observational insights were used to inform interpretation, identify emerging patterns, and validate findings, but were not coded as standalone qualitative data due to their less structured format and smaller sample.

3.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves systematically categorizing the data, and examining the relationships that exist between these categories in order to extract meaningful insights. Specifically, I conducted a thematic analysis on the collected data. This method is used to identify,

assess, and report on patterns, or themes, within qualitative data, and allows for the consideration of multiple different elements relating to the topic of interest (Braun and Clark, 2006). Several studies that are concerned with conservation and sustainability have made use of thematic analysis (for examples, see Yang *et al.*, 2020; Georgousis *et al.*, 2021; Sewak *et al.*, 2021). While thematic analysis incorporates the quantitative measure of frequency of codes, the overarching goal is to ascertain the salience and underlying meaning of the dataset (Braun and Clark, 2006; Lochmiller, 2021). Thus the researcher takes an active role in identifying the patterns and themes that are present within the collected data. This allows the researcher to apply those theoretical paradigms that are deemed to be the most appropriate for the research and topic of interest (Braun and Clark, 2006).

When conducting thematic analysis, it is essential to identify themes and patterns across an entire data set. This contrasts to the traditional approach of seeking out themes within a single data item (e.g. an individual interview). Thematic analysis has also been recognized as a constructionist method, as it allows for an assessment of how experiences, meanings, and realities are affected by societal discourses (Lochmiller, 2021). The use of thematic analysis allows the researcher to identify and understand the subjective realities of the research participants, and in turn, to assess how these realities relate to the behavioural choices of these individuals (Riger and Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). All these factors make thematic analysis an appropriate technique for understanding Saudi people's motivations, thoughts, and reasoning regarding sustainability and culture from the perspective of a social constructivist research philosophy. I structured my thematic analysis using the comprehensive framework provided by Lochmiller's (2021) five-step analysis model. The five-steps consist of:

1. Familiarization: becoming immersed in the data through reading and re-reading transcripts, notes, and other qualitative data sources to gain deep understanding.
2. Initial coding: systematically identifying and labelling interesting features of the data. The coding process involves assigning short phrases or words to segments of data that highlight important features or represent significant phenomena.
3. Theme searching: examining the codes to identify the patterns among them, and grouping related codes into broader themes. These initial themes represent coherent and meaningful patterns that address the research question.
4. Theme reviewing: re-examining the themes to refine them, and ensuring that they accurately represent the data. This may involve splitting, combining, or discarding themes, with the aim of creating a coherent thematic map that illustrates the relationships among the themes.
5. Defining and naming themes: writing detailed analyses that clearly define the scope and focus of each theme. This step ensures that each theme tells a distinct part of the overall story of the data.

Lochmiller's (2021) five-step method of thematic analysis provides a holistic approach that guides the qualitative analysis from data immersion to final reporting of the findings in a coherent and compelling manner. Yet although Lochmiller (2021) provides a five-step methodology, there is also a need to include the reasoning followed during the process, and specifically during the theme identification (Braun and Clark, 2006). While rigid rules can hamper theme identification, there is still a need to provide detailed and transparent information about how the research has applied thematic analysis, in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings (Braun and

Clark, 2006). This includes providing insights into the methodology used by the researcher to determine the significance and prevalence of a theme.

Theme identification does not require purely quantifiable measures; rather, it is more important to measure the theme in terms of the patterns that are associated with the research questions. Since this data was collected with the research questions in mind, my thematic analysis followed an inductive approach. This entails identifying a research question, designing the data collection tools (i.e. the semi-structured interviews and “Shop alongs”), and coding the data without the use of a pre-existing coding frame (Braun and Clark, 2006). This allowed for the themes to emerge from the collected data, rather than using previously determined potential themes to assess the data. The presentation of the findings will use tables and text, and the discussion of the results will quote excerpts from the interviews to ensure that it is objective, and reflects the views and opinions of the sampled participants.

The combination of data from interviews and “Shop alongs” offers a comprehensive approach for addressing this study’s research questions. The interviews provided in-depth qualitative data relating to the personal perceptions and experiences of the participants, including insights into how their motivations and reasonings related to culture and sustainable behaviours. The “Shop alongs” provided supplementary insights, capturing observational data within specific real-world contexts related to sustainable consumption behaviours. The “Shop along” data added to the depth of the examination into how Saudi consumers’ stated beliefs and motivations translate into their sustainability purchasing behaviours. By combining data from interviews and “Shop alongs”, this research was able to increase the depth of its insights into the relationships between sustainability, culture, and consumer choices among Saudis, and thus offer a robust basis for addressing the research questions and drawing meaningful conclusions.

3.6.1 Steps Adopted for the Thematic Analysis

The details of the five-step model of thematic analysis followed in this research are set out below:

3.6.1.1 Familiarization with the data

After collecting the interview responses, the researcher transcribed the interviews in the Arabic language. Being proficient in Arabic, the researcher read all the transcriptions to ensure that they had been accurately transcribed. After formatting and the correction of any grammatical errors in the transcriptions, the researcher immersed himself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts, notes, and textual content. The purpose of reading the interview transcriptions was to ensure that they were error free, to get an overall idea of what was said, and to note any important observations. The goal here was to become deeply familiar with the data before proceeding to the code identification.

3.6.1.2 Generating the initial codes

The researcher systematically identified and labelled the key features of the data that were relevant to the research questions. A total of 56 initial codes emerged during the coding process for the 30 interviews. These codes were translated into English by the researcher. The motive behind the coding was to assign short labels or codes to any meaningful data segments. These codes were then refined, with some being merged to enhance clarity and reduce redundancy. This resulted in a final set of 42 compact codes.

Table 4 shows the list of the 42 codes that were identified from the 56 sub codes, and their frequency.

Table 4. Code generation from the sub codes

| S.no | Sub codes | Codes | Frequency |
|------|---|--|-----------|
| 1 | Understanding sustainability | Awareness regarding sustainability concept | 20 |
| 2 | Product lifespan | Continuity and durability | 8 |
| 3 | Long-term impact of sustainability | | |
| 4 | Climate change | Environmental dimension of sustainability | 4 |
| 5 | Resource conservation | | |
| 6 | Pollution reduction | | |
| 7 | Cost-benefit analysis | Economic dimension of sustainability | 4 |
| 8 | Green economy | | |
| 9 | Community development | Social dimension of sustainability | 22 |
| 10 | Ethical consumerism | | |
| 11 | Social equity | | |
| 12 | Media influence | Source of participants' perceptions of sustainability | 4 |
| 13 | Education influence | | |
| 14 | Myths about sustainability | Misconceptions and personal interpretations | 5 |
| 15 | Organic products | Eco-friendly products | 8 |
| 16 | Biodegradable products | | |
| 17 | Packaging sustainable products | | |
| 18 | Recycling of products in household and industry | Recycling | 22 |
| 19 | Second-hand market | Reusing | 26 |
| 20 | Perceived quality of sustainable goods | Quality | 22 |
| 21 | Price comparison with non-sustainable products | Price | 14 |
| 22 | Functional sustainability | Need and Use | 8 |
| 23 | Consumer needs | | |
| 24 | Brand suitability claims | Brand and reputation (reviews and opinions) | 6 |
| 25 | Carbon footprint reduction | Environmental friendliness | 6 |
| 26 | Eco certifications | | |
| 27 | Availability of sustainable goods | Searching for sustainable products | 30 |
| 28 | Health benefits | The importance of sustainable products and motives for purchasing them | 28 |
| 29 | Financial savings | | |
| 30 | Religious teaching | Religious and ethical motivation for purchasing sustainable products | 9 |

| | | | |
|----|--|--|----|
| 31 | Ethical obligations | | |
| 32 | Peer influence on environmental motivation | Environmental motivation | 29 |
| 33 | Unavailability of sustainable products | Unavailability of sustainable products | 29 |
| 34 | Lack of awareness | Lack of awareness of the importance of sustainable products | 14 |
| 35 | Sustainable products are expensive | Increase in the prices of sustainable products | 4 |
| 36 | Religious sustainability views | The difference between Islamic values and cultural influences | 15 |
| 37 | Cultural consumption patterns | | |
| 38 | Distinguishing between fixed religious values and changing cultural practices | Distinguishing between fixed religious values and changing cultural practices | 9 |
| 39 | Entanglement between religion and culture | Entanglement between religion and culture | 2 |
| 40 | Cultural consumption patterns | Cultural consumption patterns | 3 |
| 41 | Customs and traditions with religion | Intersection of customs and traditions with religion | 13 |
| 42 | Cultural influences on consumer behaviour | Cultural influences on consumer behaviour | 11 |
| 43 | Social image | Social image | 30 |
| 44 | The impact of media and social media | The impact of media and social media | 30 |
| 45 | Not being extravagant | Not being extravagant | 2 |
| 46 | Cleanliness and environmental conservation | Cleanliness and environmental conservation | 11 |
| 47 | Sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030 | Knowledge of the relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030 | 12 |
| 48 | Conserving the environment as per sustainability goals in Saudi Vision 2030 | Conserving the environment as per sustainability goals in Saudi Vision 2030 | 11 |
| 49 | Moving towards renewable energy sources | Moving towards renewable energy sources | 21 |
| 50 | Economic Diversification | Economic Diversification | 18 |
| 51 | The extent to which the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 for sustainability have been achieved | The extent to which the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 for sustainability have been achieved | 24 |
| 52 | Future behaviour of participants | Future behaviour of participants | 17 |
| 53 | The critical role of price and quality | The critical role of price and quality | 24 |

| | | | |
|----|---|--|----|
| 54 | Low awareness of the importance of sustainability | Low awareness of the importance of sustainability | 17 |
| 55 | Corporate responsibility | Corporate responsibility in promoting sustainability | 8 |
| 56 | Business support | Business support in promoting sustainability | 9 |

3.6.1.3 Searching for themes

Initially, 56 codes were generated during open coding and later refined to 42 after merging overlapping or less relevant codes. The researcher merged recurring patterns within the codes and highlighted any that were closely related. These codes became the categories for identifying the themes. Some themes were merged directly, while others were slightly adjusted before merging. As a result of this process, a total of 11 sub-themes were identified, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Development of the sub themes from the codes

| S.no | Sub Themes | Codes |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Understanding sustainability | Awareness regarding sustainability concept |
| 2 | Environmental sustainability awareness | Environmental motivation |
| | | Environmental friendliness |
| | | Business support in promoting sustainability |
| | | Environmental dimension of sustainability |
| | | Recycling |
| 3 | Economic and social considerations | Economic dimension of sustainability |
| | | Social dimension of sustainability |
| | | Conserving the environment as per sustainability goals in Saudi Vision 2030 |
| | | Moving towards renewable energy sources |
| | | Economic Diversification |
| | | Social Image |
| 4 | Factors influencing purchases | Eco-friendly products |
| | | Reusing |
| | | Quality |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | | Price |
| | | The importance of sustainable products and motives for purchasing them |
| 5 | Ethical and religious influences | Religious and ethical motivation for purchasing sustainable products |
| | | Cleanliness and environmental conservation |
| 6 | Purchasing sustainable products | Continuity and durability |
| | | Increase in the prices of sustainable products |
| 7 | Cultural and religious intersection | Source of participants' perceptions of sustainability |
| | | The difference between Islamic values and cultural influences |
| | | Entanglement between religion and culture |
| 8 | Cultural practices and consumption | Misconceptions and personal interpretations |
| | | Cultural influences on consumer behaviour |
| | | Need and use |
| | | The critical role of price and quality |
| | | Cultural consumption patterns |
| 9 | Religious and environmental alignment | Distinguishing between fixed religious values and changing cultural practices |
| | | Intersection of customs and traditions with religion |
| 10 | Market barriers and product availability | Searching for sustainable products |
| | | Unavailability of sustainable products |
| | | Lack of awareness of the importance of sustainable products |
| | | Future behaviour of participants |
| | | Low awareness of the importance of sustainability |
| | | The extent to which the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 for sustainability have been achieved |
| 11 | Social awareness and media impact | Brand and reputation (reviews and opinions) |
| | | The impact of media and social media |
| | | Not being extravagant |
| | | Knowledge of the relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030 |
| | | Corporate responsibility in promoting sustainability |

3.6.1.4 Reviewing the themes

The 11 sub themes were reviewed again for refinement and to ensure coherence and consistency. The themes were checked repeatedly to ensure the accuracy of the represented data. The researcher merged a number of the sub themes to come up with a final total of seven (07) themes. For example, the sub themes environmental sustainability awareness and understanding sustainability were merged into the single theme, understanding sustainability; economic and social considerations and factors influencing purchases were merged into a theme relating to the factors affecting purchasing decisions; and cultural and religious intersection and religious and environmental alignment were merged into a single theme about the relationship between Islamic values and sustainability. The main themes and sub themes are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Main themes and sub themes

| Main Themes | Sub themes |
|--|--|
| Theme 1: Understanding sustainability | Understanding sustainability |
| | Environmental sustainability awareness |
| Theme 2: Perceptions regarding sustainable consumption | Purchasing sustainable products |
| Theme 3: Factors affecting purchasing decisions from the participants' perspective | Economic and social considerations |
| | Factors influencing purchases |
| Theme 4: Islamic values, cultural influences, ethical principles, and their relationship to consumer behaviour | Ethical and religious influences |
| | Cultural practices and consumption |
| Theme 5: The relationship between Islamic values and sustainability | Cultural and religious intersection |
| | Religious and environmental alignment |
| Theme 6: The relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030 | Social awareness and media impact |
| Theme 7: Future outlook of sustainability practices and barriers to adoption | Market barriers and product availability |

3.6.1.5 Defining and naming the themes:

For the sake of clarity, the main themes were renamed, and a fuller understanding of them was developed to provide a clear narrative for each of the research questions. The revised main themes are set out below:

Theme 1: Conceptualizing Sustainability

Theme 2: Perceptions Regarding Sustainable Consumption

Theme 3: Factors Affecting Purchasing Decisions from the Participants' Perspective

Theme 4: Islamic Values, Cultural Influences, Ethical Principles, and their Relationship to Consumer Behaviour

Theme 5: The Relationship between Islamic Values and Sustainability

Theme 6: The Relationship between Sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030

Theme 7: Future Sustainability Practices and Barriers to Adoption

3.6.2 Word Cloud of Sustainability-Related Codes

A word cloud was produced to show the most frequently occurring words in the dataset. The word cloud, shown in Figure 3, provides a visual representation based on the sub codes, codes, sub themes and themes.



Figure 3. Word cloud of sustainability-related codes

3.7 Research Ethics

When conducting research that involves human participants, it is necessary to have a robust ethical framework in place to protect the participants' rights, freedom, and dignity, and maintain their well-being throughout the research process. The most important objective is to protect the personal and psychological integrity of the participants, and make sure that they remain healthy and content. To assure adherence to ethical principles, Research Ethics Committees (REC) have established comprehensive guidelines for studies involving human subjects (Taquette and Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). The purpose of these guidelines is to establish and maintain ethical standards and ensure that research is undertaken in accordance with the principles of respect and protection for all participants. Thus, researchers must comply with these considerations to obtain the necessary approval for their work.

In line with these principles, Wa-Mbaleka (2019) emphasizes the importance of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality in social science research. Scholarly investigations

in this field must adhere to these ethical considerations to preserve the credibility of their study and safeguard any participants. In this study, the participants were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the research, including any potential risks and benefits, before being asked to give their informed consent. This procedure ensured that participants were fully aware of what their participation entailed and made it possible for them to make an informed decision about whether or not they would participate. A pre-application process was employed to define and communicate the limits of the data collection.

All the information gathered was identified and stored securely to ensure data security. The data were stored on a password-protected computer and backed up on a secure, encrypted cloud-based server accessible only to the principal researcher. All the files were labelled with unique participant codes rather than names, in order to maintain anonymity. Confidentiality was paramount. It was stressed that the collected data would only be used to serve the study's objectives, and rigorous standards were put in place to protect the identities of the participants. Not only did the study protect the participants' dignity and anonymity by adhering to these ethical considerations, it also fostered an environment for research in which individuals were engaged based on their informed and voluntary participation, and where their information was protected against misuse. This dedication to ethical practices ensured that the research was carried out with respect for all of the participants, preserving their freedom and ensuring that they remained protected throughout the duration of the study.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study exploring socio-cultural influences on Saudi shoppers' perspectives towards sustainability and ethical practices. Using thematic analysis, the qualitative data from the participant interviews were analysed to identify any recurring patterns and key insights. Seven distinct themes emerged, each reflecting the complex interplay of cultural values, religious beliefs, social norms, and individual attitudes that shape consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia. These themes offer a comprehensive understanding of how sustainability and ethics are perceived and acted upon by Saudi shoppers. The findings are organized by theme and supported with illustrative quotations from the participants to ensure authenticity and depth.

The seven themes all helped to address the three research questions. A detailed mapping is provided in Table 7.

Table 7. Themes mapped to the research questions

| Research Question | Themes |
|--|---|
| 1. What do Saudi citizen-consumers designate as sustainable consumption practices, and what factors impact these designations? | Theme 1: Conceptualizing Sustainability Theme 2: Perceptions Regarding Sustainable Consumption Theme 3: Factors Affecting Purchasing Decisions from the Participants' Perspective |
| 2. What is the relationship between religious and cultural contexts and sustainable consumption among Saudi citizen-consumers? | Theme 4: Islamic Values, Cultural Influences, Ethical Principles and their Relationship to Consumer Behaviour Theme 5: The Relationship between Islamic Values and Sustainability |

| | |
|--|--|
| 3. To what degree, if any, are Saudi citizen-consumers aware of Saudi Vision 2030? What impact, if any, has it had on their consumption practices? | <p>Theme 6: The Relationship between Sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030</p> <p>Theme 7: Future Sustainability Practices and Barriers to Adoption</p> |
|--|--|

4.2 Outcomes of the Thematic Analysis

The outcomes of the thematic analysis are presented in relation to each research question (RQ) in turn, to offer a structured insight into how the participants responded. The findings are supported with illustrative quotes to ensure authenticity and depth.

4.2.1 What do Saudi citizen-consumers designate as sustainable consumption practices, and what factors impact these designations?

This research question is covered by three of the identified themes: Conceptualizing Sustainability; Perceptions Regarding Sustainable Consumption; and Factors Affecting Purchasing Decisions from the Participants' Perspective.

4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Conceptualizing Sustainability

This theme explores what Saudi consumers define as sustainability in their terms. Participant 21 defined sustainability from his point of view by saying: *“I expect that its definition is to preserve the life span of properties, food, and vehicles for the longest possible life so that they exist for us and for generations to come, and there is a kind of preservation of the continuity of the thing.”* Similarly, for Participant 11, *“the word sustainability means reusing materials from the natural resources available to us in a way that does not affect the environment, and by that, I mean waste, the manufacturing process, etc.”*. However, the participants were not all aware of how to

recognize sustainability. Participant 3 said that “*it is Environmentally friendly products; this is what I think*”.

This theme also addresses the way Saudi consumers conceptualize sustainability and whether they view sustainability from an economic, environmental, and social perspective. Participant 9 stated that “*food products made of glass are better than metal and plastic, and I do not know if this is included in the environmental conservation, and I do not expect that it is included, but in another way*”. Participants also defined sustainability in terms of consumption level. Participant 3 said that “*I think that it is perhaps consumption without extravagance or waste, according to need, so that it does not even affect society and the environment*”. Others took sustainable consumption practices to relate to continuity. Participant 11 said that “*it means the continuity of things, from that the continuity of organizations, that they can to survive, continue, and remain for generations to come*”. However, this continuity of resources depends on various factors. Participant 26 stated that “*I expect that sustainable products are important and so on and so forth. I hope that it will also be mandatory to preserve all natural and industrial resources for future generations, ... This means that it stems from love for future generations and love for our children. There is also a religious and cultural aspect to it. This means that you see the environment not being formed by the consumption that is happening, for example, we see it in parks, plastic, car exhausts and their effects on the atmosphere, factories, etc.*”. Participant 4 said, “*so I can imagine if it was another material other than plastic, it would become sustainable consumption*”.

Five Participants were found to be unfamiliar with the concept of sustainability, and Participants 11, 15, and 22 showed limited concern for it in their purchasing decisions. Participant 9 said, “*I try to buy only what I need – excess is not sustainable*”. Participant 16 felt that “*When a*

product lasts longer, it's more sustainable". Participant 30 noted that, *"Being sustainable doesn't mean giving up comfort, just being smarter"*. Nevertheless, almost all of the participants believed in sustainability. In particular, 9 participants connected sustainability with long-term social and environmental responsibility. Participant 4 said that *"I want my children to grow up in a cleaner, better Saudi"*. One participant emphasized personal accountability, saying, *"We are responsible for what we leave behind – it starts with our choices today"*. Similarly, another participant said, *"If we do not act now, we will damage the future"*.

Five participants talked about consumers perceive sustainability that focuses on the environment, such as reducing carbon footprints, waste management, energy conversion, etc. Others viewed sustainable consumption as a part of supporting businesses, the future generation, and long-term financial stability. Understanding this perception is necessary to comprehend how consumers consider and think about sustainable practices. Table 8 shows the key points in the participants' conceptualization of sustainability.

Table 8. Participants' conceptualization of sustainability (insights)

| Participant Number | Key Insights |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 21, 1, 4, 8, 9, 23, 25, 26, 6 | Preservation |
| 11, 30, 4 | Resource reuse |
| 3, 19 | Need-based consumption |
| 9, 12, 19 | Packaging awareness |
| 16, 29 | Durability |
| 30, 7, 22 | Smart consumption |
| 4, 12, 27, 5 | Material substitution |

4.2.1.2 Theme 2: Perceptions Regarding Sustainable Consumption

This theme reflects on some of the actions and behaviours that consumers associate with sustainability in their daily life. It involves some important questions regarding sustainable consumption, such as do Saudi consumers prioritize sustainable consumption, what are their perceptions regarding sustainable practices, and are they able to differentiate between genuine sustainable efforts and greenwashing? Participant 11 felt that sustainable consumption was the responsibility of the government. He said that “*Consumption can be regulated, i.e., within the framework of preserving the environment.*” Others saw sustainable consumption as part of saving the Earth (Participants 11 and 23). Participant 17 said that “*It is how to conserve the Earth’s resources to reduce the consequences of water, air, and pollution, preserve natural green spaces and animal habitats through various forms of using sustainable products, reduce the consumption of ‘fast fashion, non-recyclable materials’, increase the consumption of animal products, fuel from cars, airplanes, etc.*” Participant 1 reflects the need to sustainable product in the market. He said that “*the difficulty we face in alternatives to products that do not support sustainable consumption and are harmful to the environment or are not energy-conserving. Alternatives are almost expensive, or almost low-quality, or difficult to obtain, meaning you cannot find alternative products in any supermarket. You cannot find, for example, things that help in energy conservation, all of which are difficult to access.*” Similarly, views were shared by Participant 18 that “*organic products are part of sustainable products and they are expensive.*” However, Participant 24 said about sustainable consumption that “*it does not mean much to me due to lack of awareness and encouragement.*”

Many participants feel that they are accountable for sustainable consumption. Participant 15 quoted that “*I believe it’s my responsibility to reduce plastic use wherever I can.*” Participant

20 also said that *“Sometimes I feel guilty when I buy things I know harm the environment.”* Whereas, Participant 23 reflects on buying behaviour, stating that *“We can’t just consume without thinking – it affects more than just us.”* Participant 18 talks about the limited consumption options in the market, stating that *“Sometimes I think it’s hard to be sustainable in Saudi because of limited options.”* Whereas Participant 20 has a different perspective on sustainable consumption. He said that *“Being sustainable doesn’t mean being perfect – it’s about making better choices.”*

Similarly, Participant 7 also talks about this: *“For me, it starts with food – buying local, organic, and not wasting.”*

This theme is critical in assessing whether consumers’ attitudes align with their actual purchasing behaviours. The theme showed a mixed perception of consumers. Some expressed strong interest in sustainability, but their purchasing decisions might be driven by convenience, cost, or availability, which may not always align with their stated values. Whereas others do not express any need towards sustainability due to a lack of awareness and encouragement. Table 9 shows the main essence or crux of participants’ perception regarding sustainable consumption.

Table 9. Main insights from participants’ perceptions of sustainable consumption

| Participant Number | Key Insights |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Participants 11, 17, 23 | Stewardship for a sustainable future |
| Participants 1, 18 | Lack of sustainable alternatives |
| Participants 20, 15, 12, 3, 5, 10, 28 | Mindful use, meaningful impact |
| Participants 24, 27, 29 | Low awareness |

4.2.1.3 Theme 3: Factors Affecting Purchasing Decisions from the Participants' Perspective

This theme focuses on the barriers and motivations that shape the choices of consumers. Some of the elements that affect Saudi consumers' purchasing decisions are environmental conservation, social influence, and government regulations. Participant 13 talked about customs and traditions that have an impact on purchase behaviour. He said that *"customs and traditions are very strong, as I mentioned, as customs have been controlling us since we were young, and if you notice sometimes, purchasing habits differ even in different homes, as some homes follow a healthy system, you see their method and behaviour of purchasing completely different from the home that is accustomed to external orders."* Thirteen participants described feeling compelled to over-prepare food at family gatherings and religious festivals (e.g., Eid), even when they personally wanted to cook "just enough." As Participant 12 explained, *"If I make fewer dishes, my relatives will think I'm stingy or don't care about them."* Participant 27 echoed this, noting, *"It's not about leftovers; it's about honouring guests."*

Many participants talk about price and quality as most important part in sustainable products. Participant 15 said that *"the first thing is the need for this product. Another thing, the purchasing power of this product. Oh, and is this product also original or commercial, meaning quality... And this applies to all purchases."* Similarly, Participant 19 said that *"Need – Quality – Price, and it changes according to the situation."* Participant 27 said that *"Purchase priorities: My need for it, the quality of the product, and the price of the product. These are the basics that I rely on. The lowest rank is the product's environmental friendliness. The last rank I think about is the issue of it being environmentally friendly."*

One of the primary goals of the interviews was to uncover the main considerations consumers use when making purchase decisions. In the shop-along subset of 10 participants, quality and price were the most frequently mentioned criteria, with brand reputation occasionally referenced. A typical response was that consumers prioritize the tangible and immediate benefits of the product, such as durability or affordability, over its environmental credentials. For instance, the first participant stated, “*First quality, then price*”, a sentiment echoed by most participants, reinforcing the idea that economic rationality dominates their decision-making processes. However, when faced with two products of equal price and quality, several participants (e.g., Participant 5 and Participant 10) said they would choose the green product, though this decision was contingent upon price parity.

From the viewpoint of Practice Theory, the routinized nature of purchasing decisions becomes evident in these responses. Consumers rely on pre-established habits rooted in prioritizing economic value (price and quality), which act as structural elements guiding their behaviour. These practices are socially conditioned, embedded within a larger system of material and social relations where the environmental impact of products remains secondary to immediate economic concerns (Warde, 2005). In other words, while green products might hold intrinsic value, they do not yet form part of the embodied knowledge or cultural capital that consumers draw upon during everyday transactions (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). In contrast to rational-choice models, which assume that consumers make decisions based solely on individual preferences, Practice Theory posits that such preferences are themselves shaped by habitual patterns and socially constructed expectations (Reckwitz, 2002). The emphasis on quality and price suggests that sustainable consumption has not yet entered the realm of routinized practices, requiring external stimuli or changes in material circumstances to shift these behaviours (Hargreaves, 2011).

Participants also reflect that cultural norms, religious practices, and awareness campaigns by the government and private sector could impact how consumers prioritize sustainability in their purchases. Table 10 shows the main essence of purchasing decision factors from the participants' perspectives.

Table 10. Insights into purchasing decision factors (participants' perspectives)

| Participant Number | Key Insights |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Participant 16 | Government campaigns raise awareness |
| Participants 5, 7 | Preference for green product if equal |
| Participants 10, 20 | Conditional eco-preference |
| Participants 13, 3, 9, 24 | Cultural traditions influence behaviour |
| Participant 22 | Personal values vs. societal norms |
| Participants 1, 15, 19, 27, 12 | Need, affordability, and quality |
| Participant 27 | Environmental concern ranked lowest |

4.2.2 What is the relationship between religious and cultural contexts and sustainable consumption among Saudi citizen-consumers?

Regarding the relationship between religious and cultural contexts and sustainable consumption among Saudi citizen consumers, two themes have been developed. Theme 5 reflects on Islamic values, cultural influences, and their relationship to consumer behaviour. Theme 6 talks about the relationship between Islamic values and sustainability.

4.2.2.1 Theme 4: Islamic Values, Cultural Influences, Ethical Principles and their Relationship to Consumer Behaviour

Being a Muslim state, Islamic values and cultural influence play an important role in adopting sustainable practices. For many Saudis, Islam is not only a personal faith but also a

foundational part of national identity and daily life, shaping public expectations, consumer behaviour, and societal norms. This religious grounding is reflected in how participants view sustainability through a moral and spiritual lens. Participant 13 said that *“Religion constitutes 65% of its impact on consumer culture.”* Saudi consumers give importance to religious activities, and sustainable practices is part of religious beliefs. Participant 30 talked about this, *“Religion also cares about the environment and taking care of everything around you and not isolating yourself.”* Participant 27 said that *“I mean because the religion is clear, thank God, with us, I mean one knows, for example, if there is a consumer, for example, he should try to economize, for example, and not be wasteful, and these things, ...I mean one can differentiate between customs, a little and it comes, but mostly religion has become far.”* Participant 16 said that *“the difference is that religion is something constant between us all as Muslims, and culture varies from place to place. Something that is normal in one society may not be acceptable in another.”* However, Islamic values are deeply rooted in Saudi culture that shape consumer purchasing decisions, brand preferences and lifestyle choices. One of Islamic value modesty and ethical consumption is a key principle that affect consumer’s purchasing decision in buying sustainable goods. Participant 22 talked about this *“I expect that if it was something that is bought once, meaning something that can be used for a year or two, for example, and it is not a daily need, such as water and food, it is possible to replace it with the friendly thing that is sold because it is a one-time thing, so it will not be too much for the seller to increase the amount of 2%, three times 104%, or 5% in order to preserve the environment. But if the thing is permanent and a daily thing, it will be difficult for you to find an alternative with the same specifications but does not serve the environment.”* Islamic teachings discourage extravagance and wastefulness, leading consumers to seek products that align with ethical and responsible consumption. Participant 7 said that *“Islam teaches us not to waste*

and to live modestly, but in our culture, when there's a wedding or a gathering, you're expected to show abundance – it's like people will judge you if you don't".

One unique observation from the interviews was the cultural dimension of sustainability. Participant 4, for example, referred to long-standing Saudi traditions of reuse and recycling, such as repurposing everyday containers or using parts of palm trees in daily life. She emphasized that these practices were not new but were a cultural heritage, rooted in the past. This highlights an important aspect of Practice Theory: the idea of habitus, where practices are often inherited from previous generations and deeply ingrained in the social fabric (Bourdieu, 1977). The existence of these culturally embedded sustainable practices suggests that there is already a foundation upon which modern green consumption could be built. Rather than being viewed as foreign or novel, sustainable practices could be framed as a continuation of traditional Saudi values (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). Participants' references to these traditional practices suggest that by leveraging these cultural practices, green consumption could become more aligned with the habitus of Saudi consumers, making sustainability not just a rational choice but a normative behaviour embedded in the everyday routines of life (Warde, 2005). This offers a powerful cultural narrative that could support the broader adoption of green products by positioning sustainability as a natural extension of deeply held traditional values (Reckwitz, 2002).

Many shoppers prefer products that promote ethical business practices and fair labour environment. Participant 18 said that *"I think it is important and should be generalized and added to the law, and from an ethical standpoint, we are already seeing how pollution has affected the earth."* Another perspective of ethical purchase is based on religious principles. Consumers prefer ethical consumption that aligns with Islamic principles of responsible stewardship (Khalifa) and avoiding wastefulness (Israf). Participant 2 said that *"customs and traditions prevail over religion*

in purchasing.” He further added that “Islam encourages good morals and self-development, and sustainability is part of these things. For example, extravagance is forbidden in religion, and sustainability also encourages not being extravagant, so Islam encouraged sustainability before humans knew the word sustainability.” Participant 19 said that “ethical practices that are sustainable practices are promoted in Islam.” With rising awareness of environmental issues, consumers are demanding ethically sourced and eco-friendly products. Participant 28 shared his experience that “During Hajj, I see people throwing plastic bottles everywhere – it’s heartbreaking. We’re supposed to be in a state of spiritual purity, but the environment suffers. That’s not ethical, and it certainly isn’t Islamic. Even in Ramadan, there’s so much food wastage. We prepare lavish meals and end up throwing a lot of them away. Islam teaches us moderation, but we’re forgetting that part.” Similarly, Participant 29 said that “Islam teaches us not to waste – whether it’s water, food, or resources. But during Ramadan, I see people buying in excess and throwing away untouched food.” He further added that “Hajj – piles of plastic waste left behind by pilgrims. It feels like we’re honouring the rituals but ignoring the responsibility.”

An essential aspect of sustainable consumption is whether consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products. The responses were varied: while some participants expressed a willingness to pay more for green products, most were hesitant. Participant 4, for instance, stated, *“I will pay more for the green product”, while Participant 1 was more pragmatic, asserting, “(I won’t buy the green product because my priority is price)”*. This variability in willingness to pay highlights the uneven integration of sustainability into different consumers’ practices. For some participants, the idea of paying more for green products indicates that new practices are forming, where ethical considerations are starting to influence habitual consumption (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). However, for the majority, price remains the decisive factor. In Practice Theory,

this can be understood as the persistence of deeply embedded economic practices that prioritize financial considerations over ethical or environmental ones (Warde, 2005). Those willing to pay more for green products appear to be in the early stages of adopting sustainable consumption practices. However, these practices are not yet fully entrenched or supported by the broader material context (Reckwitz, 2002). For these practices to become more widespread, structural changes such as subsidies for green products or government policies promoting sustainable consumption would likely be necessary to normalize these behaviours (Spaargaren and Van Vliet, 2000). Table 11 shows the main essence of Islamic values, Ethical principles cultural influences, and their relationship to Consumer behaviour.

Table 11. Insights into Islamic values, cultural influences, and their relationship to consumer behaviour

| Participant Number | Key Insights |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Participants 13 | Faith-driven sustainability |
| Participants 30, 22, 16 | Islam as a moral compass for consumption |
| Participants 27, 2, 18, 19, 28 | Modesty and ethical consumption |
| Participants 16, 22 | Shared religious identity, diverse cultural practices |
| Participant 22 | Pragmatic ethical consumption |
| Participants 4, 16, 27, 13 | Cultural continuity through sustainability |
| Participants 1, 12, 5 | Prioritizes price over ethical concerns |
| Participant 4 | Willing to pay more for green product |
| Participants 10, 12 | Seeks brand transparency |
| Participants 13, 28, 29 | Wasteful consumerism |

4.2.2.2 Theme 5: The Relationship between Islamic values and Sustainability

The respondents observe a connection between Islamic values and sustainability. Islam provides a comprehensive framework that promotes environmental responsibility, resource conservation, and ethical consumption. Participant 12 said that *“Here comes the connection between customs, traditions, and religion and adapting your customs and traditions in a way that*

does not conflict with religion.” Participant 19 reflected on Islamic values and said that “Islam urges not to be extravagant, to remove harm, to cultivate the land and not to spoil, and all of these are mentioned in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.” Similarly, the relationship of Islamic values and sustainability was shared by Participant 25: “Islam strongly supported sustainable consumption as two basic points. Islam urged us to cultivate the earth, and cultivating the earth means preserving it...The second aspect is that Islam forbids extravagance and wastefulness in consuming natural resources. Let us say that I see that the greater Islam, or the religious aspect for us as a religious person or as a religious motive, is that we should have a very strong sustainable consumption orientation, given the two points that I mentioned before: the issue of the demands that you as a Muslim cultivate the earth and that consumption be sustainable.”

Another significant Islamic principle is moderation (wasatiyyah), which encourages avoiding both extravagance and extreme frugality. Islam teaches that wealth and resources should be used wisely without excessiveness or greed. Participants 13 talk about this principle, *“Islamic values have a major role. For example, religion forbids extravagance, so you find that a person is keen to consume according to his need and keep the rest or distribute it. There are even associations that receive surplus food so that they do not waste products forbidden in Islam, whether food products or services such as usurious services. Their consumption is low and almost non-existent, and there are many examples.”* Participant 4 said that *“From now on and in the coming years, I think sustainable consumption is very important because it will provide a healthy environment and a clean atmosphere and will make one feel responsible for the person and there will be no extravagance and it will create a new culture between the consumer and society.”* Participant 29 said that *“it’s already in our religion. Islam teaches us to avoid waste, to care for nature, and to live with balance.”* Participant 17 said that *“Sometimes I feel bad buying too much,*

but it's part of the tradition – you have to present yourself well, even if it's not necessary.”

Participant 22 shared his thought that *“the problem is, people often separate faith from daily choices like what they buy or throw away.”*

Islamic teachings emphasized ethical economic practices, which support sustainability by promoting fair trade, social justice, sharing of resources, and responsible business conduct. Islamic teaching focuses that humans have a moral duty to protect the Earth. Moreover, the teachings of Islam not only encourage sustainability but also inspire long-term ecological preservation, social justice, and economic equity, making sustainability an essential part of Islamic living. Table 12 shows the main essence of the relationship between Islamic values and sustainability

Table 12. Insights into Islamic values and sustainability

| Participant Number | Key Insights |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Participants 12, 4 | Harmony between culture and religion |
| Participants 19, 25 | Islamic environmental ethics |
| Participant 25 | Sustainable stewardship in Islam |
| Participant 13 | Moderation and need-based consumption |
| Participant 22 | Personal choice |

4.2.3 To what degree, if any, are Saudi citizen-consumers aware of Saudi Vision 2030?

What impact, if any, has it had on their consumption practices?

Two themes have been identified to reflect on the third research question. Theme 6 talks about the relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030, and Theme 7 reflects on the future behaviour of participants and barriers to change. These two themes highlight the Vision 2030 and challenges towards sustainable adoption.

4.2.3.1 Theme 6: The Relationship between Sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030

The core pillar of Saudi Vision 2030 revolves around sustainability. The vision influences multiple sectors that have a direct and indirect effect on consumer behaviour. However, eight participants reported no awareness of any link between Vision 2030 and sustainability. Four participants felt they had a general idea that sustainability might be connected to Vision 2030, while the remaining participants were convinced that a strong connection exists between the two. Participant 25 shared his views on Vision 2030 and its connection with sustainability *“I expect yes, due to what we see of afforestation projects in the regions of the Kingdom and environmental protection and reserves, for example. I also heard about plans to diversify the sources of energy used.”* Participant 7 said that *“I know is that one of the most important goals of the vision is the subject of sustainability, and they were working on it, and it was the establishment of a complete centre for recycling waste, and now I heard two weeks ago that there is something like forcing towers and large residential areas to recycle sewage water, dignity and wastewater consumption in irrigation, and supporting the Green Riyadh project.”* Participant 4 said that *“I expect that the change will be clear in the future and its impact will be great on the individual and society.”* One of the key objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 is to promote environmental sustainability by reducing carbon emissions, increasing reliance on renewable energy, and improving resource efficiency. Participant 12 talked about Vision 2030 and said that *“a few weeks ago or something like that, the Investment Fund announced that their companies will focus on Sustainability, so there will be a budget dedicated to it from the point of Vision 2030, which is sustainability in general. In general, recycling, and the company I work in, I mean, among the plans it has set, I mean, it keeps pace with Vision 2030, which is the Carbon Strategy. Some reach 0 Carbon emission, whether it is Reduction by*

Non-renewable Energy or its environmental initiatives to settle SABIC.” The Kingdom has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2060, with major investments in green energy projects such as the NEOM city, the Green Saudi Initiative, and the expansion of solar and wind power. From green energy to smart cities, Vision 2030 is setting new records for sustainable living, shaping a new generation of eco-conscious consumers. Table 13 shows the main insights of the relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030.

Table 13. Insights into sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030

| Participant Number | Main Essence |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Participants 25, 2, 19 | Afforestation and energy diversification |
| Participants 7, 17 | Enforcement of sustainable infrastructure |
| Participants 4, 18, 23, 27, 9 | Future-oriented societal change |
| Participant 12, 7 | Corporate alignment with carbon strategy |

4.2.3.2 Theme 7: Future Sustainability Practices and Barriers to Adoption

Saudi consumers are gaining more awareness of sustainability. Participant 15 said that *“I am interested in sustainable products, but I don’t always find enough information about them in local stores.”* Participant 11 also said about the availability of sustainable products, *“If sustainable products were more widely promoted and available, I would consider switching from conventional products.”* However, Participant 3 faced a barrier to sustainable products, stating that *“Sustainable products are often more expensive, and I am not sure if they justify the price difference.”* Participant 9 talks about the role of government for promoting sustainability: *“If the government provided incentives or subsidies for sustainable products, I would be more likely to purchase them.”* Participant 17 talks about no social pressure for buying sustainable products: *“Many people in my community are not aware of sustainability issues, so there is little social pressure to buy*

eco-friendly products.” Participant 13 talks about trust and perception of sustainable products: “*I don’t always trust brands when they claim to be ‘eco-friendly’ because there are no clear standards.*”

A consistent theme across the interviews was the low awareness of green products in Saudi Arabia. Most participants admitted to lack of clear labelling rarely, if ever, encountering green products, and even when they did, they found it difficult to distinguish them from conventional alternatives. Participant 3 succinctly captured this sentiment, stating, “*I don’t know because I don’t focus on these things*”. Participants highlighted the and marketing strategies as barriers to identifying green products. For example, Participant 8 noted, “*Usually, I can’t tell unless there is a shelf specifically labelled that the products are environmentally friendly*”. From a Practice Theory perspective, knowledge is often embodied; people learn how to navigate the world through repeated exposure to objects, actions, and social cues (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). The participants’ difficulty in identifying green products reflects a lack of embodied knowledge regarding sustainability. Green products have not yet become an integral part of their consumer environment, and their absence in day-to-day practices makes it hard for consumers to engage with them meaningfully (Warde, 2005). This suggests that sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia remains marginalized within the broader material culture. For green products to be more widely adopted, there needs to be a significant material shift in how products are presented to consumers (Spaargaren and Van Vliet, 2000). The lack of visible markers and consistent messaging about the environmental benefits of products limits their social presence and, consequently, their ability to become embedded in consumers’ habitual practices (Reckwitz, 2002).

A recurring issue raised by participants was the limited availability of green products in the Saudi market. Even when available, the lack of clear labelling makes it challenging for

consumers to identify and purchase these products. For instance, Participant 5 noted, “*Not much, because the presence of green products is unclear*”. Participant 9, who had lived in the United States, remarked that recognizing green products was far easier in the U.S. due to clear labelling and consistent market availability, contrasting it with the situation in Saudi Arabia. This lack of availability and clear labelling points to the material context as a critical element in shaping consumer behaviour. In Practice Theory, the material environment plays a central role in enabling or constraining certain practices (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). In the case of green products, the invisibility of these products in the marketplace limits consumers’ ability to incorporate sustainable practices into their routines (Warde, 2005). If green products were more readily available and clearly labelled, they could become part of consumers’ shopping habits, as the material environment would facilitate the shift towards more sustainable consumption (Reckwitz, 2002). The social-material environment in which shopping occurs is crucial. As long as the marketplace remains structured in a way that obscures the presence of green products, consumers will struggle to integrate sustainability into their routinized behaviours (Spaargaren and Van Vliet, 2000). Changes in this material context, such as the introduction of eco-labels or designated green product sections in stores, could significantly impact consumer practices (Shove and Walker, 2010).

Finally, when asked if their purchasing behaviours would change following the interview, many participants expressed doubt. Participants, such as Participant 1, noted that “*price would remain their primary consideration*”, while others (e.g., Participant 3) mentioned: “*the need for greater awareness and clear labelling before they would shift their behaviour.*” This resistance to change underscores the stability of habitual practices. According to Practice Theory, practices are inherently resilient and difficult to change unless there are significant disruptions in the social or

material environment (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). The scepticism expressed by participants indicates that while there may be awareness of sustainability, the current social-material structures do not provide enough incentive or opportunity for green consumption to become part of their routines (Warde, 2005). For substantial behavioural change to occur, there would need to be a concerted effort at both the institutional level (through policies and incentives) and the market level (through availability and labelling) to reshape the material environment in which these practices take place (Southerton, 2013). As Practice Theory suggests, shifting consumer behaviour requires more than just information or moral appeals – it demands a transformation in the underlying material and social contexts that sustain existing habits (Reckwitz, 2002).

Participants have highlighted several barriers such as availability and accessibility, lack of culture and social influence, price sensitivity and affordability, and lack of consumer willingness and awareness. All of these need attention from policymakers. Table 14 shows the main essence of future sustainability practices and barriers to adoption.

Table 14. Insights into future sustainability practices and barriers to adoption

| Participant Number | Key Insights |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Participants 3, 27 | Lack of information |
| Participants 7, 17, 5 | Limited availability and promotion |
| Participant 1 | High price |
| Participants 12, 7 | Need for government incentives |
| Participants 12, 4 | Low social pressure and awareness |
| Participants 19, 25, 8 | Distrust in eco-labelling |

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Participant 25 | Lack of clear labelling |
| Participant 13 | Unclear product presence |
| Participant 27 | Price sensitivity |

Based on these identified eight themes, we have grouped them into three aggregate dimensions: sustainable consumption practices and influencing factors, the influence of religious and cultural contexts, and awareness of Saudi Vision 2030 and its impact. This hierarchical structure provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping sustainable consumption behaviours, as shown in Figure 4.

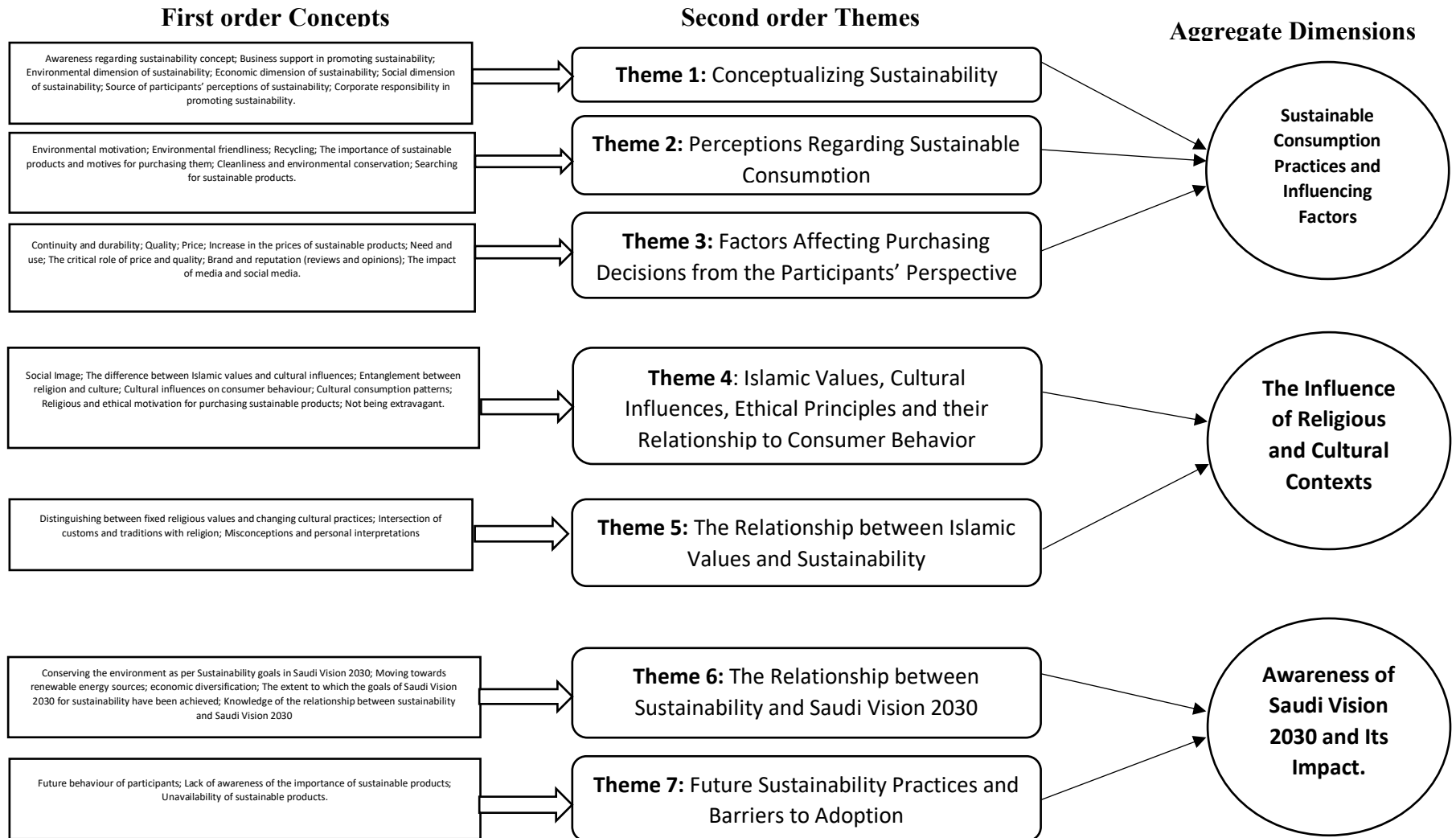


Figure 4. Identified themes and their aggregate dimensions

4.3 Integrating the Identified Themes with the Theoretical Framework (Practice Theory)

This part presents an in-depth analysis of consumer behaviour towards green products in Saudi Arabia, drawing on qualitative data gathered through “Shop along” interviews. The interviews, conducted in Arabic, sought to understand the key factors influencing the purchasing decisions of Saudi consumers, particularly regarding green products, and to assess the awareness and attitudes surrounding sustainable consumption. The analysis is structured through the lens of Practice Theory, an approach within the social sciences that views human behaviour as a product of routine, embodied practices shaped by social, material, and historical contexts. By applying Practice Theory, this analysis aims to transcend simple rational-choice models of consumer behaviour, which often focus on isolated decisions, and instead focuses on how everyday practices influence consumer engagement with green products. The analysis is conducted based on practice theory components and identified seven themes. Table 15 shows the three components of practice theory (reflected on theoretical framework) integrated with identified themes in this research.

The first component “Meaning” includes cognitive process, affective states, and motivational factors that influence why people engage in certain behaviour. This refers to how Saudi consumers perceive sustainability, their motivations, and their emotional connections to ethical consumption. Theme 1 (Conceptualizing sustainability), Theme 2 (perception regarding sustainable consumption), Theme 4 (Islamic values, cultural influences, ethical principles and their relationship to consumer behaviour) and Theme 5 (the relationship between Islamic values and sustainability), all contribute towards the values, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, and cultural influences that determine why individual engages in a particular practice, such as sustainable consumption. The meaning component reflect that how Saudi consumers assign meaning to

sustainable consumption- either they perceive as an environment responsibility, Islamic values, socio-culture trend, economic burden or moral obligation. If consumer perceives these sustainable products as beneficial, convenient and Islamically acceptable, they are more likely to buy sustainable products. Islamic teaching and cultural norms play an important role in shaping the “Meaning” individuals attach to sustainability. Together, these themes explain why (or why not) consumer adopt the sustainable consumption based on personal beliefs, religious values and societal expectations.

The competence component explains the knowledge, abilities and procedure through which consumer engage in sustainable consumption. This refers to how consumers develop the necessary skills and understanding to make informed decisions. Theme 3 (factors affecting purchasing decisions from the participants’ perspective) focuses on key factors when making purchase decision. This decision is made based on how well consumer understand these factors and integrate sustainability into their decision. These understandings are also reflecting the economic reforms and policies formation such as Vision 2030. Theme 6 (the relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030) link the national goal with individual consumer behaviour. It evaluates how well consumer have knowledge about Saudi Vision’s 2030 sustainability goals and initiatives, how they align their personal consumption choice with Saudi sustainability goal and what actions or procedure do they adopt to follow sustainable habits.

The material component refers to the availability and accessibility of the sustainable products, tools and infrastructure that encourage consumers to adopt sustainable behaviour. Theme 4 (ethical purchasing and sustainability commitment) focuses on the consumer willingness to support sustainable brands. It also reflects on availability of ethical sources, identify tools such as ecofriendly certifications and accessibility to these products. Theme 7 (future sustainability

practices and barriers to adoption) highlight the challenges in adopting sustainable practices and factors that impact the future buying behaviour and decision. It also reflects on policies and government incentives that encourages sustainable products.

Table 15. Typology of themes, participant insights, and their links to Practice Theory components

| Practice Theory framework | Description | Identified Themes | Participants Quote | Linking with Sub components of Practice Theory framework | Justification |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Meaning | This refers to how Saudi consumers perceive sustainability, their motivations, and their emotional connections to ethical consumption. | Theme 1: Conceptualizing Sustainability | “For me, sustainability means using resources wisely so that future generations can also benefit. It’s about reducing waste and making mindful choices.” (P13) | Cognitive Processes | How consumers understand and define sustainability. |
| | | | “The word sustainability means reusing materials from the natural resources available to us in a way that does not affect the environment, and by that, I mean waste, the manufacturing process, etc.” (P11) | Affective States | Emotional reactions towards sustainability, such as concern for the environment or indifference. |
| | | Theme 2: Perception Regarding Sustainable Consumption | “It is how to conserve the Earth’s resources to reduce the consequences of water, air and pollution, preserve natural green spaces.” (P17) “It means the continuity of things, from that the continuity of organizations, that they can to survive, continue, and remain for generations to come.” (P11) “Convenience plays a big role. If a sustainable product is hard | Cognitive Processes | Knowledge and awareness of sustainable consumption practices. |
| | | | | Affective States | Emotional attitudes (e.g., pride in buying eco-friendly products or frustration with greenwashing). |
| | | | | Motivational Factors | Reasons driving or discouraging sustainable consumption, such as |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|----------------------|--|
| | | | to find or takes extra effort, I'm less likely to buy it." (P19) | | cost, convenience, or ethical beliefs. |
| | | Theme 4: Islamic Values, Cultural Influences, ethical principles and Their Relationship to Consumer Behaviour | <p>"Religion also cares about the environment and taking care of everything around you and not isolating yourself." (P30)</p> <p>"I prefer products that align with Islamic ethics, like those that ensure fair treatment of workers and avoid harm to the environment. It's not just about buying – it's about making the right choices." (P5)</p> <p>"Extravagance is forbidden in religion, and sustainability also encourages not being extravagant." (P12)</p> <p>"Ethical practices that are sustainable practices are promoted in Islam." (P19)</p> | Cognitive Processes | How consumers interpret Islamic and cultural teachings related to consumption. |
| | | | | Motivational Factors | The extent to which religious, ethical and cultural values encourage or discourage sustainability-related decisions. |
| | | Theme 5: The Relationship Between Islamic Values and Sustainability | <p>"Islam teaches us not to waste, so I try to buy only what I need. Being mindful of consumption is part of my faith." (P16)</p> <p>"Islam strongly supported sustainable consumption as two basic points. Islam urged us to cultivate the earth, and cultivating the earth means preserving it." (P25)</p> | Cognitive Processes | Understanding of Islamic principles related to environmental responsibility. |
| | | | | Motivational Factors | The influence of religious teachings as a driving force behind sustainable behaviours. |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|---|------------|---|
| Competence | This relates to consumers' awareness, knowledge, and ability to engage in sustainable consumption. | Theme 3: Factors affecting purchasing decisions from the participants' perspective | <p>“Need – Quality – Price and it changes according to the situation.” (P19)</p> <p>“Customs and traditions are very strong, as I mentioned, as customs have been controlling us since we were young, and if you notice sometimes.” (P13)</p> | Knowledge | Awareness of sustainable products and their impact. |
| | | | | Abilities | Ability to identify and compare sustainable vs. non-sustainable options. |
| | | | | Procedures | Steps taken when making purchasing decisions (e.g., checking labels, researching brands). |
| | | Theme 6: The relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030 | <p>“one of the most important goals of the vision is the subject of sustainability, and they were working on it, and it was the establishment of a complete centre for recycling waste, and now I heard two weeks ago that there is something like forcing towers and large residential areas to recycle sewage water, dignity and wastewater consumption in irrigation, and supporting the Green Riyadh project.” (P12)</p> <p>“Companies will focus on Sustainability, so there will be a budget dedicated to it from the points of Vision 2030, which is sustainability in general.” (P07)</p> | Knowledge | Awareness of Saudi Vision 2030 sustainability goals. |
| | | | | Abilities | Ability to align personal consumption with national sustainability objectives. |
| | | | | Procedures | Actions taken to support Vision 2030, such as adopting sustainable habits. |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|--|-----------------|---|
| Materials | This focuses on the availability and accessibility of sustainable products, infrastructure, and regulatory support. | Theme 7: Future Sustainability Practices and Barriers to Adoption | <p>“Sustainable products are often more expensive, and I am not sure if they justify the price difference.” (P3)</p> <p>“If the government provided incentives or subsidies for sustainable products, I would be more likely to purchase them.” (P9)</p> <p>“Many people in my community are not aware of sustainability issues, so there is little social pressure to buy eco-friendly products.” (P17)</p> | Items | Access to sustainable alternatives such as reusable bags, electric vehicles, and eco-friendly household products. |
| | | | | Infrastructure. | Retail accessibility to ethical and sustainable products (e.g., eco-friendly stores, online platforms) |

Chapter Five: Discussion

This study sought to investigate the socio-cultural influences shaping Saudi consumers' perspectives on sustainability and ethical practices. The findings derived from in-depth qualitative analysis provide a context-specific understanding of sustainable consumption (SC) behaviours in Saudi Arabia. The study reflects the interplay between religious values, government strategies, cultural norms, and consumer decision-making. The adopted thematic analysis reveals that sustainability is largely understood through the lens of religious and cultural values rather than pure environmental and economic terms. Participants largely framed sustainability in connection with Islamic teachings, primarily focusing on the concepts of Wasatiyyah, Khalifah, and Amana. The concept of Wasatiyyah encourages balanced consumption and discourages wastefulness, promoting mindful use of resources (Batchelor, 2016). Khalifah positions humans as caretakers of the Earth. They are responsible for preserving the well-being of future generations. Amana reinforces the moral obligation to act responsibly with the resources entrusted by God. Al-Jayyousi (2016) also reflects on these concepts in his book that these cultural-religious values shape the sustainable practices, guiding them towards ethical consumption, environmental responsibility, and social consciousness, not merely as lifestyle choices but as expressions of religious duty and cultural identity. This religious-ethical foundation influenced not only how sustainability was conceptualized but also how participants rationalized their purchasing behaviour.

The seven identified themes collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of how socio-cultural factors influence the Saudi consumers' perceptions and practices regarding sustainability, which directly aligns with the research objectives. Themes 1 and 2 highlight the conceptualization of sustainability and how consumers perceive sustainable consumption in Saudi

Arabia, addressing the objective of developing a culturally grounded framework. Theme 3 uncovers the social, cultural, and economic factors influencing purchasing decisions. Theme 4 explores the participants' ethical and behavioural commitment, both contributing to the evaluation of practical sustainability dynamics in a collectivist and patriarchal society. Themes 5 and 6 illustrate how Islamic values and cultural norms shape sustainable behaviours, aligning with examining religious doctrines. Theme 7 connects with the national policy, mainly Saudi Vision 2030, to consumer attitudes. It supports the analysis of governmental influence. Lastly, theme 8 influences the future practices and challenges faced by consumers. It provides insight necessary for developing context-sensitive recommendations. These themes support in critically assessing the applicability of Western-centric sustainability theories and strengthen the understanding of sustainability within the unique socio-religious context of Saudi Arabia.

5.1 Understanding and Influencing Sustainable Consumption Practices among Saudi Consumers

The concept of sustainability is not universally defined through the lens of global environmental discourse, but Ives and Kidwell (2019) claimed that it is shaped by deeply embedded religious, cultural, and social values. In my research findings, many Saudi consumers primarily understood sustainability as a moral and spiritual responsibility rather than a pure environmental and economic concern. Ives *et al.* (2024) explain the role of religion in shaping sustainable principles. My findings explore the sustainability as an extension of the consumer's faith, describing it as an act of worship or a duty to Allah rather than simply a consumer trend. It is also highlighted that the idea of Wasatiyyah was adopted from religious values that encourage moderation in consumption and discourage wastefulness and excess. This principle guides many Saudis to avoid overconsumption, primarily by not focusing on environmental concerns. But they

link it with the Islamic teachings that promote balance and temperance in all aspects of life. The research findings also link with Bsoul *et al.* (2022) perspective that environmental protection embedded in UN SDGs. Several participants also noted perceived parallels between these sustainability goals and ethical principles in Islamic teaching. However, they emphasized that this alignment depends on individual interpretation and does not always translate into practice – religiously motivated events and traditions can sometimes involve unsustainable behaviours despite their ethical foundations. The present study finds that actions such as conserving water, avoiding littering, or resource sharing are part of moral obligations that reflect one’s character and faith. The conceptualization of sustainability in Saudi Arabia is unlike that in Western countries, where sustainability is often linked to individual lifestyle choices or the global climate movement. It is viewed through a collective and religious lens. Saudi consumers tend to conceptualize that resources are a trust from God and must be used wisely and fairly, while others – including less-religious shoppers – prioritized economic prosperity and material comfort. In Saudi society, this notion extends to future generations and becomes a vital part of the upbringing of the child, with a deep concern that leaving behind a degraded environment would be a betrayal of the trust God placed in them.

The study also found that several participants admitted to being unfamiliar with the term “sustainable consumption”. and unable to explain the word sustainability. However, when sustainable practices examples such as minimizing food waste, reusing items, or supporting local products, etc., they accept that they share similar sustainable principles. Hence, the concept of sustainability in Saudi Arabia is often practiced intuitively and culturally, rather than as a result of formal environmental education or branding. Other aspects of cultural values, such as hospitality, generosity, and family responsibility, also influence the local interpretation of sustainability. While

the majority of participants viewed sustainability positively, there was also a degree of scepticism about its relevance or feasibility within the Saudi context. Some believed that sustainability is a Western concept being imported without adequate cultural adaptation, while others viewed it as a governmental or elite concern rather than a community-driven effort. This reflects a broader disconnect between global sustainability discourse and local realities.

On the other side, the concept of generosity might conflict with sustainability, such as over-preparing the food that might be correct morally or socially, particularly during festive times. Some participants clearly show their intention to waste reduction, but the societal pressure pushes them to maintain hospitality norms. This form of informal sustainability education, embedded in family and community life, further illustrates how the concept is internalized within a local cultural and religious framework. The recurring conflict between generosity and waste reduction among Saudi shoppers reflects a deeply embedded hospitality ethic in Gulf societies (Elshaer *et al.*, 2021). Although Islamic teachings advocate moderation, the social capital gained through lavish hosting can override environmental considerations.

Moreover, cultural norms also complicate perceptions of sustainable consumption. Actions that would be considered unsustainable in the Western framework, such as the preparation of excess food or the purchase of luxury items, are socially reinforced in Saudi society as symbols of generosity and family honour. Participants critically explained the situation where it is socially important to appear generous, such as gatherings and religious celebrations, suggesting an internal conflict between cultural identity and sustainable ideals. Another critical insight emerged around gender roles and sustainability awareness. Female participants, particularly homemakers, demonstrate a higher degree of involvement in day-to-day sustainable behaviours such as managing household waste, choosing reusable items, and controlling energy usage. However, their

efforts are often unrecognized or undervalued within the broader discourse of sustainable consumption. This highlights the gendered nature of sustainable practices, where women's contributions are informal and invisible, despite being instrumental.

The findings reveal that the perception of sustainable consumption among Saudi consumers is multifaceted, aligned with Abu-Bakar and Almutairi (2024) study and shaped by a unique intersection of religious beliefs, cultural practices, economic conditions, and evolving societal norms. Critically examining this has revealed that a landscape where sustainable consumption is both acknowledged and misunderstood, practiced unintentionally without consciously identifying its benefits. Participants in this study have shown a positive attitude towards the concept of sustainability in general, and they associate it with morality and responsibility. However, when the conversation shifted to sustainable consumption, a noticeable gap emerged between theoretical understanding and practical implications and behaviour. Many participants equated sustainable consumption with frugality or avoidance of waste, which is in line with Islamic values. Yet, this understanding remains at surface level, lacking in-depth regarding broader environmental, economic, and ethical dimensions such as carbon footprints, ethical sourcing, or lifecycle product impacts. Using Practice Theory, the gap in sustainable consumption can be explained through the “Meaning” component. Participants associate sustainability with Islamic teachings and cultural values, viewing it as a moral or religious duty. This frames sustainable practices as acts of frugality and anti-wastefulness. However, this meaning remains limited to traditional values, lacking broader environmental significance, which restricts deeper engagement with sustainability in a modern, globalized context.

This limited perception is a critical challenge, as it suggests that sustainable values may be culturally embedded, but their translation into a modern consumer framework is still

underdeveloped. Conversely, when this alignment is taken as a strength, anchoring sustainable consumption in faith-based values, it can also limit the broader adoption of more complex sustainable practices, especially when they require changes in purchasing behaviour. Brand preference or lifestyle adjustments. For instance, sustainable fashion or eco-friendly packaging were rarely mentioned as priorities. This selective engagement implies that sustainability is perceived as a domestic or behavioural matter, not necessarily linked to consumer activism or market accountability. This fragmented perception poses critical implications for policy and advocacy. It calls for a deeper integration of Islamic values with contemporary sustainability education to elevate public awareness beyond moral virtue into systemic understanding.

Several participants expressed the belief that sustainable consumption, especially purchasing organic, locally produced, or eco-friendly goods, is a luxury for the affluent, not a practical option for average citizens. This critique highlights the socio-economic barriers that hinder the normalization of sustainable purchasing behaviour in Saudi Arabia. Despite the initiation of Vision 2030, which promotes environmentally responsible living, the perception among some consumers is that sustainable options remain more expensive and less accessible than conventional alternatives. This leads to a situation where sustainability is respected in theory but rejected in practice due to economic constraints.

Some participants criticized sustainability as a Western import. There was also a growing openness to learning about global sustainable trends, particularly among younger and more educated Saudis. This generation appeared more willing to embrace sustainability as part of a modern, progressive identity aligned with global citizenship. However, this group also expressed frustration over the lack of government transparency, lack of awareness, and the gap between policy promises and visible change. For example, many Saudis are unaware of Saudi Vision 2030's

emphasis on sustainability. They felt the initiative had yet to filter down into practical everyday guidance or product accessibility. This scepticism signals that while national visions provide direction, actual behavioural change requires micro-level engagement, consistency, and cultural resonance.

The factors influencing Saudi consumers' purchasing decisions reveal a complex interplay between individual priorities, societal norms, economic considerations, and the relatively recent integration of sustainability discourse into mainstream consciousness. Although government-led campaigns under Saudi Vision 2030 have made commendable efforts in raising awareness. However, this has limited influence on consumer behaviour, especially when weighed against more immediate concerns such as need, affordability, and quality. This observation underscores a key limitation of top-down awareness strategies. Awareness alone does not equate to behavioural change, particularly when there is a disconnect between promoted ideals and day-to-day lived realities. This critical gap suggests that while the government plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainability discourse, more culturally embedded, bottom-up strategies may be necessary to influence actual purchasing behaviours.

Another key factor identified was the concept of “conditional eco-preference”, which means consumers are only willing to avail sustainable products when they do not compromise other priorities such as key features, price, or quality of products. In general, when product is treated equally in terms of price and quality, they prefer to have eco-friendly products (Eckhardt and Dobscha, 2018). Whereas, this perception fades when eco products are more expensive or less available. This pattern of consumer choice is often embedded in Western sustainability models, in which ethical and environmental concerns are more dominant than consumer preference. In Saudi Arabia, it appears as a highly pragmatic approach where consumers prefer sustainability as a nice-

to-have feature compared to a primary purchase decision. This pragmatism approach reflects the socio-economic structure where the concept and benefit of eco-friendliness are still emerging, and green branding is still underdeveloped.

Another factor that has a severe impact on consumer behaviour is cultural traditions in Saudi Arabia. These cultural imperatives pushed consumers towards excess or brand-centric consumption, often at odds with sustainable ideals. The study also found that the power of social conformity in shaping market behaviour is arguably stronger than environmental awareness. Similarly, when ranked in hierarchical consumer priorities, the environmental concern is consistently ranked lowest. Al-Torkistani, Salisu and Maimany (2015) claimed that ecological impact is overshadowed by practical and economic considerations. Johnsen, Howard and Miemczyk (2018) suggest in their book that without economic incentives, subsidies, or structural changes in supply chains that make sustainable goods more accessible, efforts to elevate environmental concern in the purchasing calculus may struggle. This reflects a broader trend also observed in Western societies, where economic and convenience factors often outweigh environmental values in purchasing decisions. Thus, moral or emotional appeal to sustainability is insufficient where the cost of living and product availability are major concerns. Another important factor is consumer scepticism regarding product authenticity and green advertising. Such scepticism is not unique to Saudi consumers; similar doubts exist in Western markets, where greenwashing has undermined trust in sustainable branding. There is a need to develop trust in order to shift towards sustainable products. Nkamnebe (2011) and Polonsky (2011) explain that the lack of consumer confidence in sustainability marketing reflects a broader institutional challenge. The current findings also reveal a disconnect between top-down policy intentions and bottom-up market mechanisms that must be addressed to facilitate meaningful change.

5.2 Religious and Cultural Influences on Sustainable Consumption Patterns in Saudi Arabia

The study found that participants often articulated a moral recognition of ethical consumption, but their actual purchasing behaviour diverged from their ethical values. This reflects an “attitude-behaviour” gap, meaning that consumers’ actual intentions do not align with their actions, aligned with Jung, Choi and Oh (2020) study. This gap is affected by several interrelated factors such as religious, cultural, social, and market dimensions, all of which critically shape ethical decision-making in consumption. Despite the presence of Islamic ethical principles regarding sustainability, the critical analysis reveals that while these values are internalized conceptually, their application in everyday consumption is not always direct or consistent. The study reveals that one reason for this conditionality is the socio-economic diversity within the Saudi population. Higher-income consumers may express a stronger alignment with ethical purchasing ideals, whereas low- or middle-income participants are more likely to deprioritize ethical considerations in favour of cost and accessibility. Furthermore, the study also found that ethical purchasing decisions often depend on visible cues such as labels, branding, and certifications, yet many participants claim their authenticity. Unal and Tascioglu (2022) research on consumer behaviour claims that trust is directly proportional to purchase intention. Hence, without trusted regulatory bodies and culturally recognized standards, ethical purchasing remains fragmented in Saudi Arabia, where consumers are unclear in terms of awareness and sustainable products to make informed decisions. Becchetti *et al.* (2014) highlight that a layer of complexity stems from the evolving nature of ethical awareness within a society.

This study also found varied understanding of “ethical product”, with some associating it solely with environmental friendliness, while others included fair labour practices, animal welfare,

or even religious permissibility (halal). Brothie *et al.* (1999) explain that Western frameworks often dominate global sustainability discourse, yet they may fail to resonate fully with Eastern consumers unless adapted to incorporate local values and religious references. This underscores the importance of re-contextualizing sustainability communication to align with the moral vocabulary already embedded in Saudi life. The study also found that commitment to sustainability is often situational and reactive rather than proactive. For instance, participants showed commitment to sustainability in specific scenarios such as avoiding plastic during Hajj, buying local products during Ramadan, and community reinforcement during festive seasons. This sustainability commitment has a dual nature in Saudi Arabia, as it promotes values like hospitality, generosity, and collective care for ethical consumption, whereas on the other hand, these same values can fuel overconsumption and brand-centric purchasing in the name of social obligation. Thus, the current consumer behaviour of Saudis reflects a tension between ethical intent and practical constraints, suggesting that sustainability commitment is not absent but conditional, context-driven, and evolving.

The relationship between Islamic values, cultural influence, and consumer behaviour is complex. It is deeply embedded in both the individual and collective psyche of society. Islamic teaching regarding consumer behaviour is rooted in concepts like halal (permissible), haram (forbidden), Amanah, Khalifah, and Wasatiyyah. All of these frames the ethical and moral boundaries of consumption practices in Saudi Arabia. However, the effect of Islamic principles on consumer behaviour is also shaped by broader socio-economic factors, cultural values, and global trends that influence the local market dynamics of KSA. Mathras *et al.* (2016) asserted that religion affects consumer psychology through four dimensions, such as rituals, values, beliefs, and community. The present study follows the same four dimensions and illustrates how consumer

behaviour is shaped by Islamic values. The rituals are the ethical practices, values are the moderation and trust, beliefs are halal or haram, and stewardship and community influence show the deep-rooted role of religion in guiding consumption decisions (Orellano, Valor and Chuvieco, 2020). Nonetheless, consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia is also influenced by global culture. This cultural shift is evident in the rise of consumerism, which is tied to Western ideals of individualism, materialism, and consumption for self-consumption. Despite of moral foundation of religion, the allure for luxury items is increasing, However, this growing consumerism has not simply replicated Western models but has been localized within the Saudi context – where luxury and consumption are often aligned with social status, hospitality, and even religious identity. Thus, Western ideals are reinterpreted through local cultural and religious norms, creating a uniquely Saudi form of consumer behaviour.

This exposure to globalization through social media and international trade highlights the interplay of diverse modernities, where Saudi consumers navigate a localized form of modernity that integrates global influences with religious and cultural traditions. Under this situation, consumers prioritize personal desire over communal or religious obligations. While some consumers express support for sustainable consumption that links with their traditional and religious values but the lack of widespread infrastructure, affordable eco-friendly alternatives, and educational initiatives makes it hard for consumers to make consistent ethical choices. This reflects a context where modern consumer choices are not purely secular or Westernized, but are shaped by a hybrid framework of values – blending globalized lifestyles with local moral, religious, and cultural commitments.

Previous Literature constantly advocates for balance, resource preservation, and ethical responsibility, yet their translation into contemporary consumer behaviour remains complex

(Gupta, 2020; Hosta and Zabkar, 2020). Similarly, Islamic values theoretically provide a potent platform for promoting sustainability. However, a gap still exists between values and practice (Al-Jayyousi *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, despite the presence of strong religious endorsement of stewardship, rapid economic development in Saudi Arabia has historically encouraged unsustainable practices such as excess energy consumption (Felimban *et al.*, 2019), overreliance on automobiles (Aljuaid, Masood and Tipu, 2024), and water misuse (Abdella, Masood and Tipu, 2024). This indicates a gap between acknowledging the religious importance of environmental care and actual consumption patterns. Despite Islamic teachings that emphasize avoiding extravagance and maintaining balance in all aspects of life, Saudi consumer culture often leans towards excess, especially in food consumption and luxury goods. This contradiction points to a tension between religious ideals and societal expectations.

Another critical element of this disconnect is that Islamic texts advocate for environmental ethics, but their application is subject to their interpretation by Islamic scholars. Environmental concerns were not seen as a priority in their mainstream religious discourse. However, few scholars have started recognizing ecological responsibility as a religious obligation. This delay in integration has caused a generation gap, particularly among older generations whose primary religious education did not include modern environmental issues. Many participants acknowledged that their religious beliefs made them more conscious of waste and encouraged them to promote eco-friendly practices. However, this awareness is frequently conditional, filtered through affordability, availability, quality, and price. The critical insight here is that values themselves are not sufficient to reflect sustainable behaviour unless there is consistent religious reinforcement that connects day-to-day consumption choices with spiritual accountability.

5.3 Saudi Citizen-Consumers' Awareness of Vision 2030 and Its Influence on Consumption Behaviour

Despite various barriers, the launch of Vision 2030 by the Saudi government reflects a strategic agenda with long-term ecological, social, and economic goals while also reshaping public consciousness around responsible consumption and production. Selim and Alshareef (2024) explained that sustainability is positioned as a cornerstone of Vision 2030, not merely in environmental terms, but also in promoting a sustainable economic model through advancements in renewable energy and fostering a citizenry that is more aware of and engaged in sustainable living practices. When Vision 2030 is viewed through the lens of consumer behaviour and sustainability, its effectiveness remains a contested issue. Initiatives like NEON city, investment in solar and wind energy, all demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. However, the translation of macro-level ambitions into micro-level behavioural change, particularly consumer habits and preferences, is far less assured.

Although government initiatives to appear to reduce negative environmental impact are invoked in its policy discourse, their impact on individual consumer behaviour is limited by factors such as lack of awareness, insufficient incentives, and sometimes a passive reliance on the government to lead environmental efforts. Many participants in this study acknowledged that religious beliefs made them more conscious of ethical product consumption compared to awareness of Vision 2030, standing on sustainability. Aina (2017) and Alshuwaikhat and Mohammed (2017) asserted that Vision 2030 holds great promise in creating a truly sustainable Saudi society; its success hinges on its ability to embed sustainability not only in state-led initiatives but in the daily lives and values of its citizens. Likewise, the present study found that sustainability initiatives require cultural adaptation, religious reinforcement, community

engagement, and equitable access to effectively embed eco-friendly practices at the consumer level. Vision 2030 is often overshadowed by technocratic and economic rationales; thus, this integration would foster a bottom-up culture of sustainability, rather than a purely top-down policy-driven model.

In Saudi Arabia, the conversation around sustainability is increasingly being shaped by a blend of government initiatives and shifting public attitudes. Vision 2030 offers an opportunity to change where there is momentum towards sustainability, but the pace of adoption remains slow in the consumer behaviour domain. Conversely, the sustainable consumer practices are gaining attention, such as eco-friendly products, green building and energy, water conservation, and waste management. Despite global sustainable awareness, significant barriers to their adoption persist in Saudi Arabia. The study found that the preference for high-quality, long-lasting, and often resource-intensive products is deeply ingrained in Saudi consumer behaviour. One rationale of such behaviour is due to societal emphasis on luxury and comfort that creates a paradox where environmentally friendly options are often perceived as less prestigious and convenient. A gap exists between modern consumerism and sustainability.

Another barrier is price disparity - organic products are expensive than conventional products, which further discourages sustainable behaviour. Saudi Arabia's consumer base also faces psychological barriers where the desire for social approval and conformity plays a significant role in shaping consumption behaviours. This behaviour also reflects a deeper tension highlighted in the findings – between traditional customs, which emphasize status, celebration, and social display, and religious teachings that promote modesty, stewardship, and ethical restraint. Respondents often viewed sustainable choices as aligned with religious values but in conflict with

societal expectations rooted in custom and modern consumption patterns. This divide contributes to the difficulty of embedding sustainable practices in daily life.

Overall, the oil-based economy is deeply entrenched in Saudi Arabia's social and economic fabric, and any move towards sustainability must carefully navigate the economic implications of such a transition. The entrenched reliance on fossil fuels means that the country faces a significant challenge in balancing its economic interests with environmental goals. While Vision 2030 lays out a roadmap for reducing this dependency, the transition requires overcoming substantial political and economic obstacles, including potential job losses in the oil sector and the need for substantial investment in alternative industries. Thus, there is clear potential for future sustainability practices to take root in Saudi Arabia, the barriers to their adoption are multi-faceted and deeply entrenched in the country's cultural, economic, and political structures. Overcoming these challenges requires a concerted effort from both the government and private sectors, along with a shift in societal attitudes and consumer behaviour.

5.4 Bridging the Literature Gap

The findings of this study reveal several important areas of convergence and divergence with the existing literature. While the study supports the growing awareness of sustainability among consumers, it also highlights that such awareness remains limited and uneven across the broader Saudi population. Key influences on sustainable consumption include cultural values, personal attitudes, and government-led initiatives. Unlike much of the Western-centric literature that identifies environmental concern as a primary driver of sustainable behaviour, this study found that Saudi consumers often prioritize factors such as affordability, immediate need, and product quality over environmental considerations.

These findings suggest a more pragmatic approach to consumption, where sustainability is secondary to economic and functional concerns. Consistent with prior research, the study confirms that consumer culture is influenced not only by environmental considerations but also by broader societal norms and religious expectations (Nair & Little, 2016). However, in contrast to Western contexts where sustainability is frequently driven by individual responsibility and grassroots activism, Saudi consumers demonstrate a stronger reliance on government action and institutional leadership. This reflects a more collective and conditional model of sustainability adoption, where change is expected to originate from top-down mechanisms alongside bottom-up initiatives. The tension arises because top-down policies rely on state direction and regulation, whereas bottom-up mechanisms depend on voluntary consumer action and market responsiveness. At the same time, top-down policy interventions and bottom-up market mechanisms need not be mutually exclusive.

While government-led initiatives provide guidance, incentives, and structural support, bottom-up market-driven activities, such as eco-labels, sustainable product innovation, and consumer demand for green options, can reinforce these policies (Mir et al., 2024). When aligned, top-down policies create the structural pathways, while bottom-up mechanisms supply the behavioural and market momentum needed for long-term sustainability. Their co-existence creates a complementary relationship, where institutional leadership creates enabling conditions, and consumer engagement helps operationalize and normalize sustainability practices within everyday life. This culturally specific pattern diverges from trends such as voluntary ethical consumption, zero-waste lifestyles, and consumer-driven eco-labelling campaigns commonly observed in Western societies. These differences underscore the importance of contextualizing sustainability within local cultural, religious, and structural frameworks.

A summary of how these findings relate to the existing literature, categorized by thematic areas, is provided in Table 16.

Table 16. Linking themes with UNSDGs

| Theme | Confirmations from Literature | Novel Findings Compared to Literature | Linked UN SDGs |
|--|--|---|---|
| Theme 1: Conceptualizing Sustainability | Sustainability is recognized as important; cultural and social factors shape its understanding. | The broader concept of sustainability is linked strongly to religion and social obligations, less to environmental activism. | SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) – Promotes sustainable lifestyles rooted in culture. SDG 4.7 (Education for Sustainable Development) – Reflects how knowledge is framed by local values. |
| Theme 2: Perception Regarding Sustainable Consumption | Consumer awareness of sustainable consumption is rising globally and locally. | Environmental concern is ranked lower than affordability, quality, and social norms among Saudi consumers. | SDG 12 – Understanding consumer priorities helps in designing effective sustainable consumption strategies. SDG 13 (Climate Action) – Highlights behavioral barriers to climate-oriented choices. |
| Theme 3: Factors Affecting Purchasing Decisions | Price, quality, and cultural influences are known major factors across markets. | Conditional eco-preference observed; willingness to buy green products only if cost and quality match conventional products. | SDG 12 – Informs policymakers on how to encourage sustainable consumption. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) – Addresses affordability as a key barrier. |
| Theme 4: Islamic Values, Cultural Influences, Ethical Principles and Consumer Behaviour | Religion impacts consumer behaviour globally. Ethical consumption is recognized in the literature as growing due to awareness campaigns. | In Saudi Arabia, Islamic teachings (Wasatiyyah, Khalifah, Amanah) directly frame sustainability choices, more explicitly than in secular markets. Ethical commitment is heavily tied to religious and societal approval rather than individual moral reasoning. | SDG 12 – Ethical consumption framed through faith-based values. SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) – Links ethical behavior with societal structures. |

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| Theme 5: Islamic Values and Sustainability | Global literature acknowledges religion's role in promoting care for creation. | In contrast to studies with Western consumers, Saudi consumers tend to integrate Islamic stewardship principles more explicitly into their consumption choices. | SDG 12 – Supports faith-based environmentalism. SDG 13 – Religious motivation supports climate action. |
| Theme 6: Sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030 | National visions and policies drive sustainability globally (e.g., UN SDGs influence). | Saudi Vision 2030 positions sustainability as a religious, economic, and social imperative, uniquely blending state, economy, and religion. | SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) – Integration of national development plans with global goals. SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) – Tied to strategic planning for sustainable living. |
| Theme 7: Future Sustainability Practices and Barriers | Barriers like cost, awareness gaps, and convenience are common globally. | Saudi consumers expect government leadership and structural support more than personal initiative compared to Western consumers. | SDG 12 – Identifies actionable barriers to responsible consumption. SDG 16 – Trust in institutions shapes citizen engagement in sustainability. |

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Future Implications

This chapter synthesizes the key findings of the study, reflecting on how the research objectives have been addressed through critical thematic analysis. The chapter presents an integrated understanding of Saudi consumers' perceptions of sustainability, and discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of the study. Finally, it identifies potential avenues for future research, emphasizing in particular the evolving role of government initiatives, Islamic values, and societal change in shaping sustainable consumption patterns in Saudi Arabia.

6.1 Conclusion

This study has critically examined how socio-cultural, religious, ethical, and policy-driven factors shape consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia. It addresses the research objectives through a qualitative exploration of seven identified main themes that unpack the multilayered interplay between cultural values, Islamic principles, state policy (such as Vision 2030), and ethical concerns concerning sustainability. The study found that the awareness of sustainability is growing in the region, but that is still constrained by several deeply rooted socio-economic, cultural, and structural barriers.

At the heart of the investigation was the question of understanding the concept of sustainability from the consumer's viewpoint in Saudi Arabia. This was framed through the lens of Practice Theory and the concept of Multiple Modernities to guide the initial assumptions and lines of inquiry. With this motive, Theme 1 reflects the understanding of sustainability from the consumer's perspective. The study concludes that consumers' conceptualization of sustainability is still evolving and is largely shaped by recent public discourse, government-led-initiatives, and religious teachings. However, among consumers, this understanding is fragmented- most commonly limited to economic savings or environmental cleanliness – rather than being seen as a holistic lifestyle that integrates social, environmental, and ethical

considerations. Furthermore, the local interpretations remain heavily shaped by religious beliefs and social norms. Theme 2 identified the perception of sustainable consumption. A conditional eco-preference was evident where consumers preferred sustainable options only when they were found affordable in terms of price and quality. Apart from those who wish to purchase sustainable products found it is a burden on their financial affordability. Theme 3 revealed several factors that influence the consumer's purchasing decisions. These factors are listed as government campaign, price, quality, and social norms.

The study also concludes that environmental concerns were ranked lowest in terms of influencing choice. This suggests a utilitarian consumer mindset. Themes 4 and 5 reflect the critical role of Islamic values, ethical principles and broader cultural influences on consumption behaviour. The study concludes that Islamic teachings strongly endorse sustainable living; their practical translation into consumer behaviour is uneven. Theme 6 found that public awareness of Vision 2030 and its sustainability goals remains superficial for many citizen-consumers. There was a mixed response on participants' acknowledgement of national infrastructure and policy; very few attributed personal behaviour changes associated with Vision 2030. The study found a disconnect between the top-down sustainability agenda – primarily led by state-driven infrastructure and policy reforms – and the lack of emphasis on grassroots behavioural change. While Saudi consumers often look to institutional leadership for direction, Vision 2030 focuses largely on large-scale sustainability initiatives (e.g. energy, urban planning) with limited attention to promoting sustainable consumption behaviours among ordinary citizens. Theme 7 reflects the barriers highlighted by participants, such as cost, quality, lack of awareness, cultural inertia, social burden, and accessibility. Participants also recognized the role of younger generations in leading behavioural change, hinting at an intergenerational shift in values and awareness.

These themes identified a meaningful understanding regarding how consumers perceive sustainability and how their culturally and religiously embedded understanding differs from the Western world. The study also challenges the applicability of Western-centric theories of sustainability by demonstrating how consumption in Saudi Arabia is deeply intertwined with communal identity, religious duty, and government policy. The clear rationale for this gap lies in the inconsistent or limited application of sustainability principles in consumer behaviour, where consumers consistently express positive attitudes towards sustainability in theory but struggle to translate these into sustained, practical actions. This inconsistency highlights a disconnect between belief and behaviour, influenced by contextual factors such as economic priorities and social norms. Therefore, there is a pressing need for context-specific sustainability education and policy interventions that effectively bridge religious values with practical consumption choices, making sustainable behaviour more accessible and normative within the Saudi consumer context.

Another important aspect the study concludes is related to the desire for hospitality, status, and conformity, which often competes with the ideals of minimalism, waste reduction, and ethical consumption. Under such circumstances, the desire for sustainability is often overshadowed by the need to maintain cultural norms. However, it does not suggest a lack of concern, rather, it reflects a contradiction between societal expectations, personal values, and available choices. Furthermore, the study highlights government initiatives under Vision 2030 aimed at steering public discourse towards sustainability. However, the translation of policy into practice at the individual or consumer level remains limited. While citizens are aware of national goals, there is uncertainty about how Vision 2030 aligns with sustainability objectives and influences consumer behaviour.

One of the more optimistic findings is the emergence of sustainability consciousness among younger, urban, and more educated demographics. This group demonstrates a stronger

alignment between values and actions, driven partly by social media, global exposure, and increased environmental literacy. The study also highlights the lack of trust in sustainability claims by consumers. Consumers express scepticism over greenwashing and marketing strategies that exploit the concept of eco-friendliness without substantiated evidence. This creates a distrust of sustainable products, institutions, and businesses. However, the sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia is not a question of resistance but of readiness. The cultural, religious, and policy foundations are available in the region to support the shift in consumer preferences. The study also highlights the need for a multidimensional strategy, one that caters to the religious, societal, cultural, market reforms and policy incentives, and engagement with consumers. As Saudi Arabia continues its transformation under Vision 2030, aligning national ambitions with everyday consumer practices will be vital to realizing a truly sustainable future. The findings of this study emphasize that sustainable development is not solely a governmental or corporate task – it is a societal endeavour that must be co-created with, and for, the people.

6.2 Implications of the Study

Based on the scope, objectives, and findings of the present study, uncovering insights that carry significant implications across the theoretical, practical, social, policy, and educational domains. The exploration of sociocultural values, Islamic principles, and policy framework, the study investigates a diverse range of factors shaping sustainability perceptions and practices. These identified implications underscore the broader relevance and impact of the study in supporting a more sustainable and socially aligned future for Saudi Arabia.

6.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical discourse by integrating Practice theory (PT) with the Multiple modernities perspectives to examine sustainable consumption in a non-Western society.

The Practice theory provides a robust lens for understanding sustainable consumption as a social phenomenon shaped by the interconnection of competence, material, and meaning (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012). Practice theory moves away from explaining consumer behaviour as purely rational or individualistic. It focuses on how routine practices are shaped by shared meanings, social norms, material resources, and learned competencies. In the Saudi context, this theory illustrates how digital infrastructure (materials), religiously informed environmental values (meanings), and improving environmental awareness (competences) collectively shape sustainable behaviours. By applying the multiple modernities perspectives, this study challenges the dominant Western-centric view that sustainable consumption is a universal behaviour shaped primarily by individual choice and market dynamics. It reveals an alternative modernity that is not derivative of Western models but rather reflective of a unique socio-cultural evolution.

The intersection of PT and multiple modernities underlines that sustainable practices are not merely technical or behavioural but culturally embedded phenomena. When applied in non-Western settings, this perspective reveals that sustainable consumption must be analysed through locally relevant institutions, collective norms, and moral frameworks, which may include religious beliefs and state authority, rather than being reduced to individual consumer choice alone. In the Saudi context, this figure is shaped as much by religious obligations and state-led visions as by environmental awareness, inviting scholars to revise consumer typologies in sustainability research. Furthermore, the integration of both theories supports the view that tradition and modernity are not in opposition but co-evolve dynamically. This collaboration reveals that there are multiple legitimate pathways to sustainability, shaped by unique local arrangements of knowledge, belief, and material infrastructure. It also enables an exploration of how global sustainability norms are interpreted and localized through cultural and religious frames. This dual-theory approach contributes to decolonizing sustainability

research by elevating the legitimacy of alternative modernities and recognizing the role of tradition, religion, and local agency in shaping sustainable futures.

6.2.2 Practical Implications

The findings of the study offer various practical implications for promoting sustainable consumption in Saudi Arabia. Firstly, framing environmental policies through religious and cultural narratives can foster moral legitimacy and social acceptance, making sustainability more resonant with everyday citizens. This involves altering the materials, skills, and meanings associated with daily routines – for example, by improving infrastructure for recycling, promoting skill-building around energy conservation, and designing spaces that make sustainable actions easier and more automatic.

Secondly, Sermons and community engagement events can integrate environmental ethics rooted in Islamic principles, offering a trusted and culturally embedded channel for promoting sustainable behaviour. Furthermore, embedding sustainability education within Islamic teachings and national identity can encourage long-term behavioural shifts among youth and future decision makers. Community-based initiatives such as mosque led environmental programmes or neighbourhood recycling drives can create a sense of pride and normalize sustainable practices into their daily lives.

Thirdly, public communication strategies should avoid assuming a one-size-fits-all model of sustainability. The awareness sessions must depend on the target audience, each of whom may take the message differently based on their cultural positioning within Saudi modernity.

Fourthly, urban planners and decision makers must consider how public infrastructure supports or hinders eco-friendly activities. Recycling bins, water-saving fixtures, and green

transport should be equitably distributed, ensuring that low-income rural communities are not left behind in sustainability efforts.

Fifthly, decision makers must include education programmes that reflect local culture, historical and religious contexts, rather than adopting Western teachings. Integrating sustainability into curricula via national heritage, Islamic teachings, and practical life skills can foster long-term behaviour change and global identity formation around sustainability.

Finally, the findings of the study offer valuable guidance for the implementation of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, recommending that top-down approach can only be translated in its true meaning when they are culturally grounded and adopted in daily routines.

6.2.3 Social Implications

At a foundational level, the study highlights how environmental behaviour is deeply embedded within social, cultural, and religious frameworks rather than being solely influenced by awareness. Hence, it highlights a desire to promote sustainability not just as an informational campaign, but it needs to engage with the social meanings and shared values that shape daily life in the region. There is a need to redefine the environmental responsibility, not as a Western imported ideology, but as a culturally resonant value grounded in Islamic teachings and traditional practices. Similarly, sustainable behaviour can be repositioned by invoking concepts such as Amana and Khalifa as moral and communal duties, instead of lifestyle choices. This action makes sustainability a social norm, particularly when it is reinforced through religious discourse, community institutions, and family traditions.

The rapid modernization in Saudi Arabia often disconnects the older generation's traditional environmental practices from and younger generation's narratives around climate change and consumerism. Hence, the mutual learning platform between generations can reinforce sustainable values across age groups. For instance, when older generation wisdom

about resourcefulness and low waste practices merged with technological solutions and creative advocacy can enrich the social meaning of sustainability and prevent it from being viewed as a foreign or generationally exclusive concept. The finding also suggests the role of social infrastructure in disseminating sustainable behaviours. Schools, mosques, and community centres are necessary for shaping social norms and behaviour, especially this action is necessary when a government message alone is not sufficient. Similarly, media play an important role in shaping public discourse and can be leveraged to highlight sustainability success stories, culturally relevant narratives, and community initiatives, thereby making sustainable behaviour visible and aspirational. The study also suggests focusing on potential social inequalities that may arise in the transition towards sustainable consumption. This disparity risks creating a forum of “eco-elitism”, in which sustainable goods are for privileged groups. Hence, policymakers must make sure that sustainable goods and initiatives are inclusive and equitable for all segments of income groups. Addressing these social dimensions ensures that sustainability initiatives not only benefit the environment but also strengthen social cohesion, moral responsibility, and cultural continuity within the kingdom.

6.3 Future Implications

The future implications of the study extend across multiple layers- economic, social, technological, policy makers, and academic. All of these offer a robust framework for shaping future research agendas, national strategies, and global sustainability dialogues. The transition stage of the Saudi economy under Vision 2030 can serve as a guiding blueprint for rethinking how sustainability is conceptualized, communicated, and practiced within a deeply rooted cultural and religious context. The Saudi consumer behaviour is not driven solely by environmental awareness or economic rationale, but it carries profound implications for future efforts aimed at mainstreaming sustainability in ways that are culturally resonant and socially acceptable.

This research challenges the dominance of Western-centric models of sustainable behaviour and calls for an alternative framework that aligns with Saudi cultural values. It empirically demonstrates the cultural specificity of Saudi consumer behaviour in relation to sustainability and contributes a methodological approach for understanding sustainability across diverse cultural contexts. Future theoretical developments should consider local religious beliefs, collectivist values, and tribal affiliations as key determinants of sustainable behaviour. To support this culturally grounded understanding, civil society organizations and policymakers should work to cultivate a generation of citizens who perceive environmental stewardship not as an imported concept, but as a moral obligation rooted in local traditions. Sustainability initiatives may gain greater traction by integrating Quranic principles and prophetic traditions, thus framing sustainability not only as an environmental issue but also as a religious duty and social responsibility.

Organizations and businesses need to understand these cultural, religious, and social values for better positioning the innovative, responsible, and sustainable product needs in the market. Future markets may see a surge in ethically produced halal goods, biodegradable packaging featuring Quranic verses, eco-friendly architecture that integrates traditional Saudi design, and local supply chains that minimize environmental impact. This also highlights the shift in green branding and the need for sustainability certification for increasing awareness with authentic proof as a differentiator in the market. It opens new economic opportunities and employment sectors that align with both local identity and global sustainability standards.

The study also opens avenues for future innovation that harmonize smart technology with sustainable living. The need for rapid, sustainable digitization in Saudi Arabia can be addressed through future smart homes, green cities, and infrastructure. Furthermore, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT) can be harnessed to monitor and reduce household and commercial resource consumption in ways that are intuitive and culturally relevant. In the

longer term, Saudi Arabia could become a hub for Islamic-inspired green technology, exporting these solutions to other countries with similar cultural dynamics.

It is recommended that policy makers encourage public transport use, waste separation, or water conservation that could be accompanied by religious endorsements, making compliance more meaningful and widespread. The government should consider establishing “green zones” in major cities tied to religious and cultural landmarks, reinforcing the symbolic importance of environmental protection. The public-private partnership can also support businesses to create sustainable solutions for long-term viability.

As more countries recognize the limitations of Western-centric approaches to environmentalism, there is growing room for Saudi Arabia to lead by example in promoting an Islamic model of sustainable development. Through such engagements, Saudi Arabia can help shape a more inclusive and pluralistic vision of sustainability that respects cultural diversity while addressing shared ecological challenges. Furthermore, the study implies a need for continuous research, evaluation, and adaptation. There is a need to continuously evolve as new demographic, economic, and technological dynamics appear in society. Future research should continue to track these changes, exploring the roles of youth, gender, urbanization, and digital transformation in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviours. Longitudinal studies, ethnographic research, and participatory action research will be critical in ensuring that sustainability initiatives remain responsive, effective, and deeply rooted in the lived realities of the people they aim to serve.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

While the study offers valuable insights into sustainable consumption behaviours within the Saudi Arabian context, there are a few limitations of the study. First, the research relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias and may not

accurately reflect actual behaviour. There may be a chance that participants overstated or understated the unsustainable practices due to the influence of cultural and religious norms. Secondly, while efforts were made to include participants from diverse backgrounds, the qualitative nature and limited geographic scope of the study mean that the findings are not intended to be generalizable. Instead, the study prioritizes depth and contextual understanding, with an emphasis on confirmability. Future research could adopt mixed-methods or large-scale quantitative approaches to enhance the generalizability and statistical representativeness of findings. The study may not fully capture the behaviours and perceptions of rural populations, non-Saudi residents, or individuals from underrepresented regions or socio-economic backgrounds. Third, the cross-sectional study limits to observe changes in behaviour or attitude over time. Hence, longitudinal research would be able to examine how sustainable consumption evolves with shifting economic conditions, policy changes, and generational shifts. Fourth, while religious and cultural values in Saudi Arabia are diverse and interpreted in various ways across regions and communities, this study primarily reflects the views of a socio-economic group with a certain level of disposable income. This segment of the population is more likely to engage with sustainability as a consideration in their consumption choices. As such, the findings may not fully represent perspectives from lower-income or more conservative segments of society, whose sustainability behaviours may be shaped by different constraints or value systems.

The study may not reflect the full spectrum of theological viewpoints or their influence on consumption, primarily due to the sampling procedure, which focused on a specific demographic and geographic context. Additionally, the study prioritized behavioural and institutional factors over a detailed theological analysis, limiting the exploration of diverse religious interpretations. Furthermore, the scope of the study is also limited to individual consumer behaviour rather than broader systemic, institutional, and infrastructural barriers that

influence sustainability in Saudi society. These limitations reflect the need for future research that covers these gaps and deepens the understanding of sustainability in culturally unique settings like Saudi Arabia.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Codes identification through MAXDAQ

Figure A: Transcription and code Identification process (Screenshots of MAXQDA software)

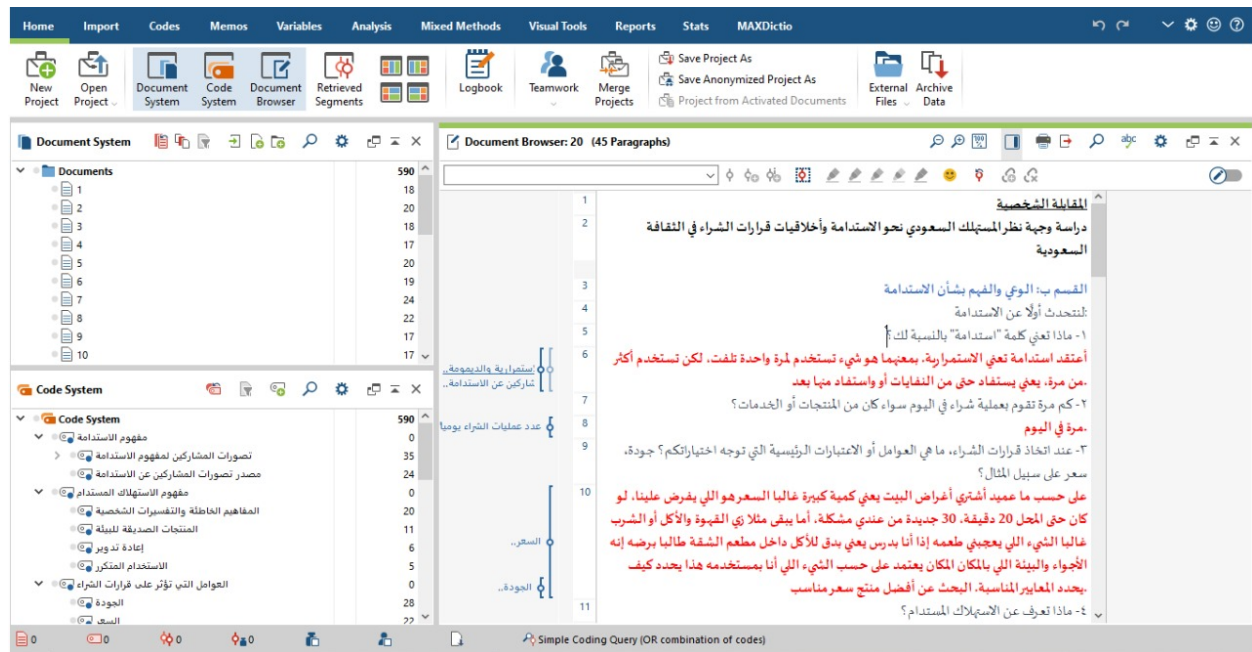


Figure B: Codes identification -Part 1 (Screenshots of MAXQDA software)

| | | |
|---|--|----------|
| MAXQDA 2020 | | |
| Code System | | |
| ارتفاع اسعار المنتجات المستدامة | | 3 |
| عوامل المفاضلة بين المنتجات المستدامة وغيرها من المنتجات | | 0 |
| التفضيل بناء على السعر والجودة | | 16 |
| تفضيل المنتجات المستدامة بفارق سعر بسيط | | 11 |
| أفضلية مطلقة للمنتجات المستدامة | | 3 |
| أثر القيم الإسلامية والتأثيرات الثقافية وعلاقتها بسلوك المستهلك | | 0 |
| الفرق بين القيم الإسلامية والتأثيرات الثقافية | | 0 |
| الدين كمحرك رئيسي ومصدر لثقافة المجتمع | | 22 |
| التمييز بين القيم الدينية الثابتة والممارسات الثقافية المتغيرة | | 4 |
| الخلط بين الدين والثقافة | | 3 |
| سلوك المستهلك بين القيم الإسلامية والثقافية | | 0 |
| العادات والتقاليد كعامل مهيم | | 24 |
| تداخل العادات والتقاليد مع الدين | | 6 |
| الأثار الثقافية على ثقافة المستهلك | | 30 |
| القيم الإسلامية والاستدامة | | 0 |
| عدم الإسراف | | 19 |
| النظافة والمحافظة على البيئة | | 15 |
| علاقة الاستدامة برؤية ٢٠٣٠ | | 0 |
| الإلمام بعلاقة الاستدامة برؤية السعودية 2030 | | 13 |
| أهداف الاستدامة برؤية 2030 | | 0 |
| الحفاظ على البيئة | | 17 |
| التوجه نحو مصادر طاقة بديلة | | 10 |
| تنوع مصادر الاقتصاد | | 6 |
| مدى تحقق أهداف الاستدامة | | 17 |
| الأثر المستقبلي ومعوقات التغيير | | 0 |
| سلوك المشاركين المستقبلي | | 19 |
| معوقات التغيير | | 0 |
| الدور الحاسم للسعر والجودة | | 9 |
| ضعف الوعي بأهمية الاستدامة | | 7 |
| Sets | | 0 |

Figure C: Codes identification -Part 2 (Screenshots of MAXQDA software)

| MAXQDA 2020 | | |
|---|--|-----|
| Code System | | |
| Code System | | 560 |
| مفهوم الاستدامة | | 0 |
| تصورات المشاركين لمفهوم الاستدامة | | 35 |
| مصدر تصورات المشاركين عن الاستدامة | | 24 |
| مفهوم الاستهلاك المستدام | | 42 |
| العوامل التي تؤثر على قرارات الشراء | | 77 |
| أخلاقيات الشراء والمنتجات المستدامة | | 0 |
| البحث عن المنتجات المستدامة | | 30 |
| أهمية المنتجات المستدامة ودوافع شرائها | | 58 |
| معوقات استخدام المنتجات المستدامة | | 43 |
| عوامل المفاضلة بين المنتجات المستدامة وغيرها من المنتجات | | 30 |
| أثر القيم الإسلامية والتأثيرات الثقافية وعلاقتها بسلوك المستهلك | | 0 |
| الفرق بين القيم الإسلامية والتأثيرات الثقافية | | 29 |
| سلوك المستهلك بين القيم الإسلامية والثقافية | | 30 |
| الأثار الثقافية على ثقافة المستهلك | | 30 |
| القيم الإسلامية والاستدامة | | 34 |
| علاقة الاستدامة برؤية ٢٠٣٠ | | 0 |
| الإمام بعلاقة الاستدامة برؤية السعودية 2030 | | 13 |
| أهداف الاستدامة برؤية 2030 | | 33 |
| مدى تحقق أهداف الاستدامة | | 17 |
| الأثر المستقبلي ومعوقات التغيير | | 0 |
| سلوك المشاركين المستقبلي | | 19 |
| معوقات التغيير | | 16 |
| Sets | | 0 |

Figure D: Themes identification (Screenshots of MAXQDA software)

| MAXQDA 2020 | | |
|---|--|-----|
| Code System | | |
| Code System | | 560 |
| > مفهوم الاستدامة | | 59 |
| > مفهوم الاستهلاك المستدام | | 42 |
| > العوامل التي تؤثر على قرارات الشراء | | 77 |
| > أخلاقيات الشراء والمنتجات المستدامة | | 161 |
| > أثر القيم الاسلامية والتأثيرات الثقافية وعلاقتها بسلوك المستهلك | | 89 |
| > القيم الإسلامية والاستدامة | | 34 |
| > علاقة الاستدامة برؤية ٢٠٣٠ | | 63 |
| > الأثر المستقبلي ومعوقات التغيير | | 35 |
| Sets | | 0 |

المقابلة الشخصية

دراسة وجهة نظر المستهلك السعودي نحو الاستدامة وأخلاقيات قرارات الشراء في الثقافة السعودية

القسم أ: المعلومات الشخصية

١- هل يمكنك تقديم بعض المعلومات الأساسية عن نفسك، بما في ذلك اسمك، الفئة العمرية والمؤهلات التعليمية؟

الجواب: **فايز الشهري العمر 36 سنة. أعمل كمحاضر في قسم الإعلام بكلية الإعلام والاتصال جامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية إلى جانب عملي كمباحث في أ الاتصال الرقمي.**

٢- ما هو دخلك الشهري الحالي؟ هل هو منخفض أم متوسط أم مرتفع؟

الجواب: **يختار متوسط.**

القسم ب: الوعي والفهم بشأن الاستدامة

لنتحدث أولاً عن الاستدامة:

١- ماذا تعني كلمة "استدامة" باللسية لك؟

الجواب: **طبعاً أنا بتكلم من شيء يعني Background، يعني كمعلومات حاضرة في الذهن يعني عندي من قبل اللي**

أعرف الاستدامة هي تقريبا من أ هدف من 17 هدف، أعتقد أ إذا ما خاب قلتي هي مفهوم عالمي يعني يندرج تحتها عدة

مفاهيم كثيرة يعني بالبيئة، بالماء، بالفكر، بخلاف ذلك، لكن المفهوم المتداول يعني أذهان العام ما اللي هو الحفاظ

المصادر وإعادة استخدامها يعني بشكل متكرر بما يضمن يعني تحقيق القائدة القصوى من هذه المصادر وانعكسها على

جودة حياة البشرية. إذا سمعت كلمة استدامة على طول ويتبادل في الذهن إنه أي شيء يعني سواء الأكل، الماء،

الأنشغال خلاف ذلك، كيف أن نستفيد من استخدامها أكثر من مرة يعني إلى فترات طويلة.

٢- كم مرة تقوم بعملية شراء في اليوم سواء كان من المنتجات أو الخدمات؟

الجواب: **لكنه بتراجع من يعني من مرتين إلى ثلاث مرات تقريبا كحد أقصى.**

Figure C: Interview questions sheet

الاسم: هدى التميمي
العمر: ٢٥-١٨ ☐ ٣٥-٢٦ ☐ ٤٥-٣٦ ☒ ٤٥- وأكبر ☐

المؤهل التعليمي: دبلوم أو ثانوي ☐ بكالوريوس ☒ ماجستير ☐ دكتوراه ☐

١- عند اتخاذ قرارات الشراء ما هي العوامل أو الاعتبارات الرئيسية التي توجه اختياركم؟
مثال: الجودة، السعر، العلامة التجارية...

الجودة أولا وبعض الأحيان يتم النظر للسعر ايضا

٢- ما مدى مواجهتك للمنتجات الخضراء في المملكة العربية السعودية؟

نادرا

٣- هل سبق وأن بحثت عن منتجات خضراء؟

نعم، خصوصا على الصعيد الشخصي ابحث في الأزياء عن المنتجات الصديقة للبيئة

٤- هل يمكنك تمييز المنتجات الخضراء من غيرها؟

حقيقة نعم وغالبا ما اميز المنتج الصديق للبيئة عن طريق رائحة الكرتون فيتضح لي كثيرا اذا كان الكرتون صديق للبيئة ام لا من رائحته. أيضا بعض المناديل يتم إعادة تدويرها ويتضح ذلك بسبب سوء الجودة/

٥- إذا كنت أمام منتجين يحملان نفس الجودة والسعر وأحدهما أخضر، ما الذي ستختار؟

سأختار المنتج الأخضر بالتأكيد

ماذا لو أن المنتج الأخضر أعلى بالسعر؟

على حسب المنتج ولكن في الحقيقة الوضع لدينا ما يساعد على ان الشخص يهتم حيث انه من الصعب جدا الحصول على المنتجات الخضراء لذلك لماذا ادفع كثيرا الان وغدا لن اجد؟ هو أسلوب حياة لابد ان يستمر.

٦- بعد هذه المقابلة، هل ستتغير طريقته للشراء مستقبلا؟

طبعاً

Appendix B: Codes Identification

The detail of codes are as follows:

Code 1: Participants' awareness of the concept of sustainability

While there was a lack of familiarity with the above-mentioned terms, that did not equate to a lack of awareness of the concept of responsible consumption. Saudi citizen-consumers did demonstrate beliefs and practices that align with sustainable consumption; however, it was stemmed from an ethos based in a religious and cultural context. A significant finding of this research is the influence religious motivations has on sustainable consumption among Saudi citizen-consumers. Religious values and duty were cited as motivators to protect and preserve the natural environment, with an emphasis on protecting the environment for future generations. In addition, most respondents didn't consider themselves particularly religious, their values still often reflected principles grounded in religious teachings, such as moderation, respect for resources, and shared responsibility. Core tenants within Islamic teachings include calls for individuals to care for and protect the planet and that the earth's resources are for all living things (Helfaya, Kotb and Hanafi, 2018). Despite a lack of familiarity with the term sustainability, a term rooted in Western culture, the concept of adopting behaviors to achieve long-term protection of the environment was prevalent among Saudi citizen-consumers.

Code 2: Continuity and durability

The results indicated that the majority of participants (n = 20) had superficial or partial knowledge about the concept of sustainability. They defined sustainability in the literal sense of the word without linking it to a specific context or a deeper understanding of its applications. It appears from the responses that most participants linked the concept of sustainability to the idea of continuity and duration, expressing this with words such as "continuity", "durability", and "uninterrupted." This indicates that their understanding of sustainability is limited to the simple linguistic aspect, without considering the environmental, economic, or social dimensions that sustainability includes. I found that many participants linked the concept of sustainability to continuity, indicating that sustainability means the continuity of something for

the longest possible period. For example, one participant stated that sustainability means “*what comes to mind when I hear the word sustainability or see it somewhere in the street or even on the social media or TV is something that lasts as long as possible.*” (Participant 2) Another participant said “*From my perspective, I think the words sustainability is clear from its name that it refers to something that is continuous or something that lasts for a long time.*” (Participant 2)

On the other hand, I found that many participants expressed the concept of sustainability with the idea of continuity and durability within limited contexts. For example, some linked sustainability to maintaining the quality of products, financial stability, or referring to the connection between the concept of sustainability and environmental conservation without clarifying the nature of the relationship between them, etc. Although these definitions touch on aspects of sustainability, they lack a comprehensive understanding of this concept.

One participant defines sustainability in the context of product quality and price: “*For me, the concept of sustainability is not limited to one area but extends to different areas. Let us take, for example, any product in the market.*” The question here is how to maintain the quality and price of this product so that it satisfies the customer for as long as possible. Sustainability means that the quality of the product continues at the same high level regardless of the changes that may occur in the company. In addition to quality, the price and other important aspects such as the shape of the product and customer satisfaction must continue. Sustainability here means that the product, with its quality, price and shape, remains constant and satisfactory to the customer no matter how the internal conditions in the company change.” (Participant 30)

Another participant used an example related to personal financial stability to define sustainability, saying, “*When we think in the term sustainability, the first thing that comes to*

mind is the durability of something. Sustainability has different meanings and applications. For example, in the financial aspect, sustainability means that a person knows his expenses and income, whether it is a salary or profits, and plans accordingly. In other words, sustainability means maintaining financial stability and continuity through constant planning and organization.” (Participant 27)

Furthermore, some participants used examples that linked the concept of sustainability to environmental conservation. However, they did not provide precise or detailed explanations on how to achieve this. They linked sustainability to some practices such as recycling, combating animal extinction without a clear understanding of the environmental dimension of sustainability. One participant defined sustainability by saying, *“For me, sustainability means preserving something so that it remains and lasts. It is always related to the environment, and I also think that it includes the process of recycling”* (Participant 7). Another participant said, *“I can tell you that long-term survival is a simplified definition of sustainability. To illustrate this concept, let me give you an example. When animals become extinct due to overhunting, we can prevent hunting or set some solid regulations to preserve animals from extinction.”* (Participant 18).

In terms of demographic characteristics of the participants, the results reveal that men are more inclined than women to associate sustainability with the concepts of continuity and durability. 77.3% of male participants held this view compared to 37.5% of female participants. While this focus reflects some connection to notions of growth and stability, it presents a limited or superficial understanding of sustainability, as it overlooks the integrated environmental, social, and economic dimensions. In terms of age, older participants (over 40 years) tended to associate sustainability with continuity and durability at a rate of 100%, compared to 40% among younger participants (21-30 years). Although the life and professional experiences of older participants may influence this perception, their exclusive focus on

continuity reflects an incomplete understanding of sustainability's complexities, which include preserving natural resources, achieving social justice, and promoting sustainable economic development.

Geographically, participants from the Eastern and Northern regions were the most likely to hold this view (80%), while the Central region (60%) and the Western and Southern regions (40%) had lower rates. These results may reflect cultural and economic differences between the regions that shape individuals' perceptions. However, the focus on continuity in these areas may indicate a gap in awareness of sustainability as a comprehensive approach beyond simple durability. In terms of income levels, low-income participants were more likely to link sustainability with continuity (100%), compared to middle-income (65%) and high-income groups (57.1%). This can be explained by the fact that lower-income groups rely more on the continuity of resources and services to ensure life stability. However, this perception may fall short of understanding other aspects of sustainability, such as achieving sustainable development and social equity. As for education, participants with diplomas or high school degrees were more likely to adopt the continuity concept (85.7%) compared to those with bachelor's or master's degrees. This indicates that lower-educated groups may tend to have a more basic understanding of sustainability, focusing only on essential needs without considering the environmental, economic, and social aspects that are key components of societal sustainability.

Code 3: The environmental dimension of sustainability

On the other hand, I found that a group of participants ($n = 8$) adopted the environmental aspect when defining the concept of sustainability. These participants linked sustainability to protecting the environment from pollution and preserving natural resources, reflecting a deep understanding that preserving the environment and ensuring the continuity of natural resources constitute one of the most important criteria for environmental sustainability. This

understanding includes the realization that environmental sustainability depends on a set of practices and procedures that aim to reduce the negative environmental impact of human activities. These practices include managing natural resources responsibly, preserving biodiversity, reducing pollution through the use of eco-friendly technologies, promoting recycling, and relying on renewable energy sources. Thus, this deep awareness of the concept of eco-sustainability reflects a commitment to adopting lifestyles and work practices that support the survival of healthy ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of resources for current and future generations.

Some participants believe that sustainability means the optimal use of natural resources in a way that ensures their continuity. One of them says, “*Sustainability is the use of natural resources to meet human needs without harming them.*” (Participant 3) Another participant defines it by saying, “*Sustainability is related to the rational use of resources, which means trying to use resources wisely, especially since many of them are non-renewable and run out over time.*” (Participant 13) A third participant believes that “*sustainability is preserving the environment so that natural resources remain usable for as long as possible without being affected.*” (Participant 29)

I also found that some participants define sustainability as preserving the environment from pollution. One of them defines it as “*reducing environmental pollution and preserving green spaces and animal habitats by reducing the consumption of non-recyclable materials and reducing dependence on fossil fuels used in cars, airplanes, etc.*” (Participant 4) Another participant defines sustainability as “*using materials from the natural resources available to us in a way that does not harm the environment, including waste management, industrial processes, etc.*” (Participant 5)

In addition, some participants linked sustainability to sustainable practices such as the use of renewable energy: *“When I talk about sustainability, the term renewable energy always comes to mind, as I associate them greatly. This is because renewable energy is one of the pillars of achieving sustainability by using sources such as solar energy, wind energy, and others.”* (Participant 5) Another participant linked it to recycling: *“When I hear the word (sustainability), I always associate it with the environment, because when something is sustainable, it includes improvements and developments that include recycling and renewable consumption.”* (Participant 25)

It was found that women had a deeper understanding of the environmental dimension of sustainability compared to men, with 62.5% of women emphasizing this aspect compared to 13.6% of men. This trend may reflect environmental awareness efforts that specifically target women, or the influence of social and cultural values that encourage women to be more concerned with environmental issues. Looking at age groups, younger participants (21-30 years) showed greater awareness of the environmental dimension (50%), with this awareness decreasing with age. This trend could be attributed to younger generations being exposed to more environmental education through modern curricula and media campaigns.

Geographically, the Western region had the highest percentage of interest in the environmental dimension (40%) compared to other regions such as the Central and Eastern regions (30% each). This may reflect the influence of environmental conditions and challenges faced by some areas regarding natural resource preservation. Economically, middle- and high-income groups showed greater interest in the environmental dimension (30% and 28.6%, respectively) compared to lower-income groups (0%). This could be due to higher environmental awareness in wealthier circles, thanks to greater access to educational and cultural resources. Regarding education, participants with higher academic degrees demonstrated greater awareness of the environmental dimension (46.2%) compared to those

with lower education levels, suggesting that education plays a crucial role in promoting environmental awareness.

Code 4: The economic dimension of sustainability

A smaller number of participants ($n = 3$) adopted the economic aspect of the concept of sustainability. These participants linked sustainability to how institutions and companies maintain their continuity and financial prosperity. For them, achieving sustainability means ensuring that companies are able to operate efficiently and continuously while achieving profits and financial growth in the long term. This aspect of sustainability is important because it focuses on the economic growth and sustainable financial development of companies, which contributes to achieving broader economic stability and a positive impact on the communities these companies serve. One participant commented when asked about the concept of sustainability, *“I am from the team that focuses on the economic aspect of sustainability, the sustainability of institutions and companies and how to maintain their continuity and financial prosperity.”* (Participant 13) Another participant said, *“From my point of view, the concept of sustainability is closely linked to the business field, as I see that sustainability in business means the company’s ability to achieve sustainable profits and revenues that ensure its continued growth and prosperity. Therefore, it is not only companies that benefit, but society as a whole benefit from a sustainable work environment that leads to improving the quality of life and enhancing the economic stability of the community.”* (Participant 25)

The results showed that both men and women exhibited similar levels of awareness of the economic dimension of sustainability, with 9.1% of men and 12.5% of women recognizing this aspect. This indicates that concern with the economic aspects of sustainability, such as resource or financial sustainability, is not significantly tied to gender. Regarding age, participants aged 21-30 were the most aware of the economic dimension (20%), suggesting that this group may be more concerned with financial sustainability early in their careers.

Geographically, the Eastern and Central regions had the highest awareness of the economic dimension (20% each), reflecting a focus on local economies or industries that depend heavily on resource sustainability. In terms of income, the middle-income group showed greater awareness of the economic dimension compared to other groups, suggesting that this group may be more affected by economic sustainability due to its direct impact on their livelihoods. Educationally, participants with higher academic degrees were more concerned with the economic dimension of sustainability than those with lower education levels.

Code 5: The social dimension of sustainability

Some participants (n = 4) addressed the concept of sustainability from a social perspective. They saw that sustainability is related to the continuity of resources and basic services that contribute to improving the quality of life for all, and ensuring the availability of these services for future generations. From their point of view, this social concept includes a variety of vital areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. One participant stated that sustainability means *“using natural resources and basic services for as long as possible, so that they remain available to us and to future generations, while ensuring their continuity. For example, we must pay great attention to basic services such as education, public transportation, health institutions, etc. to ensure that they serve many generations. This also applies to natural resources and energy sources, as by preserving these resources, humanity can improve the quality of life in a sustainable manner.”* (Participant 16) In the same vein, another participant stated that sustainability means *“using natural resources in a way that ensures maximum benefit and ensures their continuity for future generations.”* (Participant 14)

For the social dimension, the results showed that men were more engaged with this aspect (18.2%) compared to women (0%). This may reflect the larger societal role that men play in some environments, which requires consideration of the impact of sustainability on

community resources. In terms of age, participants aged 31-40 were the most aware of the social dimension (18.8%). This may be because this age group is at a stage in life where the role of sustainability in supporting social services and community welfare becomes more relevant. Geographically, the Central region showed the highest focus on the social dimension (20%), which suggests that local policies or social conditions may enhance awareness of sustainability's importance at the community level.

Economically, the middle-income group displayed greater awareness of the social dimension (15%) compared to other groups. This indicates that this group may be more attuned to the effects of sustainability on social services, which they rely on directly. Educationally, participants with higher degrees showed greater interest in the social dimension (30%) compared to those with lower education, highlighting the positive influence of education in fostering an understanding of sustainability's social aspects.

Code 6: Source of participants' perceptions of sustainability

The responses showed that participants' understanding of the concept of sustainability came from multiple and diverse sources. While not everyone had a specific and comprehensive definition, there was a general idea that sustainability is about continuity and preserving resources for long periods, whether in an environmental, social, or economic context. The results indicated that half of the participants ($n = 15$) knew the concept of sustainability from a personal perspective or heard about the concept from the news, public interviews or in social gatherings, as the information available to them about sustainability seemed to come spontaneously and unorganized through these means.

I found that a large number of participants ($n = 10$) know sustainability from their personal perspective, expressing this with words such as "it comes to mind", "from my point of view", "*I expect*", etc. For example, one participant, when asked about the meaning of sustainability, stated "*perhaps it comes to mind something durable and continuous.*"

(Participant 9) Another participant stated, *“I think that the concept of sustainability from my point of view is clear from its name, as it refers to something that is sustainable or lasts for a very long time.”* (Participant 8)

A few participants mentioned that their source of information about the concept of sustainability is through news, public interviews, or social gatherings. I found one participant stating that *“I had no previous knowledge of the concept of sustainability that has begun to spread in recent years, but I may have heard about it from some news or in some simple interviews.”* (Participant 6) Another participant says, *“I hear a lot about the concept of sustainability, but I have not researched or delved into the subject.”* (Participant 29)

On the other hand, I found that a number of participants ($n = 6$) indicated that they learned about the concept of sustainability through Vision 2030 and government policies that promote sustainability in various sectors. This governmental influence played a major role in introducing them to sustainability and linking it to national policies and future developments. One participant stated that *“3-4 years ago, I had not heard the term sustainability at all, but it began to spread widely after the state adopted Vision 2030”* (Participant 26). Another participant said, *“Government institutions are the most associated with this term. I notice that the concept of sustainability is largely linked to national policies and goals within ministries and senior departments in the government, as this concept is considered relatively new, and that it is considered a priority for senior leadership in general.”* (Participant 21)

When examining the sources of participants' perceptions of sustainability, both men and women showed significant reliance on external sources, such as general news or social discussions and media interviews. 81.8% of men and 75% of women relied on these sources to shape their understanding of sustainability. This similarity indicates that both genders receive their information primarily from media and community sources, rather than delving into formal

or academic sustainability concepts. In terms of age, participants aged 31-40 were the most reliant on these sources (81.3%), likely due to their mid-career stage, which may involve more exposure to socially circulated information or media coverage of sustainability issues. Geographically, participants from the Northern and Southern regions were the most dependent on external sources (100% for both regions). This reliance may be due to limited access to academic or specialized resources in these areas, pushing individuals to rely more on media or social discussions.

In terms of income, lower-income groups were the most influenced by external sources (100%). This may indicate that these groups rely more on media or socially circulated information, as access to more in-depth or specialized sources may be less common among them. Finally, regarding education, the results showed no significant differences in the sources of participants' perceptions of sustainability by educational attainment. This suggests that education enhances individuals' ability to engage with socially and publicly shared information, though it may not always lead to full reliance on academic or formal sources, highlighting the continued influence of personal and public sources in shaping individuals' perceptions.

Code 7: Misconceptions and personal interpretations

The results indicated that sustainable consumption remains a relatively unfamiliar concept among Saudi consumers, with the majority of participants ($n = 20$) having limited exposure to it. The responses to the question "*What do you know about sustainable consumption?*" showed that a large number of participants had not heard of the term sustainable consumption before, expressing this with words such as "*I have never come across this term before*", "*I have never heard of it*", and "*I have heard of it for the first time*", indicating the general lack of awareness of the participants about the concept of sustainable consumption. The majority of these participants resorted to guesswork and personal

interpretations of the term based on the words that make it up, without certain knowledge. I found that some of them linked sustainable consumption to continuous daily needs (such as: water, food, ... etc.) and periodic or continuous consumption of necessary products and services. Examples of this are many, including the following:

“I have no idea about it, but I expect that it includes the necessities of life such as water, food, air, ... etc.” (Participant 3)
“I have never heard of this term before, but I think it refers to services that people always need, such as a barber, a laundry, etc.”
(Participant 10)

“I think sustainable consumption means the basic things that you always consume and do not give up, which means that you consume them permanently.” (Participant 12)

“The basics of life, such as food, drink, transportation, gasoline, and daily expenses.”
(Participant 15)

“I have never heard of sustainable consumption, but I think it refers to routine purchases, such as basic food items that are bought weekly or monthly to meet the needs of the house.” (Participant 27)

In addition, some participants linked the concept of sustainable consumption to the quality and continuity of products and services. For example, some participants defined sustainable consumption as follows:

“This is the first time I have heard the term ‘sustainable consumption’. I think it is about providing an excellent service that the customer cannot do without.” (Participant 21)

“It might be something that does not spoil easily, which means it is of high quality and lasts for a long time.” (Participant 24)

“I have not heard of this term before, but I think it means buying a product of high quality so that it lasts as long as possible, and maybe I can give it to someone else to benefit from after me.” (Participant 29)

“For me, this is the first time I have heard of the concept of sustainable consumption, and I have not researched it yet. But I expect that it is about how the company makes the customer consume its products on a permanent basis, whether it is daily, weekly or monthly, so that the customer is satisfied with this continuous consumption and does not negatively affect him.” (Participant 30)

The results showed that a significant portion of participants are unfamiliar with the relatively obscure concept of sustainable consumption. According to the gender distribution, men (72.7%) were more likely to adopt personal interpretations compared to women (50%). This difference may be explained by the possibility that women are more exposed to environmental topics or have a greater awareness of sustainability than men. Regarding age groups, the older participants (over 40 years old) were the most reliant on personal interpretations (100%), which may indicate that this group depends more on personal experiences or is less aware of modern concepts related to sustainability. Conversely, the younger age group (21-30 years) was less prone to adopting misconceptions (60%), suggesting that younger age groups have a higher awareness of these issues.

Additionally, there was variation among different geographic regions. Participants from the southern region were the most associated with misconceptions (80%), while the percentages were lower in the western (60%) and eastern (60%) regions. This disparity may reflect differences in environmental awareness levels and the sustainable practices available in

each region. Notably, participants with lower incomes (66.7%) and middle incomes (70%) were more prone to adopting misconceptions compared to high-income earners (57.1%). These results indicate that income levels significantly influence sustainability awareness, with higher-income individuals having more access to information and education.

In terms of educational level, those with less education had a higher percentage of misconceptions. The results showed that participants with a high school diploma or lower (100%) were the most reliant on their own interpretations compared to those with bachelor's degrees (61.5%) or master's degrees (50%). This suggests that higher education plays a role in promoting a correct understanding of sustainable consumption.

Code 8: Eco-friendly products

The responses of a number of participants (n = 9) indicated that they understand sustainable consumption as the use of products which are classified as eco-friendly. That is, they are those products that do not leave negative impacts on the surrounding environment. They reported that the use of eco-friendly products helps reduce pollution and environmental damage caused by human activities, which reflects an awareness of the importance of sustainable consumption and the need to adopt responsible consumer behaviors that support environmental preservation. I found that some participants define sustainable consumption as the use of eco-friendly products in general without specifying those products or giving practical examples of them. Consider the following example:

“Over the past years, I have been hearing a lot about the term “sustainable consumption” in my environment. Although I have not done in-depth research on the subject, I have understood that this term refers to the consumption of sustainable products that do not harm the environment. These products are also known as green products or eco-friendly products. On a personal level, I believe that sustainable consumption is important and

necessary because it is a duty towards the environment and future generations.”

(Participant 5)

“By understanding the term ‘sustainable consumption’, I realized that any product I consume should be eco-friendly. This means that I consume things that do not have a negative impact on the environment or the surroundings. This type of consumption allows me to continue to be sustainable in my consumption of resources.” (Participant 12)

“Sustainable consumption is buying things that are recyclable and eco-friendly.”

(Participant 28)

On the other hand, I found some participants mentioning practical examples and practices that express sustainable consumption from their point of view, such as reducing the use of plastic products and products that depend on fossil fuels. Here are some examples of this:

“Honestly, I always associate sustainable consumption with products that preserve the environment. For example, I should reduce the use of plastic products. When buying a product, I should check that the producing company is not wasting natural resources and is working to reduce the environmental impact.” (Participant 25)

“Sustainable consumption means choosing products that contribute to preserving the environment. For example, I look for eco-friendly products such as biodegradable bags instead of using plastic that does not decompose easily. Choosing between using plastic bags or biodegradable bags is part of sustainable consumption, as I choose what reduces environmental damage.” (Participant 18)

“Sustainable consumption is consumption that contributes to preserving the environment. I care about something that provides me with a service and also benefits the environment. On a personal level, I am interested in electric cars because they do

not produce harmful emissions like gasoline or diesel cars, which contributes to reducing air pollution and improving air quality in cities.” (Participant 19)

“Sustainable consumption is avoiding products that are harmful to the environment. For example, if there is something that greatly affects the environment, such as choosing between an electric car and a gasoline car, I will choose the electric car if the infrastructure in Saudi Arabia is ready for it.” (Participant 22)

“Sustainable consumption focuses on using products that do not cause harm to the environment. On a personal level, I have a farm in a remote area that does not have easy access to electricity. Instead of using traditional electricity or diesel generators, I bought a solar-powered camera to monitor the farm. This solution was excellent because it relies on clean energy and reduces dependence on petroleum resources.” (Participant 30)

The results indicated that some participants associate the concept of sustainable consumption with the use of eco-friendly products. In terms of gender, there was a close understanding between men (36.4%) and women (37.5%), indicating no significant difference between the two genders in this context. Regarding age, the younger age group (21-30 years) was the most associated with the idea of eco-friendly products (50%), while the older age group (over 40 years) showed no clear connection to this concept (0%). This may reflect the younger group’s interest in adopting modern environmental practices and increased awareness of these issues.

Furthermore, there was geographical variation, with the western region showing the highest awareness of using eco-friendly products (80%), followed by the southern region (60%). This reflects the availability of more environmental initiatives or awareness campaigns in these regions. Regarding income, high-income participants showed the highest association

with using eco-friendly products (71.4%), indicating their ability to purchase sustainable products, which may be more expensive than traditional ones. Additionally, those with a bachelor's degree (53.8%) were more aware of eco-friendly products compared to those with less education, reinforcing the link between education and environmental awareness.

Code 9: Recycling

A number of participants (n = 6) linked sustainable consumption to the concept of recycling, as they believe that recycling contributes significantly to preserving resources and reducing waste. I found that one participant believes that *“sustainable consumption is closely linked to recycling. When purchasing any product, we must always think about how to dispose of it after use. Can it be recycled? If the answer is yes, this means that it is in line with sustainable consumption practices.”* (Participant 4) Another participant defines sustainable consumption by saying, *“For me, sustainable consumption means purchasing products that can be easily recycled. I feel that this practice helps reduce waste and preserve the environment.”* (Participant 8) A third participant mentions that *“sustainable consumption depends largely on the principle of recycling. Recycling helps reduce the need to extract new resources and reduces waste. For example, there are some charities that collect large plastic materials such as mobile phones and others, as well as paper, for recycling. These efforts contribute to preserving the health of the environment and benefiting from existing materials. We need to promote recycling practices during this period.”* (27)

In terms of gender, men (22.7%) were more associated with this concept compared to women (12.5%), suggesting potential differences in environmental behaviours between the genders. Regarding age, the older age group (over 40 years) was the most aware of the importance of recycling (25%) compared to younger age groups. This could indicate that older age groups may be more connected to traditional practices that support resource conservation.

In terms of geographic regions, the eastern region had the highest percentage of participants aware of recycling (60%), which may reflect the availability of infrastructure or awareness programmes related to recycling in that region. Regarding income, the low-income group (33.3%) was the most associated with recycling, possibly due to the need to reduce waste or improve resource use. Regarding education, participants with less education (42.9%) were the most associated with recycling, suggesting that this group may rely more on recycling practices as part of their daily lives.

Code 10: Reusing

A number of participants (n = 4) linked the concept of sustainable consumption to avoiding single-use products in favour of reusing products that allow for reuse. These participants referred to a set of practices that fall under this concept, including using cloth bags instead of single-use plastic bags, and relying on glass straws instead of plastic straws. They also emphasized the importance of replacing plastic water bottles with installing a water purification filter in homes, which reduces the need to buy plastic water bottles repeatedly. These practices reflect their understanding of sustainable consumption and indicate their commitment to reducing reliance on single-use products and searching for sustainable alternatives. For example, one participant defines sustainable consumption by saying, *“I can define the concept of sustainable consumption as a consumption style that an individual follows in his daily life that supports the continuity of use for long periods. To illustrate this, let’s assume that you consume large quantities of drinking water at home. Would you prefer to constantly buy bottled water or install a filter to purify tap water in your home? I can explain sustainable consumption in this way.”* (Participant 14) One participant stated that *“sustainable consumption includes some practices that can be applied in daily life. For example, when you go to the supermarket, you can take a cloth bag or a reusable bag with you instead of using plastic bags, as plastic bags are harmful to the environment because they do not decompose*

easily. Having your own bag, you can always use it. Also, we can look at Starbucks, which uses paper straws that decompose. But if you do not want to use paper straws, you can bring a glass straw with you and use it continuously after washing it, which will eliminate the use of plastic straws. As for water bottles, it is preferable to use glass bottles instead of plastic ones, as they can be filled and used permanently. In this way, we achieve sustainable consumption by using products repeatedly, which reduces waste and contributes to preserving the environment.”

(Participant 2)

In terms of gender, men (18.2%) were more associated with this idea compared to women (12.5%). Regarding age, the younger age group (21-30 years) was the most inclined to adopt the idea of reusable products (20%), reflecting greater awareness among younger groups of the importance of reducing waste.

Regarding geographic regions, the eastern region showed the highest awareness of the idea of reusable products (60%), possibly reflecting progress in adopting sustainability practices in that region. Regarding income, middle-income (20%) and high-income (14.3%) groups showed more interest in reusable products compared to low-income groups. Furthermore, participants with higher education, such as a bachelor's degree (23.1%), showed a greater understanding of the concept of reusable products, indicating the role of education in promoting sustainable environmental practices.

Code 11: Quality

The majority of participants' responses (n = 28) indicated the importance of quality when making purchasing decisions, especially when it comes to food and electronic devices. Many participants indicated that they look for high-quality products and rely on ratings and reviews to verify product quality. Some also prefer products from certain countries because they believe they are of better quality. It was found that a number of participants (n = 6) give absolute importance to the quality factor. The following examples are illustrative:

“When buying any product or service, I always prefer high quality. For me, quality is a decisive factor because it ensures that the product or service will meet my expectations and last longer.” (Participant 1)

“Honestly, quality is the most important thing for me when choosing any product.” (Participant 9)

“The most important factor for me when buying any product is its quality. It is not my priority for the product to be eco-friendly in the first place, but I focus on quality, which depends greatly, from my point of view, on the country of origin. For example, I tend to choose American and European products, which are higher in price, because they have a good reputation in terms of quality compared to products from other countries.” (Participant 12)

“For me, quality is the most important factor when choosing any product. When it comes to products used in the home, I always prefer to choose high quality even if it means paying more. I believe that quality ensures better performance and a longer life of the product, which makes investing in it completely justified for me. So, “I have no problem paying a higher price to get a high-quality product that meets my needs perfectly.” (Participant 24)

On the other hand, I found that a large number of participants ($n = 12$) chose quality as the first factor influencing purchasing decisions. The following examples, among others, are indicative:

“When choosing any product, I consider quality first and then price second. If the product is of high quality, reasonably priced, and eco-friendly, it will definitely be my first choice.” (Participant 7)

“I consider quality first on my list of priorities, followed by price, especially when it comes to food and electronic devices.” (Participant 10)

“As they say, the best quality at the lowest price.” (Participant 13)

“When buying products, the first thing I look for is quality, and then I look at the price, which helps me make the right decision based on my requirements and expectations.” (Participant 17)

“What matters to me when choosing products is quality first and then the price of the product. Next, I am interested in knowing whether you have heard about this product

before, whether through advertisements, promotions or other people's experiences."

(Participant 26)

"Quality is the most important thing, then comes the price." (Participant 28)

In addition, I found that a large number of participants ($n = 10$) see the compatibility between the product's quality and its price as one of the most important factors when making purchasing decisions, for example:

"Quality and price are equally important, as I believe that consumers should get products whose price matches their quality and vice versa." (Participant 2)

"Quality versus price is the most important factor I look for when buying any product."
(Participant 19)

"For me personally, when I make a decision to buy any product in the market, there are two main points that come together in one point, which are quality and price. In other words, I care about the product being of high quality and at a reasonable price. I do not focus only on price and I do not focus only on quality, but I look for a balance between them." (Participant 30)

Quality is the most important factor for nearly all demographic groups. Participants place significant importance on quality, especially among males, where 100% reported this factor as crucial, compared to 75% of females. This trend is also more evident in older age groups, where all participants over the age of 31 (100%) prioritize quality, while 80% of younger participants (21-30 years) do so. Regarding income, the importance of quality is more pronounced among middle- and high-income groups, ranging between 95% and 100%, while it is only 66.7% for the low-income group. Furthermore, participants with higher academic degrees (bachelor's and master's) give greater importance to quality, with the percentage reaching 100%, compared to 84.6% for those with high school or diploma education.

Code 12: Price

For a large number of participants ($n = 22$), price is one of the most important factors when making a purchase decision. Participants tend to choose products with appropriate prices and quality. Some look for the best price offers and take advantage of discounts and promotions to get products at lower prices. I found that a large number of participants put price in second place after quality when making purchase decisions ($n = 12$). There are many examples including the following ones:

“When choosing products, I consider the quality of the product and then its price.”

(Participant 11)

“Quality and then price. Sometimes the order of importance of quality and price depends on how much I need the product.” (Participant 15)

“I look first for the highest quality, and then I always ask if there are discounts or promotions to get the same quality at a lower price.” (Participant 27)

*“The order of factors that I consider when making purchase decisions is as follows:
My need for the product, quality, price, and the name and reputation of the brand.
This way, I can be sure that I get a product that meets my needs and offers good value for money.”* (Participant 29)

In addition, a large number of participants ($n = 10$) reported that the balance between price and quality of the product is one of the most important factors when making purchasing decisions. The following examples are illustrative:

“When making a purchasing decision, I have to make sure that I get a product at a reasonable price compared to its quality.” (Participant 6)

“As for purchases, it depends on the type of product I am buying. Sometimes, I look for high quality even if the price is high, and other times it is the opposite. But in general, I always try to buy a product that combines quality and a reasonable price. The quality does not have to be excellent; it is enough that it is good or average.” (Participant 8)

“The price and quality must be compatible. Sometimes I buy products at a high price but they must be of high quality, while at other times I tend to buy products at a lower price and in this case, there are some compromises in terms of quality.” (Participant 21)

Price is the second most important factor but comes significantly after quality. The results show that price remains an important factor for all participants, with both males (72.7%) and females (75%) showing equal attention to this factor. Younger participants (21-30 years) indicate the importance of price by 80%, compared to 50% for those over 40 years old. In terms of income, participants from the Eastern region place the most importance on price (100%) compared to other regions. Additionally, those with higher education also show greater emphasis on price, with this factor being important to 80% of them.

Code 13: Need for use

The responses of many participants (n = 14) indicated that the actual need for the product is a major factor in making purchasing decisions. This shows that nearly half of the participants tend to focus on the necessity and practical use of the product before purchasing. This reflects a rational approach based on evaluating the real benefit of the product in meeting their current needs and requirements, which makes them more selective and accurate in their purchasing decisions. Examples of this are many, including:

“One of the most important factors when making a decision to buy a product is the extent of my personal need for this product.” (Participant 4)

“Is it a need or a luxury? “The answer to this question determines a large part of my decisions to purchase products.” (Participant 16)

“First, I must have a real need for the product, before I think about making a purchase decision.” (Participant 26)

“Of course, when making a purchase decision, I must be in need of this product.” (Participant 27)

“The factors I consider when making purchasing decisions are: my need for the product, quality, price, and the brand name and reputation. This way, I can be sure that I am getting a product that meets my needs and provides good value for money.” (Participant 29)

The analysis results indicate that the actual need for the product is an important factor for some participants. The data show that males (50%) focus more on need and usage compared to females (37.5%). The importance of need is particularly highlighted among older participants (100%), reflecting a rational approach that evaluates the product’s actual benefit in meeting their needs. Regarding regions, participants from the Central and Southern regions give more importance to need (60% and 80%, respectively), while less attention is seen in the Eastern and Northern regions. As for income groups, middle-income participants place more emphasis on need (55%) compared to other groups.

Code 14: Brand reputation

Some participants’ responses (n = 7) indicated that brand reputation and product reviews play an important role in their purchasing decisions. This indicates that these participants pay great attention to what others say about the brand and to the experiences of previous users with the product. When a brand is well-known, trusted and has a good reputation in the market, consumers feel confident in the quality of its products and are more willing to

buy them. Similarly, reading positive reviews and ratings online gives them a sense of security and enhances their decision to buy, while negative reviews may deter them from doing so. For example, one participant said, *“After product quality, I pay great attention to brand reputation and online reviews when making purchasing decisions.”* (Participant 5) Another participant said, *“My previous experience and the recommendations I receive about the product greatly influence my purchasing decision.”* (Participant 13)

The results show that brand reputation plays an important role in purchase decisions. This factor is notably more important to females (50%) compared to males (13.6%). The data also indicate that younger participants (21-30 years) place more importance on brand reputation (50%), while this percentage drops to 25% among older participants. Additionally, high-income groups show more concern for brand reputation, with 42.9% prioritizing it compared to other groups. Moreover, participants with higher education tend to give more attention to reviews and opinions, with this percentage reaching 38.5%.

Code 15: Eco-friendly relationship

A minority of participants (n = 6) indicated that they attach importance to the environmental impact of products when making purchasing decisions. This trend reflects a growing interest in environmental responsibility and a desire to contribute to preserving the environment. Where I found that these participants prefer to choose products that have eco-friendly characteristics, such as those made from recyclable materials, for example:

“I take into account the importance of choosing an eco-friendly product for some needs ... cooking tools for example.” (Participant 4)

“When choosing any product, I consider the quality first and then the price second, and if the product has high quality, a reasonable price and is eco-friendly, it will definitely be my first choice.” (Participant 7)

“When making purchasing decisions, I prefer products that do not affect the surrounding environment. For example, for plastic products, I make sure that they are stamped with a recyclable label, such as cups and garbage bags. I try to reduce the use of plastic bags as much as possible because they are harmful to the environment.” (Participant 16)

Although environmental friendliness is considered less important among participants, some groups give significant weight to this factor. The results show that younger age groups (21-30 years) care about this aspect by 40%, while males (22.7%) show more interest compared to females (12.5%). The results also indicate that middle-income groups give more importance to environmental friendliness (25%) compared to other groups.

Code 16: Searching for sustainable products

The responses of a large number of participants (n = 20) indicated that they had not previously searched for sustainable or eco-friendly products. This reflects the lack of awareness or interest in sustainable environmental choices among participants, and highlights the limited recognition of these products and their potential environmental and societal benefits among participants. Some participants responded negatively when asked if they had ever looked for sustainable or eco-friendly products without specifying a reason, while others indicated that this was due to lack of awareness or unavailability of these products. Examples of this include:

“I have never tried to look for eco-friendly products because this culture is new in our country.” (Participant 3)

“Honestly, I did not seek to learn about them, but rather avoided them. The reason is due to lack of awareness and encouragement. No one has contacted me about this topic, I have never heard of it, and I have not received any messages on social media or WhatsApp regarding sustainable products. In the past, we used to hear a lot about topics

such as rationalizing water consumption, and they would come to my door and distribute tools to rationalize water, but I have not heard about sustainable products until now.” (Participant 6)

“I haven’t specifically looked for these products, but I have noticed their absence and never felt the need to seek them out” (Participant 15)

“Honestly, I’ve never cared about them, I haven’t looked for them, and I don’t know what they look like.” (Participant 17)

“No, I’ve never looked before. I think it’s because of the lack of awareness about eco-friendly products and the lack of encouragement to use these products.” (Participant 28)

In addition, some participants’ responses indicate a negative attitude towards sustainable or eco-friendly products. For example, one participant expressed health concerns towards sustainable products, saying:

“Honestly, no. I don’t like buying these products, and when I find them, I avoid them. As for recycled products, I don’t think they are healthy. I wonder about the goals of selling recycled products, is it to preserve the environment or reduce costs? I feel deceived when I’m sold a cheaper product and presented as eco-friendly. I have real health concerns about these products, as many of them don’t provide enough information about the recycling process. For me, the environmental issue is not one of the primary criteria when purchasing. If I find two products of equal quality, I might consider their impact on the environment. For example, if there is a local product that is made in a sustainable way that respects the environment and resources, I will prefer it. However, if it is a commercial product from a global company that uses sustainability only to reduce costs, I do not care. Sustainability is not a primary criterion for me, but

rather a secondary criterion if the product succeeds in the other criteria. However, in some products, sustainability may be a priority if it is related to local natural resources.” (Participant 13)

Some participants showed a great degree of disinterest, as one participant said, “No, not at all. I have not reached the stage of paying excessive attention to monitoring products in terms of their environmental friendliness. I focus mainly on quality and price. “I don’t think it’s my responsibility to choose eco-friendly products.” (Participant 20) Another participant said, “I’ve never looked for eco-friendly products, and I’m not interested in buying them unless they save me money at the moment.” (Participant 30)

On the other hand, one third of participants (n = 10) indicated that they had previously looked for sustainable or eco-friendly products, although the responses indicated that they searched narrowly for specific products such as cooking and food preservation tools, cosmetics, and electric cars. Examples of this include:

“Yes. I have previously searched for items used by children such as utensils made of organic silicone, toys, and organic pacifiers, which fall within the scope of eco-friendly products. “They are often labelled as healthy and eco-friendly, but I don’t know if they are completely biodegradable or not.” (Participant 2)

“Yes, I have looked for cosmetics and skincare products that are eco-friendly.”
(Participant 5)

“Yes, I have looked for some eco-friendly products, especially electric cars, before I bought my current car.” (Participant 7)

“Yes, I have looked for eco-friendly cutlery, and when I see signs that say they are eco-friendly or sustainable, I get excited about buying them.” (Participant 12)

“Honestly, I have looked for eco-friendly products such as cooking and serving utensils such as spoons, forks, and plates. I make sure to choose tools made of wood instead of plastic, which are less harmful to the environment.” (Participant 25)

The analysis results show that all participants, regardless of gender, age, geographic region, income level, or education, were interested in searching for sustainable products. This result reflects a growing general awareness of the importance of sustainable products in society and indicates that the interest in products contributing to environmental preservation is no longer limited to a specific group.

Code 17: The importance of sustainable products

Although a large number of participants reported that they had not previously searched for sustainable products, the majority of participants (n = 27) stressed the importance of purchasing sustainable products. In other words, many participants admitted to not actively searching for sustainable products, the majority (n = 27) acknowledged their importance during the interview. After being introduced to the concept, they recognized the potential benefits of sustainable products for environmental preservation and the health of future generations. They expressed their awareness during the interview of the importance of these products in preserving the environment and the health of future generations. Some of them indicated that their motivation for choosing sustainable products stems from their moral and religious commitment to protecting natural resources and reducing pollution. They also expressed their willingness to change their consumption habits and search for eco-friendly alternatives, stressing the need to increase awareness and adopt policies that support sustainability. This support reflects a positive shift in environmental awareness among participants, despite their not previously searching for these products. The following are examples of participants' responses regarding the importance of purchasing sustainable products:

“Definitely. “I think that buying sustainable products should be part of the daily shopping culture for home needs, outside or at work ... It should become part of my habits and traditions.” (Participant 1)

“Very important and I hope that the state will work to raise awareness and clarify the importance of sustainable products and adopt policies that will provide sustainable alternatives for all products.” (Participant 4)

“Definitely, this is important to me. In our daily life, there are many things where we need sustainable products. I know the impact of not eco-friendly products on nature and wildlife. This is more human than anything else because I am part of the life system, and what negatively affects nature will also affect me.” (Participant 7)

“Buying sustainable products is very important, without a doubt ... from a religious and ethical standpoint to preserve future generations.” (Participant 15)

“Certainly, buying sustainable products is important and will positively affect our lives, but there must be a culture and awareness of the importance of sustainable products and the impact of non-sustainable products on the environment. As a person who is aware of this, I will be more interested in sustainable products.” (Participant 21)

“Definitely, I support the use of sustainable products. Even if the impact of non-sustainable products on the environment is small, it accumulates over time and negatively affects the environment. Therefore, we must be aware of this.” (Participant 22)

A significant proportion of participants considered buying sustainable products important. 100% of women expressed the importance of these products, compared to 95.5% of men. Among the age groups, younger participants (21-30 years old) showed the highest

appreciation for sustainable products at 100%, while the age group (31-40 years old) showed a slightly lower percentage (93.8%). Geographically, the Eastern and Southern regions showed slightly lower percentages (90%) compared to other regions. Regarding income, the interest in purchasing sustainable products was almost equal across the groups, except for the middle-income group, which showed a slightly lower percentage (95%). The importance of sustainable products is shared by most participants, regardless of demographic characteristics. However, there are slight differences between age groups, geographic regions, and income levels, suggesting that these factors have a limited influence on the importance of consuming sustainable products.

Code 18: Religious and ethical motivation for purchasing sustainable products

Half of the participants' responses (n = 15) indicated that they have strong moral and religious motivations for purchasing sustainable products. Many of these participants see the commitment to purchasing eco-friendly products as an integral part of their religious duty, as protecting and preserving the environment is a core religious value. In addition, these participants express a sense of moral responsibility towards future generations, emphasizing that protecting the earth and its natural resources is a duty that falls on everyone. These participants believe that preserving the environment reflects their moral and religious values, as religion urges them to avoid waste and keep the environment clean. From an ethical perspective, they see failure to protect the environment as a failure to fulfil their duty towards society. Therefore, they believe in the importance of purchasing sustainable products as a means of fulfilling this shared responsibility. Here are examples of participants' responses regarding the religious and ethical motivation for purchasing sustainable products:

“As for religious as well as ethical motivations, the significant negative effects of pollution on the environment have become clear to us. Pollution has a tangible impact on the quality of air, water and soil, which harms and impacts the health of

humans, animals and plants. Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of the importance of choosing products that do not contribute to this pollution, and to avoid using products that cause environmental damage.” (Participant 4)

“I believe that purchasing eco-friendly products is a moral duty that falls on us, because it is directly related to preserving the environment and the health of future generations. In addition to the ethical motivation, there is also a religious motivation that calls on us to preserve and protect the environment. The principles of Islam promote the value of preserving nature and not harming it, which makes it our duty to choose products that are in line with these principles.” (Participant 5)

“Islamic values urge Muslims to save and economize, which reinforces the importance of sustainable products. The Earth is not only ours, but also for future generations, and it is our religious and ethical duty to preserve it.” (Participant 8)

“From a moral and religious perspective, we see the impact of unsustainable products on the nature that God has urged us to preserve. Plastic, car exhausts, and factories have major negative effects that we must try to avoid.” (Participant 18)

“The motivation is not limited to the moral aspect only, but also includes the religious aspect that urges us to avoid harming society. The long-term negative effects of consumption make sustainable products a necessity. Therefore, we must be careful to buy sustainable products after knowing their benefits and positive impact on society and the environment.” (Participant 27)

“The earth belongs to everyone, and from a religious and moral standpoint, we must preserve the environment so that everyone can benefit from natural resources. We must use eco-friendly products and consume them more than others to preserve the earth and the health of the environment for future generations.” (Participant 29)

The results indicated that women were more influenced by religious and ethical motivations at 62.5%, compared to men at 45.5%. The age group (21-30 years) was the most concerned with religious motivation at 60%, compared to other age groups. Geographically, the Southern region was the most influenced by religious motives (80%), while the Central region was the least influenced (30%). In terms of income, participants from low-income groups were the most influenced by religious and ethical motives (66.7%), while the middle-income group was less influenced (45%), and the high-income group was at 57.1%.

Code 19: Environmental Motivation

A large number of participants (n = 14) indicated the importance of preserving the environment as a major motivation for purchasing sustainable products. These participants are fully aware of the negative impacts that can result from using not eco-friendly products, such as environmental pollution and global warming. They have seen with their own eyes how environmentally harmful products can contribute to natural disasters and negatively impact wildlife and plants. In addition, participants indicate that using sustainable products contributes to reducing waste and limiting environmental pollution. They are aware that plastic products and harmful chemicals can remain in the environment for long periods, causing lasting damage to wildlife and plants. Therefore, they see this as a great motivation to buy and use sustainable products, examples of which are as follows:

“My main motivation is the environment and the negative impacts I see from not eco-friendly products. This is very important to me, because I have witnessed first-hand how these products have caused natural disasters and negatively affected nature and life. I consider the human factor in this context to be more important than anything else, as I am part of the integrated ecosystem. Any negative impact on the environment necessarily affects my life and the lives of others as well.” (Participant 7)

“Humans must strive to achieve a public interest for the earth and the environment in which we live, because improving the environment benefits us and future generations. Hence, I consider preserving the environment to be the most important motivation for using sustainable products. I believe that we have a responsibility to preserve the environment for all future generations.” (Participant 11)

“We must consider the environmental benefits of sustainable products. The environment is greatly affected by the excessive use of plastics and car exhausts, which lead to air pollution and environmental degradation. Therefore, we need to be aware of the importance of reducing the consumption of products that are harmful to the environment and looking for sustainable alternatives.” (Participant 7) 16)

“It is necessary to use sustainable products and work to reduce the use of plastic materials, such as plastic spoons, as recycling them requires time and effort. Reducing waste and paying attention to recycling materials enhances environmental conservation and reduces pollution.” (Participant 25)

“In addition, the environmental motivation is not only a result of moral or religious motives but is also a response to modern environmental problems such as global warming and others. Therefore, we must be aware of the importance of sustainable products and work to protect our planet for future generations.” (Participant 26)

Contrary to religious motivations, the results showed that men expressed greater interest in environmental motivation (50%) compared to women (37.5%). The age group (21-30 years) emerged as the most environmentally motivated (70%). Geographically, participants from the Northern region showed significant interest in environmental motivation (60%), compared to the Southern region (40%). Regarding income, the high-income group was the

most affected by environmental motivation (57.1%) compared to the low-income group (33.3%).

Code 20: Unavailability of sustainable products

The responses of the majority of participants (n = 25) indicated the scarcity of sustainable and eco-friendly products in the markets. When these products are available, they are often limited to specific places such as supermarket chains in large cities and some famous brands. Some participants also noted the limited variety of these products, as they are often limited to biodegradable bags only. This indicates an urgent need to expand the range of sustainable products and make them more widely available in various markets. The following examples are illustrative:

“It is very rare for me to see eco-friendly products, except in some that cafés may use paper straws. Also, some big brands, like Zara, replace plastic bags and use reusable cloth bags. I think sustainable products may be more available in big cities than in small cities.” (Participant 2)

“On a personal level, I find it difficult because of the limited availability of eco-friendly products.” (Participant 5)

“I think that on a societal level, we are very behind in terms of sustainable products. For me, I rarely find eco-friendly and recyclable products, and I often have to buy non-recyclable products.” (Participant 14)

“Sustainable products are very rare.. I don’t see them very much here in Saudi Arabia.” (Participant 17)

“Since I study and live abroad, I notice that we are still in the development phase towards a culture of sustainable products. Sustainable and eco-friendly products are very rare in Saudi Arabia.” (Participant 20)

“Eco-friendly products are very rare. Although I am informed and follow accounts specialized in this field, However, I rarely see or hear about these products in Saudi Arabia.” (Participant 21)

“I rarely see or hear about eco-friendly products. For example, eco-friendly garbage bags are few and of poor quality, and sometimes they are transparent, which I do not like.” (Participant 24)

“At the moment, eco-friendly products are not widely available, only some products such as electric cars, or recyclable plastic utensils in restaurants. But there is no widespread of sustainable and eco-friendly products.” (Participant 26)

“Eco-friendly products are very rare and almost non-existent. I was exposed to some of them in a simple way in some restaurants and clothing stores, and sometimes in food products.” (Participant 29)

The results showed that the lack of availability of sustainable products was one of the most significant barriers faced by participants. Women reported this issue at 100%, compared to 77.3% of men. Among age groups, younger participants (21-30 years) were the most affected by this issue at 100%. Geographically, the Eastern, Southern, and Central regions had high percentages (100%) compared to other regions, which showed lower percentages. Regarding income, both low- and high-income groups reported significant impact from this issue at 100%. The lack of availability of sustainable products is a major barrier for consumers across all groups, with the impact being more pronounced among women, young people, and residents of the Eastern and Southern regions.

Code 21: Lack of awareness of the importance of sustainable products

Many participants (n = 15) expressed a lack of awareness of sustainable products and their importance, indicating that many people do not realize the role of these products in

preserving the environment. They stressed that the lack of sufficient awareness campaigns and weak environmental education contribute to the continued use of products that are harmful to the environment. Some participants also indicated the need to enhance community awareness through media and educational campaigns that enhance the public's understanding of the importance of sustainability and push them towards adopting an eco-friendlier lifestyle. Here are some examples of this:

"I have never paid attention to whether products are eco-friendly or not, due to the lack of education and awareness about the importance of these products and their role in preserving the environment. I hope that awareness and education campaigns on this topic will increase, and that its importance for our future will be clarified."

(Participant 3)

"Honestly, I did not seek to learn about them. The reason is due to the lack of awareness and encouragement. "No one has contacted me about this, I have never heard of it, and I have not received any messages on social media or WhatsApp about sustainable products. In the past, we used to hear a lot about topics like water conservation, and they would come to my door and hand out water conservation tools, but I have not heard about sustainable products until now." (Participant 6)

"Sustainable products play a major role in preserving the environment, but awareness of the importance of these products and their role in preserving the environment requires a lot of awareness, especially among children from a young age. If we do not grow up aware of the importance of preserving the environment, it will be difficult to apply these practices later." (Participant 7)

"Unfortunately, our awareness regarding this point is very low. There are motives for purchasing sustainable products, the most important of which is preserving the

environment, but awareness of the role of sustainable products in preserving the environment must increase so that these motives turn into a consumer culture for society.” (Participant 11)

“Lack of awareness is a major barrier to the consumer’s adoption of sustainable products. I believe that the relevant government agencies should use social media to spread awareness about the importance of purchasing eco-friendly products.”
(Participant 12)

“I had no previous knowledge about sustainable products, and I was not interested in them due to the lack of information about them, and this reflects a deficiency in awareness and education about these products and their importance. I hope that the state and the agencies concerned with the environment will raise awareness and educate about the importance of sustainable products and their role in preserving the environment.” (Participant 27)

The results indicated that women were more affected by the lack of awareness about the importance of sustainable products at 62.5%, compared to men (45.5%). The age group (31-40 years) was the most affected (56.3%), while participants over 40 showed the least impact (25%). Geographically, the Central region was the most affected by the lack of awareness (70%), while the impact was lower in other regions. Regarding income, participants from low-income groups were more affected by the lack of awareness (66.7%) compared to middle- and high-income groups.

Code 22: Increase in the prices of sustainable products

Also, some participants (n = 3) indicated that the high prices of sustainable products are a barrier for consumers, as they see the high cost of these products as making them unaffordable for everyone, especially for low-income families. They stressed that this limits

the ability of individuals to regularly purchase eco-friendly products, which leads to continued reliance on traditional products that are usually less expensive. One participant said, *“The high prices of sustainable products are also a barrier. For example, eco-friendly clothing, which decomposes naturally, is usually more expensive than regular clothing. I have watched videos of people who have completely transformed their lives to be eco-friendly, and I notice that their cost of living has become much higher. Despite the importance of switching to sustainable products, their high prices can be a barrier, especially for low-income people.”* (Participant 2)

These participants also added the poor quality of sustainable products with their high prices as an additional barrier for consumers. They indicated that sometimes sustainable products are of lower quality than other products, which makes them hesitant to purchase them despite their desire to support eco-friendly products. One participant said, *“The difficulty we face in finding alternatives to unsustainable products is that they are often expensive or of poor quality, which makes it difficult to find them in a regular supermarket.”* (Participant 16) Another participant said, *“Despite my awareness of the importance of sustainable products, their high prices are a big barrier for me. When I compare the prices of sustainable products to regular products, I find that sustainable products are much more expensive, and sometimes of lower quality. This makes me hesitate to buy sustainable products and prefer regular products that are cheaper and of higher quality.”* (Participant 22).

The results showed that women were more affected by the high prices of sustainable products (12.5%) compared to men (9.1%). The younger age group (21-30 years) was the most affected by high prices (20%), while older age groups were less concerned about this issue. Geographically, the Eastern region was the most affected by high prices (40%), while other regions showed less impact. Regarding income, low-income groups did not show much concern about high prices compared to the high-income group (14.3%).

Code 23: The difference between Islamic values and cultural influences

The responses of the majority of participants (n = 22) indicated the pivotal role that religion plays in the life of the Saudi citizen in general. Many of these participants (n = 12) consider religion to be the foundation and most important, and that customs, traditions and societal culture may change over time while religion remains constant and a reference. They also see Islamic values as logical, justified and binding on all, which makes them superior to cultural values, societal customs and traditions. Examples of this are many, including:

“Customs and traditions may be imposed on you by your family and society, and sometimes you may find yourself applying them without conviction. But in general, religion is more important than customs, traditions, and cultural values.”

(Participant 2)

“Religion is the foundation on which other things are linked. Some customs may change over time, but in the end, we always return to religion.” (Participant 8)

“Religion is about fearing God and obeying Him, and that your morals and deeds benefit you and society. As for customs and traditions, they are about thinking about people and fearing their opinion.” (Participant 10)

“Religion is an integral part of the life of the Saudi citizen in all his daily affairs, and it forms the basis for organizing his life from waking up to sleeping. It is an essential element that cannot be divided, and it must be followed completely.” (Participant 12)

“When talking about Islamic values, they are binding values that everyone must adhere to. Cultural values may not be equally binding, and in our society, people often follow religious values because they are more convincing, even if they conflict with other values Cultural.” (Participant 14)

“Religion is the strongest motivator in society, which makes it difficult to violate its teachings. However, customs and traditions may be easier to violate, especially if you are not being watched by people.” (Participant 17)

“Our society adopts Islamic law (Sharia), which is based solely on the Quran and the Sunnah (Prophet’s tradition), so if customs and traditions violate religious values in any aspect, they are unacceptable.” (Participant 19)

“Customs and traditions often have no clear meaning or reason, unlike Islamic principles, which you can always find a reason and justification for their existence.”
(Participant 23)

While a large number of these participants (n = 10) see religion as the basis from which culture, customs and traditions in Islamic society stem. They also point out that these customs and traditions often reflect the religious values and principles with which they were raised. They believe that culture in Islamic society cannot be separated from religion, but rather is an extension of it and an expression of its teachings. Examples of this include:

“I see that customs and traditions are shaped by the person himself and what he derives from his environment. For us as a religious Muslim community, most of the customs and traditions that I adopt came from my family and society, so they are closely linked to religion.” (Participant 1)

“Religion is what directs culture. Sure, customs and traditions may have existed before Islam, but religion is the foundation upon which culture, customs and traditions are built in our society.” (Participant 6)

“I see that religious values are the foundation upon which everything in life is built, including customs, traditions and culture.” (Participant 7)

“We Muslims welcome any culture that promotes Islamic values and does not contradict them. For example, the culture of not being extravagant is stipulated in the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him).” (Participant 20)

“We live in a religious culture, where our customs and traditions are shaped by religious upbringing. This culture varies from one family to another based on their religious knowledge and education. In Saudi Arabia, customs differ between remote and educated areas based on the level of religious knowledge.” (Participant 27)

“The culture is originally defined as something that does not contradict religion, but recently, our culture has been influenced by Western cultures, which has led to major changes in our customs and traditions. However, religion still often forms the basic background of culture.” (Participant 28)

The study results indicate that religion is a fundamental driver of consumer behaviour in society, with 62.5% of females and 77.3% of males indicating that religion plays a crucial role in shaping their purchasing decisions. This influence appears to increase with age, reaching 100% among participants over 40 years old. This reflects the importance of religion as a primary factor influencing purchasing behaviour, especially among older age groups.

Geographically, participants in the eastern and western regions (100%) are more influenced by religious values in their purchasing behaviour, which may be related to the cultural nature of those areas. Additionally, the influence of religion seems to be stronger among participants with low income (100%) compared to those with medium and high incomes, indicating that individuals with lower income rely more heavily on religious values to guide their consumption behaviour.

Code 24: Distinguishing between fixed religious values and changing cultural practices

On the other hand, minority of the participants (n = 4) indicated that there is a difference between religious values and cultural practices within Saudi society. They believe that religious values are fixed and do not change with time or location. On the other hand, they believe that cultural practices change and develop over time and are affected by social, economic, and geographical factors. What is acceptable and customary in one society may be unacceptable or unknown in another society. Examples of this include:

“The main difference is that religion is constant among all Muslims, while culture varies from place to place. What may be normal in one society may not be acceptable in another.” (Participant 5)

“For me, I see that customs and traditions can differ from one region to another and from one time period to another, and are also affected by the financial and educational situation on a personal level. On the other hand, religious values are considered fixed constants that do not change as customs and traditions change.” (Participant 11)

“Customs and traditions are things that people know, love and apply in their societies, and may be rejected in other societies. As for religion, it is fixed rulings, orders and prohibitions that cover all areas and include all segments of society and at all times and seasons. Customs and traditions differ from one region to another, as the customs of the people of the south differ from those of the people of the north, east and west. As for religion, its legislation, acceptance and rejection depend on the commands of the Lord of the Worlds through the messengers and prophets, while customs and traditions depend on the acceptance of the society itself. Therefore, a person can choose to adhere to his customs and his local traditions without affecting his religious affiliation.” (Participant 16)

The study results show that 30% of participants aged 21-30, and 30% from the central region, have a greater ability to distinguish between fixed religious values and changing cultural practices. This can be interpreted as younger groups being more open to new ideas and more aware of the need to differentiate between religion and culture. In contrast, this percentage is lower among older age groups, suggesting a more entrenched adherence to cultural practices within this demographic.

Code 25: Entanglement between religion and culture

Some participants (n = 3) indicated that there is a great confusion between the concept of religion and culture in Saudi society, which sometimes leads to difficulty in distinguishing between what is religious and what is cultural. This confusion can arise from the intertwining of religious values with traditional cultural practices, as customs and traditions are often treated as an integral part of religion, although some of them may be inspired only by the social and environmental contexts of the society. One participant said, *“In our society, I think we tend to confuse religion and culture, which affects our daily practices. Religion is linked to legislation from God and His Messenger, but in society we sometimes confuse the Islamic values that we must adhere to with the customs, traditions, and cultural practices of society.”* (Participant 4) Another participant said, *“We have confusion between the concept of religion and culture. Despite the common points between them in our society, we find some practices that are religiously acceptable while the general culture of society rejects them. We also find some customs and traditions that are socially acceptable despite being religiously rejected.”* (Participant 30).

The study revealed that 12.5% of females and 9.1% of males experience difficulty distinguishing between religion and culture, indicating an overlap between religious values and everyday cultural practices. This overlap is more pronounced among younger age groups

(20%), suggesting a need to enhance the understanding of the differences between religion and culture among youth.

Code 26: Customs and Traditions as a Dominant Factor

The responses of the majority of participants (n = 24) indicated the dominance of customs and traditions in consumer purchasing culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which highlights their great influence on consumer behaviour compared to religious values. Participants note that customs and traditions play a major role in determining the volume of consumption, especially in social occasions such as banquets and the month of Ramadan. Large quantities of food are served and lavish meals are part of the tradition, which can lead to waste and extravagance. Examples of this include:

“I think most people are more influenced by customs and traditions. For example, in banquets, it is necessary to have an exaggerated amount of food, such as sacrifices and a table that extends from one end to the other. This is part of the customs and traditions that many people follow. Also, during the month of Ramadan, we find ourselves buying more than we can afford and need. The question here is: Do we consume everything we buy or waste the excess? If you consume everything you buy, that is good, but if you waste the excess, that is extravagance and contradicts religious teachings.” (Participant 2)

“For example, honouring a guest is not specifically mentioned in the Quran and requires this amount of attention, but because of customs and traditions, a person tries to reach the highest level of honour, which sometimes leads to extravagance and food waste. On social and religious occasions such as Ramadan, people buy new decorations and tools every year, and this is part of customs and traditions and not the teachings of religion.” (Participant 4)

“Unfortunately, in reality, customs often control occasions rather than adhering to the teachings of religion. For example, if you go to any occasion, you will find that customs and traditions play a greater role than religion in organizing things. There is a noticeable percentage of extravagance in such occasions, as it is assumed that abundant food is served regardless of the actual quantities required. Also, the well-known proverb says “more is more than less”, while religion states that “one food is enough for two, and two is enough for three.” (Participant 6)

“In our society, people tend to consume more than they need to please others and satisfy their desires, influenced by the role of famous people and advertisements.” (Participant 10)

“Some People buy more than they need in order to please others or to provide a meal that suits their financial or social status, which contradicts the principles of religion that call for not being wasteful. On occasions, some seek to provide large quantities of food, which reflects the influence of customs and traditions on consumption behaviour.” (Participant 23)

Furthermore, some participants believe that social culture plays a major role in shaping consumption behaviour, as individuals are influenced by social customs and social appearances more than religious values. This contributes to adopting consumption habits based on ostentation and appearances rather than actual need. Examples of this include:

“I believe that 99% of consumption behaviour in the Kingdom is based on social customs. Social ties in Saudi society are very strong compared to other countries, which greatly affects consumption behaviour.” (Participant 12)

“Although religion is considered an ideal framework for practising customs and traditions, reality shows that cultural and social factors greatly influence

individuals' behaviour, even in the way food is presented. For example, offering your guest a glass of juice and a sandwich may not be enough according to customs and traditions, as the meal should be more luxurious. Therefore, culture plays a major role in the issue of consumption, especially in social occasions and hospitality."

(Participant 14)

"In my opinion, customs and traditions are the main factor in the culture of consumption in our society. For example, some foods are considered traditional on certain days such as Friday, and you notice that restaurants may be less crowded on other days. These examples indicate that customs and traditions have a greater influence than religion on daily consumption behaviour." (Participant 16)

"Some people buy more than they need in order to please others or to provide a meal that suits their financial or social status, which contradicts the principles of religion that call for not being extravagant. On occasions, some seek to provide large quantities of food, which reflects the influence of customs and traditions on consumption behaviour." (Participant 23)

"Customs and traditions influence consumption behaviour more than religion. For example, in the past, societies lived with limited resources and provided simple hospitality, but as society developed and resources increased, ostentation of appearances and excessive spending became part of the culture, reflecting the influence of customs and traditions on consumption behaviour." (Participant 25)

Some participants also noted that customs and traditions influence consumption behaviour more than religion. For example, cultural customs are adhered to in serving food and ostentatious hospitality, even if this contradicts the principles of religion that call for moderation. One participant said: *"Unfortunately, customs often control events rather than*

adherence to religious teachings. For example, if you go to any event, you will find that customs and traditions play a greater role than religion in organizing things. There is a noticeable percentage of extravagance in such events, as it is assumed that abundant food is served regardless of the actual quantities required. The well-known proverb says “more is better than less”, while religion states that “one food is enough for two, and two is enough for three.” (Participant 6) Another participant stated: *“I think customs and traditions play a much greater role than religion in some cases. Even when it comes to issues such as extravagance, people often rely on customs and traditions rather than religious principles. For example, some may ignore the idea that overspending is considered extravagance and view it from the perspective of customs and traditions more, as I see that the percentage of influence of customs and traditions reaches about 80%.”* (Participant 26)

Also, advertisements, social media, and the opinions of those close to them play a role in shaping consumption behaviour from the perspective of participants, which adds to the strong influence of customs and traditions in Saudi society. I found one participant saying: *“Consumption behaviour in the Saudi market is largely shaped by the culture of society, in addition to being affected by advertisements, social media, and the opinions of those close to them”* (Participant 3). Another participant states: *“In our society, people tend to consume more than they need to please others and satisfy their desires, which are influenced by the role of famous people and advertisements.”* (Participant 10)

The study results indicate that customs and traditions are one of the main factors influencing consumer behaviour. About 93.8% of participants in the 31-40 age group stated that customs and traditions significantly affect their purchasing decisions, reflecting a substantial impact of established customs in this age group. Participants from the southern and western regions (100% and 90%, respectively) are also noticeably influenced by traditions, reflecting a stronger adherence to social customs in these areas compared to others.

Regarding education, the study indicated that participants with higher education (such as master's degree holders) tend to be less influenced by customs and traditions than those with lower qualifications.

Code 27: Intersection of customs and traditions with religion

On the other hand, some participants (n = 6) indicated that the overlap between religion and culture constitutes a complex dimension in shaping individuals' consumer behaviour, as the influence of customs and traditions interacts with religious values in a way that complements and affects purchasing decisions Spending. Examples of this include:

“Customs, traditions and religion are closely intertwined. In my opinion, their influence cannot be separated from each other, but rather they complement each other in shaping individuals' consumer behaviour.” (Participant 1)

“In Saudi Arabia, the influence of customs and traditions overlaps with religion. From a religious perspective, we are fortunate that all products in the market comply with Islamic law. But from a customs and traditions perspective, you find that we tend to over consume. This is part of the culture and not religion. Indeed, for example, customs such as honouring guests may lead to a problem in overconsumption, when we forget that religion forbids us from extravagance. So, the issue is complex as religion overlaps with culture in purchasing behaviour.”
(Participant 9)

“I see the issue as a mixture of customs, traditions and religion. We have customs and traditions that make us keen to show generosity, but at the same time we try to be generous without reaching the point of extravagance. Therefore, customs and traditions are combined with religion in a way that avoids extravagance, so that we can maintain our generosity without affecting religious principles.” (Participant 11)

The results show that older age groups (75%) perceive a significant overlap between religion and customs and traditions, reflecting a greater acceptance of this demographic towards the intertwining of religious and cultural practices. In contrast, this percentage is much lower among younger age groups, indicating a clearer understanding of the distinctions between religion and customs within this demographic.

Code 28: Cultural influences on consumer behaviour

Half of the participants' responses (n = 15) indicate that extravagance and waste are among the most important factors affecting consumer culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This reflects the preference of some consumers to spend excessively on goods and services beyond their basic needs. Examples of this are many, including:

"We did not have this much extravagance. For example, during the month of Ramadan, this behaviour becomes clear when people buy large quantities of food to decorate the iftar table, but the important question is what happens with the surplus? Is it distributed to the needy or is it thrown in the trash? We must buy an appropriate amount for our home, and when we invite others, we must be careful not to eat more than we need, and we must apply religious teachings in this matter." (Participant 2)

"I see that the religious influence on reducing extravagance in purchasing and consumption is very small. We are a wasteful society, and this is something that religion prohibits." (Participant 7)

"A person should buy as much as he needs and try not to be extravagant, and to dispense with things that he can do without. But now it seems that extravagance has become normal, and the door is wide open in this area, and this is of course from my point of view." (Participant 8)

“In this context, customs and traditions have slightly overcome the religious aspect in terms of daily consumption of the individual and society. For example, you find that a person A person who lives alone goes out once a week to buy supplies equivalent to the needs of an entire family. This behaviour is unsustainable, as it does not preserve the environment or natural resources, but rather contributes to their excessive consumption.” (Participant 16)

“Excessive consumption is considered one of the most important wrong consumer behaviours we have, and it is more related to customs and traditions. If we go back to Islamic values, we will see that they encourage not to waste food, and to donate the surplus to that in need. We should not spend more than we need. I believe that customs and traditions have become more influential than Islamic values in this regard.” (Participant 25)

“There is no application of religious values in this regard, as we see great waste. For example, we find that many people now buy large quantities of storable materials as if food will be cut off from the market. When you enter any house, you find that the stores are full of these materials. People now tend to buy large quantities so that they do not lack anything, but this ultimately leads to throwing large quantities of food in the trash.” (Participant 28)

“Extravagance and waste are very bad habits of ours, although this contradicts religious values that urge us to buy as much as we need. We should try to buy moderate quantities of vegetables and fruits so that they do not spoil and we throw them away. As for canned goods, we should be careful when buying them in large quantities. For example, if there is a sale on milk, you can buy large quantities if you need them, but if you cannot consume them before they expire, this is considered

extravagance. Similarly, although meat is not very expensive, buying it in quantities that are not necessary is considered extravagance. We should think carefully before buying and make sure that the quantities we buy meet our actual needs without contributing to extravagance.” (Participant 30)

The study highlighted those certain cultural practices, such as extravagance and wastefulness, are seen as fundamental issues. About 60% of participants in the 21-30 age group indicated that extravagance represents one of the challenges they face in their consumer behaviour. Additionally, participants from the eastern and northern regions (60%) perceive extravagance as part of the challenges facing consumers in these areas.

Code 29: Social Image

The responses of a number of participants (n = 8) indicated that Saudi society is greatly influenced by social pressures and societal expectations. Individuals feel the need to adhere to certain customs to avoid criticism from others and maintain their social image, which leads to certain purchasing behaviours. Examples of this include:

“When people go shopping, they try to buy products that enhance their image in society and are in line with the current trend.” (Participant 4)

“Social image has a significant impact, especially among women. Women feel embarrassed to go to events or visit others without bringing something with them, even if these things are unnecessary or repetitive.” (Participant 8)

“With technological development and openness to different cultures and societies, people’s consumption patterns in our society have changed significantly. Many people have become proud of their clothes and follow Western fashion, and diversify their foods from other societies, believing that this shows an image of civilization, sophistication, and high taste.” (Participant 12)

“When we talk about honouring guests, we find that there are customs and traditions that make it shameful to serve small amounts of food, which leads to serving large amounts only to avoid social criticism. On occasions, it is considered shameful to serve appropriate amounts of food and drink, so in order to maintain the social image, the host must serve large amounts to his guests in order to be considered generous.” (Participant 14)

“This behaviour has become common in society, which is that the hosting family (when inviting relatives, friends) ... feels embarrassed to offer small amounts of food and drink compared to what others offer. Society has come to follow this approach instead of focusing on actual needs and respecting the true values of generosity and not being extravagant.” (Participant 25)

“Social image greatly affects consumer behaviour. For example, in Qassim, people do not find a problem going to places with offers and discounts, while in Riyadh and Jeddah it is more difficult for several reasons. Some people care about saving, while others see it as a defect and avoid it because of their cultural differences.” (Participant 30)

In terms of social image, the results showed that 37.5% of participants in the 31-40 age group believe that social image plays a role in shaping their purchasing decisions, reflecting a clear impact of social pressures on consumer behaviour.

Code 30: The impact of media and social media

Some participants (n = 7) talked about the impact of social media in shaping consumption habits in Saudi society. They indicated that social media platforms play a major role in directing consumer behaviour, by promoting products and services through direct advertisements and digital influencers. These platforms create a kind of social pressure to

comply with modern standards of luxury and social well-being, which increases the desire to buy and consume. Examples of this include:

“Currently, society is greatly influenced by influencers on social media, who lead several segments of society, especially in the field of consumption. This new division of society indicates that each segment follows a specific influencer who guides it in its purchasing decisions.” (Participant 12)

“In Riyadh, we see the influence of gifts and fashions greatly, as people tend towards a specific product or a specific type of clothing due to the influence of social media celebrities. This has nothing to do with religion, but rather is part of the prevailing culture among youth and society, and is related to customs and traditions.” (Participant 17)

“Riyadh Season plays a major role in this context, as we see people from different regions and cities flocking to attend events. This behaviour reflects people’s desire to follow what others are doing and engage in the same activities, which enhances the purchasing power in general in society.” (Participant 21)

“Frankly, influencers or social media celebrities greatly influence the Saudi consumer. People follow what celebrities photograph or praise, whether it is a product, food, or restaurant. When celebrities praise something, many people follow it and buy it, which shows their great influence on purchasing decisions.” (Participant 22)

“Social media plays a major role, as new fashions and gifts are constantly emerging, whether in food, cafes, or other things. People seek to follow these trends to publish them on social media, which increases the consumption of these products.” (Participant 23)

“Customs and traditions have a very significant impact on purchasing and quickly affect society. Social media facilitates the access of these customs and traditions to people through daily life that is photographed and published, which enhances Its impact on purchasing style is significant.” (Participant 27)

The study indicated that media and social media significantly influence consumer behaviour, especially among younger groups. About 30% of participants in the 21-30 age group stated that social media plays a role in directing their purchasing behaviour. Additionally, the impact of media varies by region, with a greater influence observed in the eastern and northern regions (40%).

Code 31: Not being extravagant

A large number of participants (n = 19) indicated that Islam encourages sustainability through many Islamic concepts and values, the most important of which is moderation and not being extravagant in consuming natural resources, which is considered one of the pillars of sustainability. According to the teachings of Islam, extravagance and waste are reprehensible behaviours that must be avoided, as God Almighty says in the Holy Quran: *“And eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who waste.”* (Al-A’raf: 31) This noble verse reinforces the concept of balance in consumption and moderation in the use of resources. Participants also mention the Prophetic hadith *“there should be neither harming nor reciprocation harm”*, which is one of the basic principles of Islamic law and calls for avoiding harm to oneself and others, and can be closely linked to the concept of sustainability. Islam calls for preserving the environment and natural resources and not causing harm to them, whether on an individual or collective level. Examples of participants in this context include:

“Islam clearly states that waste should not be excessive in general. For example, the Quranic verse “And eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who waste.” And also the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him): “Do not waste

water, even if you are at a flowing river.” Islam urges us to be economical with water, food, and all resources so that they remain for future generations.” (Participant 10)

“Taking what you need in moderation without extravagance or waste is one of the most important Islamic values. For Muslims, it is an act of worship to Allah, because Allah has forbidden us from being extravagant. Allah says in the Holy Quran: “And give to the relative his right, and to the poor and the traveler, and do not be extravagant.” Also: “And eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who are extravagant.” This is the essence of sustainable consumption. Another thing is the principle of “there should be neither harming nor reciprocation harm” from the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), as this principal orders not to infringe upon the rights of others or the environment in our consumption, and emphasizes the need to consider others and preserve the environment while consuming.” (Participant 9)

“Islam has forbidden extravagance, which includes consuming natural resources in an unsustainable manner. From a religious perspective, our approach should be towards sustainable consumption. This is in line with the concept of the construction of the earth, as not being wasteful and preserving the earth’s resources are considered part of the construction of the earth and is an important Islamic principle.” (Participant 11)

“Of course, for example, Islam urges not to be wasteful with water, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) forbade wasting water when performing ablution, even if one is performing ablution in a running river. This simple example reflects the concept of sustainability in Islam. In addition, there are many examples that highlight the concept

of sustainability in Islam that can be reviewed, but time and context do not allow for them.” (Participant 14)

“Yes, there are many Quranic verses and hadiths that urge sustainability and preserving the environment and natural resources. For example, the verse “And eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess” clarifies the necessity of avoiding extravagance, and there are prophetic hadiths that urge moderation in consumption and avoiding extravagance.” (Participant 16)

“The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, used to provide what was available to him without extravagance, and he would distribute the surplus to others, which reflects a balance between generosity and not being extravagant. As Allah the Almighty said, “And eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess.” This is strong evidence of the compatibility of the concept of sustainability with religious teachings.” (Participant 25)

The results indicate a variation in participants' opinions regarding the concept of “non-extravagance” based on several demographic variables. The results showed that the percentage of males who discussed “non-extravagance” was higher (68.2%) compared to females (50.0%). This difference may be explained by the fact that males may feel a greater responsibility for economic and consumer decisions in the family or community, leading to a stronger focus on the importance of resource conservation. For the age group, the highest participation rate was among those aged 21 to 30 years (70.0%), followed by participants in the 31 to 40 age group (62.5%), while the lowest percentage was among participants over 40 years old (50.0%). This trend may reflect the increased awareness of younger generations regarding sustainability issues, compared to older generations who may be less engaged in contemporary discussions on these concepts.

Regarding geographical distribution, the data showed that all participants from the southern region mentioned “non-extravagance” (100%), while the percentages were lower in other regions, such as the eastern region (40.0%) and the northern region (60.0%). This disparity can be explained by cultural and regional differences, as some areas may have stronger tendencies towards resource conservation based on local values. Participants from higher-income groups were also more inclined to discuss the concept of “non-extravagance” (71.4%) compared to those from medium-income groups (65.0%) and low-income groups (33.3%). This suggests that higher-income participants may be better able to manage their daily consumption and thus exhibit greater awareness of the concept of moderation.

In terms of education levels, the results indicated that participants with bachelor’s degrees (69.2%) and master’s degrees (60.0%) showed more interest in the concept of “non-extravagance” compared to participants with secondary or diploma qualifications (57.1%). This can be explained by the fact that higher education contributes to enhancing awareness of the importance of resource conservation as part of sustainability.

Code 32: Cleanliness and Environmental Conservation

The responses of a large number of participants (n = 15) also indicated that Islam urges sustainability through many texts from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, which focus on the importance of conserving and developing the environment. Among the Quranic verses that confirm this approach is the Almighty’s saying: “And do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation” (Al-A’raf: 56), which indicates the importance of not causing harm to the environment and conserving the ecosystem that Allah created. Also from the Sunnah, we find that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, emphasized the importance of cleanliness and conserving resources, as he said: “If the Hour comes while one of you has a seedling in his hand, if he is able to not Until he plants it, let him plant it”, which

indicates the importance of continuing to work on developing the environment even in the most difficult circumstances. Examples of this include the following:

“The Islamic teachings and principles that call for conserving the environment are countless. For example, we mention removing harm, such as dirt, filth, and anything harmful from the road so that the land remains clean and beautiful, pleasing to those who look at it. It encourages cleanliness in yards, homes, houses, roads, and all other places. Also, the saying of God Almighty: “And do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation”, which urges not to cause corruption on the earth, which includes destroying natural resources and harming the environment. Certainly, these teachings and principles contribute to strengthening the concept of sustainability and conserving the environment, and confirm that Islam lays strong foundations for preserving the earth and its resources.”

(Participant 15)

“Islam always encourages good morals and the preservation of human beings, and also urges not to harm others and even animals and roads that are considered part of the environment. For example, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, urged to remove harm from the road because people pass by it. In doing so he promotes the preservation of the cleanliness of the road and the surrounding environment. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “If the Hour comes and one of you has a seedling in his hand, if he can plant it before the Hour comes, then let him plant it”, which reflects his urging to develop the land and agriculture. Also in the Holy Quran: “And do not cause corruption on the earth after its reformation”, which is to refrain from everything that leads to harm, whether to the environment or to others. Therefore, if there is a product that we use that may harm the environment, then refraining from it is better than using it. These

examples undoubtedly reflect that Islamic values urge sustainability.” (Participant 19)

“Islam promotes the concept of sustainability and environmental preservation through its teachings and the hadiths of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him. For example, the hadith: “If the “The Hour is when one of you has a seedling in his hand, so let him plant it”, reflects the Prophet’s (PBUH) concern for the health of the environment and his encouragement of agriculture even in the most difficult circumstances. Another example, the Prophet (PBUH) said, “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself”, which is inclusive of Muslims and non-Muslims. This hadith, in its broad sense, can be linked to the idea of sustainability and environmental protection. When a person loves for his brother what he loves for himself, he will strive to preserve environmental resources and ensure their availability for future generations, just as he seeks to ensure the quality of his life and the lives of his loved ones.” (Participant 27)

“The Prophet (PBUH) forbade cutting down trees, ordered against excessive water consumption, and many other examples that I cannot recall now. These examples highlight the importance of preserving the environment in Islam.” (Participant 28)

Regarding the concept of “cleanliness and environmental preservation”, the data showed notable variations among participants based on demographic variables. The percentage was equal between males and females (50.0%), indicating that this value is shared between genders and may be equally rooted in cultural and religious values that advocate for cleanliness and environmental preservation. The results also indicated that participants over 40 years old showed the most interest in cleanliness and environmental preservation (100.0%), compared to younger age groups, which had much lower percentages (40.0% for the 21-30 age group and

43.8% for the 31-40 age group). This reflects that older generations may be more connected to traditions that emphasize the importance of environmental conservation and natural resources.

Geographically, the percentage of participants from the western region who discussed the importance of cleanliness and environmental preservation was 100.0%, compared to only 20.0% of participants in the central region. This disparity reflects the influence of environmental and cultural factors that may play a role in shaping the environmental awareness of populations in different regions. Regarding income level, participants from higher-income groups were more likely to address the concept of “cleanliness and environmental preservation” (71.4%) compared to those from medium-income groups (45.0%) and low-income groups (33.3%). This difference can be explained by the fact that higher-income groups may be more exposed to modern environmental ideas, whether through education or access to resources. Finally, participants with secondary or diploma qualifications showed more interest in the concept of “cleanliness and environmental preservation” (85.7%) compared to those with higher education (30.0%). This may reflect that basic education may focus more on simple community values related to cleanliness, while higher education may concentrate more on theoretical issues related to sustainability.

Code 33: Knowledge of the relationship between sustainability and Saudi Vision 2030

A large number of participants’ responses ($n = 13$) indicated that they did not know whether there was a relationship between Saudi Vision 2030 and sustainability, indicating a gap in awareness about the strategic objectives of the vision and its relationship to the concepts of sustainability. The responses of these participants reflect a lack of sufficient knowledge about how the concept of sustainability is related to Saudi Vision 2030, such as:

“To be honest, I do not have a background on the relationship between sustainability and Vision 2030.” (Participant 2)

“I do not know specifically if there is a relationship between the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 and the concept of sustainability.” (Participant 5)

“Today is the first time I have heard the term sustainability, and I do not have sufficient knowledge to say that there is a relationship between sustainability and Vision 2030.” (Participant 18)

“Mostly, I am interested in what is related to sports and economic projects within the vision 2030, and I am not aware of the rest of the areas of Vision 2030.” (Participant 20)

“I have certainly heard of Vision 2030, but I have not researched and read about it sufficiently to know its relationship to the concept of sustainability.” (Participant 24)

The results indicated a significant disparity in awareness based on gender, with women demonstrating a higher awareness of the relationship between sustainability and Vision 2030 (75%) compared to men (31.8%). This difference may stem from varying interests between genders or differences in access to information related to sustainability and environmental initiatives. Age also played a role, with participants aged 21 to 30 showed a higher level of awareness (60%) than those in the 31 to 40 age group (31.3%). This trend may be attributed to younger age groups being more inclined to use modern digital media that facilitate access to information about sustainable projects. Geographic location was another factor, as participants from the western region exhibited the highest level of awareness (80%), while awareness was notably lower in the southern region (20%). This disparity may reflect differences in the geographic distribution of major environmental projects being implemented under Vision 2030, such as the “NEOM” project and the “Green Riyadh” initiative.

Economic level influenced awareness as well, participants from low-income backgrounds were more aware of the relationship between sustainability and the Vision (66.7%) compared to those from medium (35%) and high (57.1%) income brackets. This

variation might relate to targeted awareness campaigns or programmes aimed at lower-income groups to encourage their participation in environmental projects. Additionally, participants holding bachelor's degrees exhibited greater awareness of the relationship between sustainability and Vision 2030 (61.5%) compared to those with lower (42.9% for diploma holders) or higher (20% for master's degree holders) qualifications. This may be due to this group being more engaged with the labour market and social initiatives aligned with the Vision's goals.

Code 34: Conserving the environment as per Sustainability goals in Saudi Vision 2030

The responses of a large number of participants (n = 17) indicated that there is a relationship between sustainability and Vision 2030, represented by the vision adopting the goal of improving environmental quality. This can be done through several projects and initiatives, including: afforestation and environmental development, establishing nature reserves, improving air quality, developing smart cities, and reducing carbon emissions. Examples of this include:

“Of course, there is a strong relationship that appears in several environmental projects, such as increasing tree planting, artificial rain, and establishing and preserving nature reserves, in addition to establishing innovative cities such as “The Line” project, which aims to live in a pollution-free environment.” (Participant 3)

“I see a strong relationship between sustainability and the Kingdom's Vision 2030. The efforts made such as planting trees, artificial rain, and preserving nature reserves from overfishing. These projects demonstrate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to improving and preserving the environment.” (Participant 6)

“One of the most important goals of the vision is sustainability, especially the environmental aspect. For example, large centres have been established to recycle

waste and construction waste. I also recently heard about forcing towers and large residential complexes to recycle wastewater and use it to irrigate plants, in addition to supporting the “Green Riyadh” project, which is considered one of the most ambitious afforestation projects in the world.” (Participant 11)

“Since I heard about the announcement of Vision 2030, I have noticed that many of the projects included in its aim primarily to preserve the environment. The projects include initiatives such as the Green Riyadh project “Which aims to transform desert lands into green areas, improving the quality of life by reducing dust and dirt. We have already noticed a significant decrease in dust levels in Riyadh this year. Also, projects to use green energy and establish recycling companies such as “Serk” and investments in electric cars, such as “Lucid”. The biggest project in this regard is the NEOM project, which aims to be a carbon-free city. In general, I believe that all the projects of Vision 2030 include preserving the environment in their agenda.” (Participant 12)

“Many Vision 2030 projects aim to reduce or even eliminate environmental impact. For example, The Line is a prime example of a 100% carbon-neutral, eco-friendly city, reflecting the significant drive towards sustainability in the Kingdom’s Vision 2030.” (Participant 19)

“In general, recycling is a key part of the plans in place at the company I work for, which are in line with Vision 2030. In addition, these plans include a carbon strategy, which aims to reduce carbon emissions to zero, whether by reducing the use of non-renewable energy or through environmental initiatives. Therefore, I believe that preserving the environment is a key part of Vision 2030.” (Participant 22)

“Of course. For example, within Vision 2030 there is the “Green Kingdom” initiative launched by Saudi Arabia as part of its global efforts to combat climate change. This initiative reflects the Kingdom’s commitment to green sustainability, and is derived from religious values that urge the preservation of the environment for future generations.” (Participant 27)

When considering environmental preservation as one of the sustainability goals in Vision 2030, notable differences were observed based on demographic characteristics. Men demonstrated a greater awareness of environmental preservation goals (68.2%) compared to women (25%). This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that environmental initiatives are often more closely associated with activities that men typically participate in, such as energy and infrastructure projects. Geographic location also played a significant role, as awareness of environmental preservation goals was particularly high in the northern and southern regions (100%) compared to other areas. This could be linked to the presence of large environmental projects in these regions or local trends that prioritize environmental conservation.

Additionally, income levels influenced awareness, with participants from medium and high-income groups exhibiting higher awareness of environmental preservation goals (60% and 57.1%, respectively) compared to low-income participants (33.3%). This suggests that individuals from higher income brackets may be more engaged in environmental activities or have better access to information regarding sustainability. Furthermore, participants holding master’s degrees expressed a greater interest in environmental preservation goals (70%) compared to those with bachelor’s or diploma qualifications, highlighting the impact of higher education on enhancing environmental awareness.

Code 35: Moving towards renewable energy sources

A large number of participants (n = 10) responded that moving towards renewable energy sources is one of the goals of Vision 2030 that supports sustainability. Participants believe that Vision 2030 aims to expand the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind energy, which helps in diversifying energy sources and reducing dependence on fossil fuels in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Examples include:

“NEOM is an example of the shift towards alternative energy, as it relies mainly on renewable energy through solar and wind energy sources, in addition to the largest hydrogen plant in the world.” (Participant 1)

“There is a great trend towards reducing the use of oil and searching for alternative sources that are more eco-friendly, such as solar energy.” (Participant 2)

“The complete dependence on oil as a source of energy is one of the factors that threaten sustainability in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, so we notice a trend towards reducing dependence on it. I believe that Vision 2030 will bring about major changes in this area, as the vision adopts the shift towards diversifying energy such as solar and wind energy.” (Participant 7)

“The dependence on oil as a primary resource is being reduced through alternative energy projects as part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s sustainability plan. This shows a strong relationship between Vision 2030 and the concept of sustainability.” (Participant 16)

“One of the main plans in Vision 2030 is the alternative energy project, which plays a major role in achieving sustainability.” (Participant 29)

Women showed greater awareness of the shift towards renewable energy (37.5%) compared to men (31.8%), with the younger age group (21-30 years) being the most aware of this shift at 40%. These results may reflect the openness of both youth and women to

innovations and new technologies focused on clean energy. Geographic location also influenced awareness, as participants from the eastern region exhibited higher recognition of renewable energy sources (60%) due to the significant emphasis on renewable energy projects in this area, such as solar and wind energy.

Furthermore, economic level played a role, with participants from medium and high-income brackets demonstrating greater awareness of renewable energy sources (35% and 42.9%, respectively). This suggests that higher-income groups may be more exposed to clean energy projects and initiatives, contributing to their heightened awareness of renewable energy options.

Code 36: Economic Diversification

Some participants' responses (n = 6) indicated a sustainable economy as one of the goals of Saudi Vision 2030. These participants see the vision as diversifying the Saudi economy by developing non-oil sectors such as tourism, entertainment, and technology, which contributes to creating new and sustainable job opportunities and enhances sustainable economic growth. Examples of these responses include:

“Vision 2030 adopts eliminating dependence on oil exports as a primary source of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s economy, through developing new sectors such as tourism, entertainment, technology, and others. This contributes to reducing dependence on limited oil resources and enhancing economic sustainability.”

(Participant 16)

“I see a strong relationship between sustainability and the Kingdom’s Vision 2030, which is clearly evident in the implementation of many economic and tourism projects that aim to achieve a sustainable economy with diversified resources.”

(Participant 20)

“Yes, the relationship between sustainability and the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 is strong and close, and it is fully linked to the directives of His Highness the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. His Highness aspires to achieve a boom in all sectors, which is evident through his interest in all sectors at once. For example, we aim to attract 150 million visitors to the tourism sector, and we seek for the Saudi League to become one of the most important leagues in the world in the sports sector. Achieving these long-term goals will certainly lead to diversifying the economic resources of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which I believe is an essential part of sustainability.” (Participant 21)

The percentage of women who recognized the importance of diversifying economic sources was higher (25%) compared to men (18.2%), indicating a notable gender difference in awareness. Additionally, among different age groups, those aged 31 to 40 demonstrated the highest level of awareness regarding economic diversification (25%). This trend likely reflects their connection to the labour market and active engagement with economic developments.

Geographic location also influenced awareness, as participants from the eastern and western regions exhibited greater recognition of economic diversification (40%). This heightened awareness may be attributed to the presence of significant economic projects in these areas that align with the objectives of Vision 2030, further emphasizing the regional focus on diversifying the economy.

Code 37: The extent to which the goals of Saudi Vision 2030 for sustainability have been achieved

The results indicated that some participants (n = 5) believe that many of the goals of Vision 2030 for sustainability have already been achieved. The responses of these participants indicate an optimistic view towards the vision achieving the sustainability goals, as one participant says: “I see that the goals set for Vision 2030 are being achieved faster than

expected” (Participant 3). Another participant says: “In the last five years, we have witnessed the achievement of many sustainability goals” (Participant 10). One participant adds: “From my point of view, we have come a long way in achieving the sustainability goals. This can be seen through projects such as Green Riyadh, artificial rain, and diversifying sources of the economy” (Participant 15).

On the other hand, we find that a large number of participants believe that although Vision 2030 has achieved some of its sustainability goals, it still has more time and effort to achieve its goals. Examples include:

“Some achievements have been made, such as afforestation and some environmental conservation projects. I think we have currently achieved about 30-40% of the sustainability goals, and we expect to reach 60-70% by 2030.” (Participant 8)

“Saudi Vision 2030 is an ambitious plan that includes many major projects. Although some initiatives aimed at preserving the environment have been achieved, many major projects have not been completed as they still need time.” (Participant 12)

“I expect that 40-50% of the sustainability goals of Vision 2030 have been achieved.”
(Participant 13)

“I believe that there are clear government efforts to achieve sustainability goals, but we still lack a large part of the social partnership from individuals, civil society organizations, and the private sector. These joint efforts are necessary to achieve the sustainability goals of Vision 2030.” (Participant 14)

“Yes, tangible signs of achieving the sustainability goals of Vision 2030 have begun to appear. For example, about a year ago, all transactions in notary publics and courts were converted to the electronic system, which led to a reduction in the use of

paper and ink, and this contributes to preserving the environment. There are also ongoing efforts in various fields to achieve sustainability.” (Participant 26)

Men expressed greater optimism regarding the achievement of these goals, with 63.6% indicating a positive outlook compared to just 37.5% of women. This discrepancy may be linked to higher male participation in implementation projects and greater familiarity with the progress made in this area. Geographic location also played a role in perceptions of achievement. Participants from the eastern (80%) and central (60%) regions were more optimistic about the realization of sustainability goals, likely due to ongoing environmental and economic projects in these areas that foster a sense of progress. Furthermore, educational level was a significant factor, with individuals holding master’s degrees displaying higher optimism (60%) about achieving sustainability goals. This reflects the influence of education on understanding the possibilities and advancements related to these objectives.

Code 38: Future behaviour of participants

The responses of a large number of participants (n = 19) indicated the positive impact of the interview on their awareness regarding the concept of sustainability, sustainable consumption, and eco-friendly products, which may contribute to changing the way they buy in the future. Examples of this are many, including:

“Honestly, I started thinking about this topic and realized that we rarely pay attention to these matters. Maybe in the future I will start paying attention to eco-friendly products, and this interview could be a good introduction to changing my future way of buying.” (Participant 2)

“Honestly, I was excited to research the topic of sustainable products, not only because it will reflect on the environment and future generations, but it will also

affect my personal life and my family. Thank you for this opportunity.” (Participant 5)

“Of course, after this interview, ideas such as sustainability and sustainable consumption will start to take root in my mind. Maybe the next time I go to the store and see unsustainable products; I will remember this discussion and think about sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives.” (Participant 8)

“For me, one of my most important consumption behaviours was using products that preserve the environment. After this interview, I became more certain of the importance of this matter and I will work on improving my behaviour in a positive way.” (Participant 12)

“During the interview, a very important issue emerged for me, which is preserving resources for future generations. Highlighting this topic on a personal level, it will definitely make me reconsider my consumer behaviour.” (14)

“My awareness of sustainability and its importance has increased thanks to this interview, and I will focus more on researching this topic more deeply.” (Participant 15)

“This is the first time I have thought about eco-friendly products. I will research this topic more and think about it when buying any product, I promise.” (Participant 17)

“This interview has opened my eyes to research more widely about eco-friendly products and sustainability and their importance. Thank you very much for this opportunity.” (Participant 27)

When analysing participants’ responses regarding the impact of the interview on their future behaviour towards sustainability, the results showed clear differences based on

demographic characteristics. The data revealed that 72.7% of men expressed a willingness to change their behaviour towards more sustainable consumption compared to 37.5% of women. This difference may be attributed to men perceiving sustainability as part of their personal responsibilities or being more influenced by environmental awareness campaigns. The results also showed that participants over 40 years old were the most willing to adopt sustainable behaviours (75%), compared to 50% of participants aged 21 to 30. This gap may indicate that older generations are more conscious of their responsibility towards future generations than younger ones.

The willingness to change behaviour also varied between regions, with the highest readiness observed in the northern and southern regions (80%) and the lowest in the central and western regions (60% and 40%, respectively). This disparity may reflect differences in environmental awareness and the influence of local environments on residents' understanding of the importance of sustainability. Regarding income levels, the results indicated that participants with high income were the most willing to change their consumption behaviour (71.4%) compared to 60% of those with medium income. This may be because higher-income groups have the financial means to afford sustainable products. Finally, 80% of participants with a master's degree expressed a willingness to change their future behaviour towards sustainable products, compared to 53.8% of those with a bachelor's degree. This suggests that education plays an important role in raising individuals' awareness of the importance of sustainability.

Code 39: The critical role of price and quality

A number of participants' responses (n = 9) indicated that the critical role of price and quality of products may constitute a barrier to changing purchasing behaviours. These participants believe that the unavailability of sustainable and eco-friendly products at the same

price and quality compared to other products will be a barrier to changing consumer behaviours. Examples include:

“Sustainability will not have a significant impact on the purchasing process at the moment. As I mentioned earlier, price, quality, and need remain the main indicators that consumers rely on. The sustainability factor may only have a significant impact if the difference between eco-friendly products and conventional products is less than 20%. If the difference is large, the interest in sustainability will be limited, as price and quality will remain the main factors that govern the purchasing process.”

(Participant 11)

“If eco-friendly products are not of the same quality and price, this will be a major barrier to changing consumer behaviour in Saudi Arabia. For this reason, I hope that eco-friendly alternatives will be available at the same level of quality and price.”

(Participant 17)

“I do not think that I will change my purchasing method unless prices are equal between non-eco-friendly products and their environmentally friendly alternatives. For me, price is the most important factor in purchasing.” (Participant 19)

“If quality and price are equal, I will choose the eco-friendly product, because I consider sustainability an added advantage. However, eco-friendly products are often more expensive, which makes them less of a priority for me.” For me, price and quality are the main priorities, while sustainability comes in third place. So, if the initial criteria are met, I will look for an additional feature such as sustainability.”

(Participant 20)

“When I choose between two products in the supermarket or choose between two restaurants, or even between two pieces of clothing, the product’s support for

sustainability is not a decisive factor in making the decision, so I think that eco-friendly products should be available at the same price and quality.” (Participant 29)

Several participants indicated that price and quality are significant barriers to adopting sustainable consumption. The results showed that 50% of women viewed price and quality as obstacles compared to 22.7% of men, indicating that women may be more sensitive to economic factors when making purchasing decisions. Additionally, 40% of participants aged 21 to 30 identified price and quality as barriers, while this issue was not raised among participants over 40. This may be due to younger age groups facing greater financial pressures.

Geographically, 40% of participants from the southern and northern regions identified price and quality as obstacles, while the percentages were lower in other regions. This may reflect disparities in the availability and prices of sustainable products between different areas. Regarding income, 33.3% of low-income participants saw price and quality as barriers, while the percentage was lower among high-income participants (14.3%). This reflects the greater financial challenges faced by lower-income groups in affording sustainable products. Lastly, 50% of participants with a master’s degree saw price and quality as barriers, compared to 23.1% of those with a bachelor’s degree. This may indicate that higher-educated individuals have higher expectations regarding the balance between quality and price.

Code 40: Low awareness of the importance of sustainability

In addition, the responses of a number of participants ($n = 7$) indicated that the lack of awareness of the concept of sustainability and its importance to society constitutes a barrier to changing purchasing behaviours. These participants believe that sustainability and environmental conservation should be among consumers’ priorities when purchasing any product, and without that, it will not be easy to change consumers’ behaviour towards sustainable and eco-friendly products. Examples of this include the following:

“The topic of sustainability is very important, and it is necessary to raise intellectual awareness in society, especially children, about what sustainability is and its importance. Without that, I don’t think it’s easy to change consumer behaviour towards sustainable and eco-friendly products.” (Participant 16)

“I see that the lack of awareness of the importance of eco-friendly products is a major barrier to changing consumer behaviour. The availability of these products in the markets may attract some people out of curiosity to know what they are and their importance, but in order to have an impact on the consumer culture of society, great efforts must be made to educate society as a whole about the concept of sustainability and the importance of eco-friendly products.” (Participant 2)

“In our society, consumers do not see environmental responsibility as one of their duties when purchasing any product, despite their awareness that this product may have a negative environmental impact. Rather, they believe that environmental responsibility is a greater responsibility that includes the state and the relevant authorities, so I believe that collective awareness and community efforts to raise awareness will have a greater impact in changing consumer culture.” (Participant 20)

“The consumer culture in society still ignores sustainability issues. We lack a strong consumer culture that supports sustainability and encourages the use of sustainable products. If there is continuous guidance and awareness through publications and awareness campaigns, I am sure that people will pay more attention to these issues. It is necessary to teach future generations the importance of caring for the environment and not burdening the planet with more environmental pollution.” (Participant 21)

“The lack of awareness about the importance of sustainable consumption and the harms of not eco-friendly products makes consumers rarely think about their impact on the environment and the sustainability of resources when purchasing any product. In my opinion, the lack of awareness and the lack of sufficient encouragement and support may be the reason behind the lack of adoption of sustainable products in our societies.” (Participant 28)

“I have a simple idea about sustainability, but it is not one of my priorities. I think the reason for this is the lack of awareness and societal culture and the lack of deepening habits that support sustainability. We have not been accustomed to eco-friendly consumption since childhood, and there are no serious and effective applications of government decisions related to this topic. I think that we are still somewhat behind in the issue of sustainability.” (Participant 29)

A total of 37.5% of women indicated that a lack of awareness is a barrier, compared to 18.2% of men. This suggests a need for more intensive awareness campaigns targeted at women to enhance their understanding of the importance of sustainable products. Additionally, 30% of participants aged 21 to 30 identified a lack of awareness as an obstacle, compared to 0% of those over 40, reflecting a generational difference in awareness levels, with older generations appearing more informed about the importance of sustainability.

Geographically, 40% of participants from the eastern region highlighted a lack of awareness as a barrier, compared to 0% from the northern region. This disparity may reflect differences in the levels of awareness between various regions. Regarding income, high-income participants were the most affected by a lack of awareness (42.9%), indicating their expectations for more effective and in-depth awareness campaigns. Finally, 30% of participants with a master’s degree viewed a lack of awareness as an obstacle, compared to

15.4% of those with a bachelor's degree, suggesting that higher-educated individuals expect awareness campaigns that align with their level of understanding and knowledge about sustainability.

Code 41: Corporate responsibility in promoting sustainability

In addition, the responses of a number of participants (n = 8) indicated that the lack of awareness regarding corporate responsibility in promoting sustainability. Many shoppers acknowledge the importance of sustainability; however, they are not familiar with operational cost and supply chain constraints. The main reason indicated by participant 9 *“there is cost in sustainability... consumers invest when they see profitability in it”*. Similarly, another participant 17 said that *“consumers are hesitate in vesting in sustainability unless they see some clear financial benefit or consumer demand”*. Other participants have different perception, such as Participant 21 said that *“Saudi Vision 2030 is a driving force for sustainability adoption... many retailers feel compliance is more of an obligation rather than a voluntary commitment.”* Retailers note that people prefer sustainability but they still give more importance to affordability and brand reputation over sustainability. Moreover, many corporates adopt sustainability for promoting and advertising rather than genuinely showing commitment to sustainable products.

Code 42: Business support in promoting sustainability

Business support play an important role in promoting sustainability where economic diversification clearly promotes sustainability under its Saudi Vision 2030. Companies need to incorporate sustainable practices into its operations, supple chain and corporate social responsibility. Participants 29 state that *“there is need to promote sustainability concept by businesses, they have money to promote.”* However, high implementation cost is appeared as major barrier for businesses to promote sustainability. Participants 23 said that *“we do not get any government incentives to promote sustainability... no regulatory framework that*

facilitate the transition to greener practices". There is no awareness programme from businesses to educate their product front defence such as retailer that protect their product reputation and influence consumer to buy it. Participants 13 said that "*businesses along with regulatory bodies need to initiate consumer awareness campaigns, supplier collaboration and government incentives for retailers and consumers... that promote their products.*"