

How Social Business Sustainability Relates to Consumer Purchase Decision

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Introduction

Despite its positive results, social business is continuously criticised for its inability to contribute effectively to sustainable development practices. Researchers have extensively addressed the concept of sustainability in the scientific literature (Donaldson, Walsh, 2015; Dyllick, Muff, 2016; Upward, Jones, 2016). They define the importance of not only the participation of organisations in sustainable development but also highlight the importance of society as another participant (Ketprapakorn, Kantabutra, 2019). Moreover, studies show that consumers' intention to purchase sustainable products or services is strongly influenced by their positive attitudes and perceived value of sustainability (Rizwan, Ahmad, Mehboob, 2013; Vazifehdoust, 2013). The state of the art allows stating that sustainability as an aspiration is still a priority but remains only in its early maturity stages.

1. Sustainability in social business organizations and consumer behaviour

Management is an important aspect for organisations' effort to develop sustainability. Therefore, sustainability and its assessment become an essential component of corporate performance management (Saeed, Kersten, 2017). This implies that to develop sustainability more effectively, it is also necessary to analyse public attitudes towards sustainability. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the need for examining existing boundaries and recognise the dependence of organisations on societal, economic, and environmental aspects (Meadows et al., 2009; Rockstrom et al., 2009; Marcus et al., 2010; Whiteman et al., 2013; Winn, Pogutz, 2013). Research shows that while companies recognise the importance of sustainability, a large proportion do not pay attention to practical sustainability management (Bonini et al., 2010). For achieving a positive change, sustainability management should become one of the key processes when improving company performance.

Research also shows that changes in the environment are influencing consumer perceptions and that the concept of sustainability is becoming increasingly important to consum-

ers (Bonini, Oppenheim, 2008). Moreover, knowledge about sustainability is an essential factor influencing the purchase of sustainable products (Franzen, Meyer, 2010; Sidique, Lupi, Joshi, 2010; Arslan, Yilmaz, Aksoy, 2012; Vega-Zamora, et al., 2013; Paul, Modi, Patel, 2016; Yadav, Pathak, Young, 2016). The scientific literature distinguishes the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour (Fishbein, M., 1979; Ajzen, I., 1991). The main aspects of the theory are that consumer behaviour is influenced by intention, attitudes towards a certain behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Research shows that consumers' intention to purchase sustainable products or services is strongly influenced by positive attitudes and perceived value of sustainability (Rizwan, Ahmad, Mehboob, 2013; Vazifehdousta, 2013). Hence, knowledge about sustainability and its value plays an important role for sustainability to flourish.

2. Theoretical framework of interaction between social business sustainability and consumer purchase behaviour

To develop sustainability, the whole ecosystem around businesses, together with the businesses themselves, needs to transform. The analysis of the corporate perspective allows distinguishing three dimensions of sustainability, which require identifying corresponding indicators. The development of the first dimension, i.e., economic dimension, is a relevant aspect of sustainability development, and when analysing it, it is crucial to analyse areas such as the stability and profitability of organisations, the distribution of income, the market advantage, or the costs of sustainability development. The second dimension, i.e., social dimension, focuses on human rights and anti-corruption and related measurements, human resources, public health and safety, training and education, as well as analysing consumer issues and compliance with social norms. However, the social dimension is still the most challenging dimension to assess and needs to be monitored and analysed more deeply. The third dimension i.e., environmental dimension, is also an important one which helps to highlight energy and material efficiency, correct water management, waste management, measurement of emissions, the use of land as a critical resource, compliance with environmental requirements and the evaluation of suppliers (Saeed, Kersten, 2017).

In this paper, we come up with a conceptual framework that focuses on a broader analysis of sustainability, going beyond the perspective of companies or consumers only, but involving both participants in the process. The exploration and assessment of the aforementioned dimensions of sustainability influence the consumers' inclination to value sustainability, which in turn influences the consumers' purchasing behaviour such as the purchase of more sustainable products/services, or influences the choice of sustainable social business.

Conclusions

The scientific research analysis shows that to achieve economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable development, it is necessary to analyse not only the ability of companies to act sustainably, but also the contribution of consumers to sustainability by analysing their inclination to assess sustainability and their purchasing behaviour related to it.

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