



## **SOCIALLY FORMED ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND GREEN CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents a normative account of ecological awareness and green consumer behavior as socially formed value orientations. It explains how environmental values become shared norms that shape what consumers regard as responsible, respectable, or excessive in everyday buying. The discussion shows that purchasing eco friendly goods depends on meaning, trust, and perceived feasibility rather than technical information alone. Trust is treated as a moral judgment about whether labels, certifications, and brand narratives deserve reliance under conditions of limited verification. The paper outlines how identity, social recognition, and moral emotions such as pride and guilt can support greener choices, while judgmental norms may foster avoidance and cynicism. It also argues that market conditions matter because unclear claims, poor product quality, and exclusive pricing can erode confidence and reduce repeated purchase. A conceptual framework is proposed that links value formation, norm communication, and decision routines, emphasizing proportional claims, understandable information, and inclusive pathways for participation. The central claim is that stable green purchasing emerges when consumers can act on shared values without humiliation, excessive cognitive burden, or manipulation by symbolic messaging alone.

**Keywords:** ecological awareness, environmental values, green consumption, purchase decision, trust, social norms, moral emotions.

## Introduction

Ecological awareness is increasingly present as part of how society assesses quality of life, future security, and the feasibility of economic activities. This is in line with our collective efforts to realize public policies capable of balancing economic, social, and environmental sustainability aspects (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2021). In public discourse, attention to waste, energy consumption, and resource sustainability is often understood as a moral demand inherent in citizenship. However, in daily experience, ecological awareness does not always appear as an abstract concept, but rather as considerations that accompany small choices such as bringing one's own container, reducing single-use plastics, or choosing products with certain claims. These small choices are not isolated individual actions, as they are influenced by the circulating language, family habits, status symbols, and community expectations (Sarabia-Sanchez et al., 2020). When environmental concern is praised as honorable behavior, consumers are encouraged to display that concern in social spaces. When environmental concern is considered bothersome, consumers tend to delay or seek justification. Especially amidst rapid social change, sometimes our communal values are tested by challenges of social integration and differing views in society (Fariz, 2021). From this, it is evident that ecological awareness is formed through a social process that evaluates which behaviors are appropriate, which are considered excessive, and which are judged as mere image-building.

Green consumer behavior is often described as the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products, yet such decisions take place in situations filled with symbols, claims, and uncertainty. Consumers are confronted with labels, certifications, packaging, and corporate narratives that offer promises regarding materials, production processes, and environmental footprints. In the shopping experience, those promises must be translated into a sense of trust. This trust is crucial because every brand actually needs to build a strong and long-term relationship with its customers to survive (Lil Alamin et al., 2021). Trust is not born from technical information alone, but from repeated experiences, brand reputation, and social testimony from others. Many consumers express concern for the environment, but when at the shopping shelf, they weigh price, availability, convenience, and the risk of making the wrong choice

(Nguyen et al., 2019). Ultimately, the decision to buy environmentally friendly goods is indeed strongly influenced by price compatibility, the quality of the product itself, and the lifestyle we lead daily (Khayru et al., 2021). The risk of choosing incorrectly can manifest as feeling deceived, feeling like paying more for unclear benefits, or feeling judged by others. Therefore, green consumer behavior needs to be understood as a process of moral and practical judgment occurring simultaneously.

Socially formed environmental values work through norms that govern what is considered responsible and what is considered reckless. Norms can be present in the form of invitations, warnings, or habits learned without formal instruction. An individual may learn that bringing their own shopping bag is a proper action, or that separating waste is a sign of maturity. In a smaller scope, the role of family members such as housewives is also very significant in determining greener consumption choices at home (Halizah & Nuraini, 2021). However, norms can also become tools of social distinction, for example, when green product consumption is used as a symbol of class and taste. In such circumstances, green consumption can be a way of displaying identity, and identity can drive purchases even when technical understanding is still limited (Latif et al., 2020). Conversely, norms can trigger resistance if perceived as coercive morality. People may feel judged when they are unable to afford more expensive green products, or when the social environment demands standards that are difficult to meet. Therefore, companies must be clever in using the right service marketing strategies to remain superior in intense market competition (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). From this, it appears that the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products lies between the urge to be a good citizen and the need to maintain the normalcy of daily life.

Markets respond to increasing environmental concern by introducing various products that claim to be eco-friendly, ranging from materials and packaging to promises of sustainable production. Companies continuously strive to strengthen consumer awareness through honest green marketing communications to maintain their environmental integrity (Essa & Mardikaningsih, 2021). The presence of these claims opens opportunities for education, but also for deception. Consumers often face marketing language that sounds convincing but is difficult to verify at the time of purchase (Szabo & Webster, 2021). This uncertainty places consumers in

the position of interpreting signs, such as the color green on packaging, leaf icons, or terms with scientific nuances. Additionally, we often see how people can shop suddenly or impulsively when seeing attractive offers on online shopping applications (Darmawan & Gatheru, 2021). The interpretation of signs is heavily influenced by socially constructed knowledge, as consumers learn from media, communities, and previous shopping experiences. In such situations, the decision to purchase green products cannot be separated from the relationship between symbols and trust. Trust can collapse when claims are perceived as exaggerated or inconsistent, and the collapse of trust can make consumers cynical toward the entire green product category.

Ecological awareness also develops through collective experiences that form a sense of urgency, for instance, when society witnesses environmental degradation and links it to consumption patterns. This sense of urgency is often translated into demands for individuals to contribute through shopping choices. However, running a sustainable business is indeed not easy due to many uncertain regulations and challenges in managing the enterprise (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2021). In daily experience, consumers navigate various demands, such as demands for thriftiness, practical demands, family demands, and social norm demands (Wang et al., 2019). Green decisions often emerge as compromises, such as choosing some products considered safer for the environment while still selecting others that are cheaper or more convenient. This compromise shows that ecological awareness is not a fixed state, but rather a judgment process that changes according to social situations and life burdens. Socially formed environmental values provide a framework for evaluating these compromises. If social norms allow space for gradual steps, consumers feel supported. If social norms demand perfection, consumers feel they have failed and may distance themselves. Thus, the formation of environmental values and the formation of green consumer behavior need to be seen as a reciprocal relationship between moral demands, sense of capability, and social recognition.

The description of the problem in this topic relates to the tension between socially recognized claims of environmental concern and purchasing decisions that must be executed within economic and practical limits. Consumers are often in situations where environmental values are considered good, yet daily living standards demand savings in time and cost.

This tension can produce inconsistent choices, such as agreeing with green norms in conversation but not applying them to the shopping cart (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). At the level of normative reasoning, such inconsistency cannot be immediately simplified as hypocrisy, as it may reflect an unequal structure of choices. Environmentally friendly products are often perceived as more expensive, harder to find, or riskier in terms of quality. Furthermore, information regarding the green quality of products is often unclear. When information is ambiguous, consumers must bear the burden of interpretation. This burden can cause cognitive fatigue and lead consumers back to old habits. This issue creates a need to explain how social values operate amidst moral impulses, limits of capability, and information uncertainty during purchase

The following problem description concerns how socially formed environmental values can transform into judgmental norms, leading green consumption behavior to be associated with moral and social status. In many spaces, green consumption can be presented as a sign of modernity and education, causing those who do not follow suit to be considered less caring or less civilized. Such assessments risk marginalizing consumers who have economic limitations or limited product access (Kushwah et al., 2019). Consequently, green consumer behavior is no longer understood as an inclusive responsible choice, but rather as a standard that differentiates. In social experience, differentiating standards can trigger resistance and cynicism. Consumers may reject green products because they feel coerced, or because they feel green narratives are used by companies to raise prices without significant changes. This cynicism disrupts the formation of collective trust in eco-friendly claims. At a normative level, this issue demands an explanation of how environmental values can encourage participation without producing shame, and how social values can shape purchasing decisions without turning into oppressive morality.

Many public discussions about green consumption stop at invitations, as if change will occur simply by calling for concern. However, consumer experience shows that purchasing decisions require trust, clarity of meaning, and a sense of capability to carry out the choice. This writing is necessary to organize the understanding of how social norms shape feelings of appropriateness, shame, and pride in green consumption, and how these feelings enter the process of evaluating price, quality, and product claims

(Jaiswal & Kant, 2018). A normative framework is important so that green consumption is not positioned as a blaming individual morality, but as a social practice that needs to be supported by honest communication, trustworthy signs, and recognition of human limits. With an orderly description, this writing can help academics and marketing practitioners understand the ethical requirements for the formation of socially sustainable green consumer behavior.

The objective of this writing is to develop a conceptual framework regarding the relationship between ecological awareness and green consumer behavior through the social formation of environmental values. This writing explains how norms, identity, and social recognition influence consumer assessments of eco-friendly claims, price, and product quality. This writing also formulates normative measures for trust and the honesty of green claims so that purchasing decisions can be held accountable. This framework is expected to enrich value-based consumer behavior theory. Practically, this framework provides direction for marketing communications and label designs that respect the consumer.

## Method

This study utilizes a qualitative literature study to develop a conceptual synthesis regarding ecological awareness and green consumer behavior, with a focus on the social formation of environmental values and their translation into purchasing decisions. Ragin and Amoroso (2011) emphasize the importance of social research construction through orderly questioning, source selection, and the formulation of relationships between ideas so that reasoning remains tested. Sarantakos (2017) emphasizes social research as an interpretive work that demands clarity of definitions and precision in distinguishing normative claims from descriptive accounts. In this study, sources were selected based on the clarity of environmental value concepts, social norm mechanisms, consumer trust in product claims, and discussions on marketing communication ethics. The synthesis was conducted by grouping themes such as the legitimacy of green claims, consumption identity, consumer judgment burdens, and habit formation, then weaving them into an argumentative flow that addresses the problem formulation.

Material processing was carried out through repeated readings, recording key concepts, and formulating coherent normative propositions

while maintaining consistency in terminology. Gupta and Gupta (2022) assert that a good methodology requires traceable steps, including the basis for category selection and the method of drawing conclusions from written sources. Privitera and Ahlgrim Delzell (2018) emphasize orderliness in scientific writing, particularly in organizing themes and constructing reasoning that does not leap when discussing education and behavioral issues, which in this study is used to maintain focus on the social learning process of consumers. Since this writing does not utilize interviews or observations, the primary weight lies in conceptual clarity, argumentative strength, and the precision of connecting social values to purchasing decisions without presenting data. The final results are presented as a thematic synthesis that places consumption ethics and trust at the center of the discussion.

## Result and Discussion

Ecological awareness can be understood as a value orientation that leads individuals to evaluate consumption actions through the measure of responsibility toward nature and future generations. This orientation is not an inherent trait, but rather the result of social interactions that shape the language regarding crisis, obligation, and appropriateness. Besides the influence of the external environment, our intention to protect nature actually depends heavily on the extent to which we feel we have self-control and how broad our environmental insight is (Nuraini, Darmawan, Mardikaningsih, Hariani, & Halizah, 2022). In daily conversation, an individual learns that littering is a disgraceful act, that energy conservation is a virtue, and that choosing certain products can be a form of concern. Such social learning creates a framework of evaluation, so that consumption is no longer judged solely by utility and price, but also by the inherent moral meaning. However, a moral framework does not automatically produce consistent purchasing actions, because consumption takes place in situations that demand quick choices under information constraints. Therefore, it is very important for every organization or small business to have leaders who care about the environment and provide training for their members so that the resulting performance remains sustainable (Novita et al., 2022). This discussion positions ecological awareness as a source of direction, not as a guarantee of behavior.

Environmental values often take the form of civic norms, namely the belief that consumption behavior has collective consequences. Civic norms encourage individuals to evaluate products based on their production impact, packaging waste, and recyclability. In its implementation, strict legal regulations and good environmental management are highly needed so that these norms can function properly in society (Nuraini, Handayani, Wisnujati, Darmawan, & Kurniawan, 2021). However, civic norms also face tension when individuals feel their contribution is small compared to the scale of the problem. This tension can give birth to an attitude of resignation or cynicism, especially when public narratives place the burden of change solely on the consumer. Sometimes, the way environmentally friendly products are marketed can also clash with local values that have long existed in traditional societies (Mardikaningsih, Halizah, Nuraini, & Darmawan, 2021). If green choices are perceived as meaningful and socially recognized, the impulse to buy increases. If green choices are perceived as empty symbols or mere promotional tools, the impulse to buy weakens. This is where social values shape the perception of authenticity (Testa et al., 2021).

Green consumer behavior is also influenced by identity formation, which is the way individuals see themselves and wish to be seen by others (Rana & Solaiman, 2022). The consumption of environmentally friendly products can become part of an identity as someone who is caring, rational, and responsible. The involvement of local communities in preserving nature also proves that local wisdom can go hand in hand with modern science to protect biodiversity (Nurmalasari & Nuraini, 2021). This identity is built through interaction, for example, through communities that share habits, through media that display role models, and through conversations that praise a low-waste lifestyle. Within the framework of identity, purchasing decisions do not point solely to the product's function, but also to the symbols attached to the product. Green products can become symbols of modernity, cleanliness, and social awareness. However, we must also remain vigilant toward current technological developments and economic systems that can sometimes limit our freedom in making independent choices (Rojak & Gardi, 2022). An inclusive identity recognizes small steps as part of a commitment, allowing consumers to feel they have room to learn.

Trust is the heart of the purchasing decision for environmentally friendly products because green claims are often difficult to inspect directly

(Zhang & Dong, 2020). Consumers can rarely verify the origin of materials, production emissions, or supply chain practices while standing in a store. Thus, decisions rely on signs representing facts, such as labels, certifications, brand reputation, and communication consistency. Trust is a normative judgment that the other party is not exploiting the consumer's information vulnerability. In green consumption, information vulnerability is high because environmental terms are often technical. When vulnerability is high, consumers need assurance that claims are made in good faith. If this assurance is absent, consumers easily develop suspicions that all green claims are cosmetic.

The purchasing decision process involves an assessment of price, quality, and perceived benefits (Barbu et al., 2022). In green consumption, perceived benefits are often indirect, such as benefits in the form of peace of mind or a sense of pride. These feelings are a form of moral reward. However, moral rewards compete with practical rewards such as lower prices or higher convenience. Therefore, socially formed environmental values must be able to overcome the tension between moral rewards and practical rewards. If the quality of a green product proves to be good, consumers will have more trust to continue using it. This generalization becomes part of the circulating social knowledge. When green products are high-quality, it is easier for consumers to link environmental values with shopping habits. Thus, the purchasing decision is not merely a matter of values, but a matter of whether the market provides viable options for those values.

Social norms can work through subtle pressure, namely the urge to conform in order to be accepted (Schuitema & Groot, 2015). In green consumption, subtle pressure can emerge when a community praises those who bring their own water bottles, or when a family regards the use of single-use plastics as a bad habit. Subtle pressure can strengthen green behavior, yet it can also trigger resistance if perceived as judgmental. Resistance arises when individuals feel their needs are misunderstood, such as the need for time, the need to save, or practical needs. Within a normative framework, healthy social pressure is pressure that invites without shaming. Shaming pressure damages dignity and encourages people to hide. In consumption, hiding means pretending to agree while still buying old products. Therefore, socially formed environmental values require a form of communication that fosters a sense of capability. A sense of capability is the belief that green

choices can be made without an unreasonable sacrifice of lifestyle. This sense of capability is formed when the social environment provides realistic examples, offers room to learn, and acknowledges limitations. Consequently, the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products is influenced by the quality of the norm—whether the norm provides support or social punishment. Norms that provide support expand participation, while norms that provide punishment narrow it.

Green consumer behavior is also related to habit, which is repeated action that becomes automatic (Harahap et al., 2018). Shopping habits are formed through routines, store layouts, and familiar brand choices. Habits possess power because they reduce the cognitive load. However, habits can also hinder change, as change requires attention and time. To understand the purchase of environmentally friendly products, one must look at how environmental values attempt to enter the pathway of habit. Values can trigger initial experimentation, such as trying refillable soap or buying products with recycled packaging. If the experiment goes smoothly, a new habit is formed. If the experiment is bothersome, old habits return. Thus, the market and the social environment determine whether a change in habit feels sensible. Within a normative framework, providing easily accessible green choices is a form of support for good behavior. If green choices are made difficult, green consumption becomes an exhausting moral test. An exhausting moral test usually does not last. Therefore, this discussion positions availability and ease as moral elements within the consumption system. Social values can provide the push, but the system needs to provide the path so that the push can become a habit. Thus, green purchasing decisions are part of habit formation guided by norms and made possible by the structure of choices.

The availability of environmentally friendly products and the way they are displayed influence purchasing decisions through an attention mechanism (Biel, 2017). Consumers tend to choose what is visible, easily accessible, and familiar. Green products that are hidden or rarely available signal that green choices are marginal options. Such signals influence social norms, as people perceive what is easy to find as what is normal. Within a normative framework, placing green products naturally in the shopping space is a way to shape a new normalcy. New normalcy reduces the sense of awkwardness when buying green products. This normalcy is important

because many consumers are hesitant to be different. Furthermore, product appearance can shape perceptions of quality. If green products are displayed with convincing aesthetics and clear information, consumers feel safe. If the display is cluttered and information is unclear, consumers feel a sense of risk. Perceived risk decreases purchases. Thus, social values require semiotic support, namely support through signs that help consumers interpret products quickly. Sign support can take the form of brief information about materials, usage instructions, and explanations regarding the reasons for eco-friendly claims. Explanations must be understandable without jargon. Within a normative framework, understandable explanations are a form of respect for the consumer. Consequently, purchasing decisions are influenced by whether the shopping system provides signs that facilitate ease, so that environmental values do not have to struggle against confusion.

In green consumption, there is a specific moral risk, namely the risk of feeling deceived by unsubstantial eco-friendly claims. This risk is often referred to as a suspicion of greenwashing. Such suspicion forms an evaluative climate that makes consumers wonder whether green purchases truly reduce environmental burdens or merely benefit the company. Within a normative framework, a climate of suspicion is a consequence of dishonest or oversimplified communication. When claims are made absolute, for example, stating a product is entirely eco-friendly without limits, critical consumers will have doubts. Proven doubts can spread and damage trust in the product category at large. This damage to trust impacts green consumer behavior because people stop trying. At this point, socially formed environmental values meet marketing ethics. Marketing ethics demand proportional claims, namely claims based on evidence and accompanied by explanations of their scope. Proportional claims allow consumers to judge without feeling misled. Additionally, ethics demand that companies avoid emotional manipulation, such as using fear to drive consumers to buy. Emotional manipulation undermines consumer autonomy. Thus, green purchasing requires an ecosystem of trust maintained through the honesty of claims, so that environmental values do not turn into social cynicism.

Consumer knowledge about environmental issues is formed through education, media, and social experience (Barbu et al., 2022). This knowledge is not always technical, yet it is sufficient to distinguish between reasonable claims and those that sound empty. In purchasing decisions, knowledge

functions as a selection tool. However, knowledge can also create a burden, because the more information there is, the greater the demand to choose correctly. This choice burden can trigger moral fatigue. Moral fatigue occurs when someone feels they must always make the perfect choice, despite limited time and energy. Within a normative framework, moral fatigue needs to be acknowledged so that green consumption does not turn into a source of stress. If green consumption is perceived as an endless burden, consumers may withdraw. Therefore, socially formed environmental values need to be accompanied by realistic narratives about gradual steps. Gradual narratives provide room for imperfection without lowering commitment. In purchasing decisions, gradual narratives make consumers willing to try, learn, and then improve. Furthermore, gradual narratives encourage consumers to choose the point of change that makes the most sense for their lives. Accordingly, this discussion positions environmental education as the formation of judgment capacity, not the formation of guilt. Judgment capacity supports stable green decisions because consumers feel autonomous and capable.

Socially formed environmental values also operate through the family as the primary unit of socialization (H'Mida, 2009). Within the family, children learn consumption habits, how to dispose of waste, how to use water, and how to evaluate products. Families can instill principles of thrift that align with ecological principles, such as avoiding waste. However, families can also instill rapid consumption habits that make single-use products feel normal. In purchasing decisions, family influence is evident in comfort standards and the definition of needs. If a family defines a need as something that must be practical, green products requiring adjustment may be rejected. If a family defines needs with long-term considerations, green products are more easily accepted. Within a normative framework, the family is a space for the formation of consumption virtues, namely the habit of weighing the consequences of shopping actions. These virtues are not synonymous with luxury, as many green practices actually save money. However, virtue requires consistent role modeling. Inconsistent role modeling can lead to cynicism among family members. Thus, socially formed environmental values do not occur in the public sphere alone, but also in the domestic sphere, and the decision to purchase environmentally

friendly products often becomes part of family negotiations regarding cost, priorities, and the meaning of a simple life.

Communities and friendship networks shape green consumption norms through mechanisms of recognition and imitation (Figueroa-García et al., 2018). An individual may begin purchasing a certain product because they see a friend using it, or because a community recommends it. Social recommendations reduce risk because consumers feel there is a guarantee from the experiences of others. However, social recommendations can also establish excessively high standards if a community glorifies a specific lifestyle. Standards that are too high can make people feel unfit to participate. Within a normative framework, a community that supports green consumption should foster solidarity rather than moral competition. Solidarity means sharing honest information, including mentioning product flaws, costs, and ways to adjust. Moral competition means mutually judging who is the "greenest." Moral competition gives rise to performativity, which are actions performed to be seen rather than for meaning. Performativity can drive impulsive buying, such as purchasing expensive green products for image and then not using them. Impulsive buying contradicts the principle of sustainability. Thus, social networks can either encourage or undermine green consumer behavior depending on the community's ethics. Healthy community ethics emphasize learning, honesty, and respect for economic limits. When these ethics are present, environmental values become enabling norms, making the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products part of a stable social practice.

Green consumer behavior is also influenced by how institutions and companies frame responsibility. If responsibility is positioned solely as an individual choice, consumers feel the problem is too large to confront. If responsibility is positioned as a collective effort, consumers find it easier to participate because they feel there is a supporting system (Sumarwan, 2022). Within a normative framework, the framing of responsibility determines whether green consumption becomes a practice of citizenship or a burden of guilt. The burden of guilt makes consumers defensive. Defensiveness triggers justification, such as stating that small actions are meaningless. This justification decreases green purchases. Conversely, framing as a collective effort allows small actions to be understood as part of a collective habit. Collective habits form new norms. New norms make it easier for individuals

to persist. In purchasing decisions, the framing of collective effort can be supported by product availability, plastic reduction policies, and easy refill services. When facilities are supportive, consumers feel that green choices are not burdensome. Within a normative framework, the provision of facilities is a form of justice because it reduces access inequality. Fair green consumption must be accessible to many, not just to those who can afford a premium. Thus, socially formed environmental values need to be accompanied by supporting structures so that purchasing decisions do not become class symbols, but rather a common and dignified practice.

In purchasing environmentally friendly products, consumers often use judgment shortcuts, known as heuristics, to save time. Heuristics can take the form of trusting certain labels, trusting specific brands, or associating certain packaging with sustainability (Risqiani & Maemunah, 2019). Heuristics are useful but risky because they can be manipulated. Within a normative framework, the manipulation of heuristics is a form of dishonesty because it exploits limited attention. If companies mimic environmental signs to increase sales without substantive changes, consumers are morally harmed. Moral harm occurs because consumers intend to do good but are directed toward choices that do not align with their intentions. This harm damages trust and reduces future green purchases. Therefore, the system of signs needs to be maintained through clear standards. Clear standards allow for safer heuristics. Additionally, public education can help consumers understand valid signs versus vague ones. However, education must be realistic, as consumers cannot be expected to become environmental experts. Thus, this discussion emphasizes the division of responsibility. Consumers are responsible for making reasonable assessments, while producers and regulators are responsible for maintaining the honesty of signs. This division of responsibility is crucial so that socially formed environmental values do not turn into a cognitive burden that causes people to give up.

The decision to purchase green products can be influenced by a sense of fairness, namely the assessment of whether a premium price is worth paying. Consumers can accept higher prices if they believe there are truly more responsible production costs and if the benefits are understandable (Risqiani & Maemunah, 2019). However, if premium pricing is perceived as the exploitation of a trend, consumers reject it. This rejection is not

merely an economic one, but a moral rejection of dishonesty. Within a normative framework, price fairness is related to transparency. Transparency means companies explain what makes the product different and what its limits are. If transparency is absent, consumers perceive the company as opportunistic. Opportunism damages the social norms that support green consumption. Furthermore, price fairness is also related to access. If green products are always premium, green consumption becomes an exclusive practice. Exclusivity gives rise to a stigma that environmental concern belongs only to certain people. This stigma reduces public participation. Therefore, this discussion emphasizes that the market needs to provide a spectrum of choices, from the affordable to the premium, so that environmental values can be translated by various groups. In purchasing decisions, the availability of a spectrum provides a meaningful space for compromise. Thus, the social formation of environmental values requires the support of a moral economy—a pricing system that does not position care as a luxury.

Green consumer behavior often faces a dilemma between convenience and responsibility. Many products considered environmentally friendly require adjustments, such as refilling, bringing containers, or maintaining products to ensure they last longer (Honkasalo, 2010). Adjustments require time and attention. In busy lives, time and attention become scarce resources. Thus, green purchasing decisions can be influenced by the extent to which green products offer competitive convenience. Within a normative framework, offering convenience does not mean sacrificing principles, but rather acknowledging human limits. If the consumption system ignores human limits, green norms will struggle to persist. Therefore, product innovations that facilitate ease of use can strengthen green behavior. However, innovation must also be guarded against manipulation, such as offering convenience that actually increases consumption and generates more waste. This is where social values are needed to assess whether a green product supports consumption reduction or merely refines overconsumption. Socially formed environmental values should praise practices of restraint, not practices that replace one product with many new ones. Consequently, green purchasing decisions need to be read as part of a consumption ethic that weighs needs, rather than simply choosing a green version of the same magnitude of consumption.

Green consumption is also related to a sense of control, namely the belief that individual actions can produce change (Caliskan, 2020). The sense of control is influenced by social narratives. If the social narrative claims that consumer actions are meaningless because the problem originates from industry, the sense of control decreases. If the social narrative claims that green consumption is part of a cultural shift, the sense of control increases. Within a normative framework, a sense of control is important because it maintains motivation. The motivation of green consumers is often moral in nature, making it susceptible to collapse when feeling futile. Therefore, this discussion emphasizes the importance of balanced narratives. A balanced narrative acknowledges that change requires policies and producer responsibility, but also recognizes that consumption habits shape market demand. With a balanced narrative, consumers do not feel blamed, yet they still feel responsible. In purchasing decisions, a sense of control encourages consumers to seek information, compare products, and persist with green choices despite temptations. Without a sense of control, consumers choose the path of least resistance. Because of this, socially formed environmental values must nurture a sense of control through the recognition that small actions can become social signals. Social signals form norms. Norms form habits. Thus, the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products is part of a chain of norm formation that requires a sense of control to stay alive.

In green consumption, there is a moral dimension in the form of a sense of self-cleanliness, namely the feeling that one has done the right thing (Zhuo et al., 2022). This sense of self-cleanliness can drive green purchases, but it can also trigger a compensatory effect, where after buying a green product, an individual feels free to engage in other actions that are less environmentally friendly. The compensatory effect is important to discuss normatively because it shows that green consumption can be used as a moral license. Moral licensing obscures the goal of sustainability because change does not occur in overall consumption patterns. Therefore, socially formed environmental values need to emphasize consistency rather than symbols. However, the emphasis on consistency must be guarded so that it does not turn into a punitive morality. Punitive morality creates shame and causes people to withdraw. Thus, a narrative that encourages reflection, rather than judgment, is needed. In purchasing decisions, reflection means weighing

whether a green purchase is truly necessary or merely an impulsive purchase justified by a green label. If reflection becomes a norm, green consumers will move closer to the principle of consumption reduction. Consumption reduction is the core of environmental ethics. Accordingly, this discussion positions green consumption as a complex moral field, where social values must guide the direction without creating pressure that makes people pretend.

Green consumer behavior is also determined by information legitimacy, namely whether the information source is considered authoritative and trustworthy (Oliveira-Brochado et al., 2015). Consumers receive information from advertisements, influencers, institutions, and friends. Each source carries a reputation. Within a normative framework, information legitimacy is related to communication responsibility. If an influencer conveys environmental claims without understanding them, the consumer is misled. If an institution provides certification without strict standards, public trust collapses. The collapse of trust hinders green purchasing decisions because consumers feel they have no footing. Therefore, information governance needs to be maintained through clear procedures and understandable communication. Understandable communication differs from deceptively oversimplified communication. Understandable communication explains the core and provides access to details for those who wish to verify. In purchasing decisions, such an information structure helps consumers evaluate without exhaustion. Furthermore, information legitimacy is influenced by consistency. If a brand is inconsistent in its claims and narratives, consumers hesitate. Hesitation decreases purchases. Thus, the social formation of environmental values is directly related to the governance of public knowledge. Good public knowledge governance creates trust, and trust supports repeated green consumer behavior.

Consumer assessment of environmentally friendly products often involves an understanding of consequences, such as waste consequences, health consequences, and social consequences (Rana & Solaiman, 2022). This understanding is not the result of personal scientific calculation, but the result of learned social knowledge. Within a normative framework, consumers have the right to non-misleading information, because without it, the purchasing decision becomes a decision forced by ignorance. The right to information becomes the basis for a fair market. A fair market allows

consumers to exercise environmental values without becoming victims of manipulation. Additionally, the assessment of consequences involves cognitive limits. It is impossible for consumers to assess all impacts. Therefore, an honest simplification mechanism is required. Honest simplification means making specific claims, such as recyclable packaging, rather than sweeping claims. Specific claims facilitate assessment. With specific claims, consumers can link choices to understandable consequences. In purchasing decisions, understandability increases the sense of trust. When trust increases, consumers are more prepared to pay slightly more or change their habits. Thus, socially formed environmental values require conceptual tools that link products and consequences, so that green purchasing does not merely become a fashion, but an accountable action.

Purchasing decisions for green products are also influenced by the service experience, such as the availability of information in the store, ease of returns, and after-sales service (Darnall et al., 2012). Consumers evaluate whether a brand truly cares or is merely advertising. If a green product breaks and the service is poor, consumers feel twice betrayed: betrayed as a customer and betrayed as a well-intentioned individual. Within a normative framework, service is an integral part of trust. Trust is not built by advertising, but by experience. Consistent experience fosters buying habits. Buying habits support the stability of green behavior. Therefore, this discussion positions service quality as a moral element within the green consumption ecosystem. Furthermore, service is also related to producer responsibility regarding the end-of-life of products, such as buy-back or repair programs. Such programs signal that producers understand life-cycle principles. These signals strengthen environmental values within the consumer community. In purchasing decisions, signals of responsibility reinforce the sense that green purchasing is not an illusion. Thus, green consumer behavior does not end at the moment of transaction. It continues through the experience of use, maintenance, and disposal. Social values influence this entire chain of experience because they determine whether consumers feel supported or abandoned.

Green consumer behavior can be seen as an ethical practice involving questions about necessity, consequences, and honesty. Green consumption ethics reject the idea that all environmental problems can be solved by buying new "green" versions of products (Onga, 2022). This ethic emphasizes

reducing unnecessary purchases, extending product lifespan, and re-using. However, the market often offers consumption-based solutions because the market lives off sales. This tension requires consumers to assess whether a green product is truly necessary. Within a normative framework, the assessment of need is a moral act that is often overlooked. Socially formed environmental values can help by praising simple practices, such as repairing items, sharing, and buying only what is needed. If social norms praise simplicity, consumers do not feel they must buy more to be considered green. If social norms praise new products, green consumption turns into symbolic consumption. Symbolic consumption undermines sustainability goals. Therefore, this discussion asserts the importance of organizing social norms so that green consumption does not become a substitute for consumption restriction. Thus, the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products needs to be placed within a broader ethic, namely the ethic of decency. The ethic of decency evaluates actions based on need and proportion, not just labels.

Socially formed environmental values influence purchasing decisions through mechanisms of guilt and pride (Brulle, 2010). Pride arises when green consumption is recognized as a good deed. Guilt arises when consumption is considered destructive. These two emotions can drive change, but both must be managed normatively. Excessive guilt can make people defensive, while excessive pride can encourage consumption as a medium for showing off. In purchasing decisions, emotional balance is important so that green actions remain realistic. An approach that emphasizes appreciation for small steps can maintain motivation without triggering moral competition. Furthermore, this discussion emphasizes that social emotions are shaped by public narratives. Narratives that broadly blame consumers will trigger resistance. Narratives that invite without judging will foster participation. Within a normative framework, participation is the primary goal because environmental change requires collective habits. Collective habits are formed when many people feel they have a place. Therefore, socially formed environmental values must be inclusive. Inclusivity means recognizing that economic capacities differ, that product access differs, and that life priorities differ. Thus, the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products is influenced by social

emotions formed by values, and good values are those that empower, not those that punish.

The purchase of green products is also related to the norm of self-honesty, namely the need for consistency between what is believed and what is done (Peattie, 2010). Many people want to see themselves as responsible individuals. When actions do not align with beliefs, internal tension arises. This tension can drive change, but it can also encourage rationalization, such as claiming that green products make no difference. Rationalization reduces tension without changing behavior. Within a normative framework, rationalization is an understandable form of self-protection, yet it hinders learning. Socially formed environmental values can lower the need for rationalization by providing space for imperfection. If social norms accept the learning process, people do not need to justify themselves by rejecting the idea of green consumption. They can acknowledge limitations and still move forward. In purchasing decisions, the space to learn encourages consumers to try green products without fear of being accused of hypocrisy while still using other products. Thus, moral consistency is understood as a long-term direction, rather than an immediate demand. A long-term direction is more realistic and stable. This discussion emphasizes that socially sustainable green consumption requires norms that maintain engagement. Engagement will persist if people feel safe to learn. Therefore, social values must balance the drive for consistency with the recognition of human limits.

In the digital space, environmental values spread rapidly through content, recommendations, and trends. Rapid dissemination can broaden ecological awareness, but it can also lead to oversimplification. Many environmental issues are compressed into slogans, resulting in consumers receiving powerful messages that are poor in nuance (Hanley & Jakubec, 2019). In purchasing decisions, slogans can encourage spontaneous actions, but spontaneous actions are risky if information is insufficient. The digital space produces a culture of self-proof, namely the need to show that one cares. A culture of self-proof can drive consumption as a display. Within a normative framework, consumption as display is dangerous because it turns the objective into an image. Image can drive overconsumption. Overconsumption contradicts the principle of consumption reduction. Therefore, socially formed environmental values

in the digital space need to be directed toward proportional practices. This direction can be strengthened with content that emphasizes repair, reuse, and buying only as necessary.

The decision to purchase environmentally friendly products often occurs amidst conflicting information. One source says product A is the safest, while another source says product A remains problematic. When information conflicts, consumers can experience confusion. Confusion can lead consumers to postpone or choose familiar old products. The process of making a decision is indeed a quite complicated matter for many people because it involves many considerations within it (Darmawan & Andayani, 2010). Within a normative framework, information confusion is a problem of public knowledge governance. If public knowledge governance is chaotic, the responsibility is shifted to the individual to filter it themselves. This burden is unfair because filtering capacities differ. Therefore, communication standards are needed to help consumers distinguish between clear claims and vague ones. However, this discussion emphasizes the principle of epistemic humility, namely the recognition that not everything can be known perfectly. Epistemic humility is useful so that consumers do not get trapped in an exhausting search for absolute certainty. Basically, an individual's intention to buy environmentally friendly products is also often driven by a sense of care for nature as well as an awareness of their own health (Nuraini et al., 2022). Thus, socially formed environmental values need to provide a practical orientation that can be executed amidst uncertainty.

Ecological awareness is also related to sensitivity toward the social consequences of production, such as working conditions and supply chain justice (Sachdeva et al., 2015). Some consumers link being environmentally friendly with being human-friendly, as environmental destruction often goes hand in hand with social injustice. Within a normative framework, responsible green consumption needs to avoid a narrow separation between nature and humans. The vital role of family members, especially women, in managing household shopping is also very decisive for the success of these greener consumption patterns (Halizah & Nuraini, 2021). However, caution is also needed so that the scope of responsibility does not become an unbearable burden for consumers. Therefore, socially formed environmental values need to prioritize several understandable principles,

such as reducing waste, choosing durable products, and supporting transparent companies. These principles are easier to apply than a long list of demands. In purchasing decisions, prioritizing principles helps consumers make decisions without getting lost. If a company advertises as eco-friendly but treats workers poorly, sensitive consumers will lose trust.

The existence of socially formed environmental values serves as a source of norms that guide assessment, and positions the purchasing decision as the result of an intersection between norms, trust, and the structure of choices. Social values shape ecological awareness through moral language, identity, and recognition. Social values also shape how consumers interpret signs, evaluate prices, and assess the authenticity of claims. The decision to purchase environmentally friendly products occurs when consumers feel the choice is meaningful, trustworthy, and can be carried out without exceeding the limits of a reasonable life. Conversely, purchasing decisions weaken when consumers face uncertainty in claims, experiences of poor quality, judgmental norms, or exclusive choice structures. Within a normative framework, the center of the issue is not a lack of intention, but rather the quality of the social ecosystem that shapes trust and a sense of capability. Therefore, the discussion positions communication ethics, the honesty of claims, the inclusivity of norms, and ease of access as requirements for consistent green consumer behavior. With this framework, environmental values are understood as a social force that can lead the market toward more responsible choices, provided those values are manifested in trustworthy signs and in a fair structure of choices.

## Conclusion

Ecological awareness and green consumer behavior are shaped by environmental values born from social processes, which are then translated into purchasing decisions through norms of appropriateness, identity, and trust mechanisms. Social values provide a language for consumers to evaluate actions as either responsible or reckless, and shape social emotions such as pride, shame, and guilt that direct choices. However, the decision to purchase environmentally friendly products remains dependent on the choice structure faced by consumers, including the readability of claims, product quality, price fairness, and ease of access. When green claims are vague, when quality experiences are disappointing, or when social norms

turn into judgment, consumers tend to become cynical and return to old habits. Therefore, the relationship between social values and green purchasing can be understood as a link between moral meaning and the governance of trust. The answer to the problem formulation shows that environmental values direct purchases to the extent that those values form a sense of meaning, a sense of capability, and a sense of security from manipulation, allowing green consumption to become a stable habit.

The implications and suggestions emphasize the need to organize the communication and signage of environmentally friendly products so that consumers are not forced to bear an excessive burden of interpretation. Producers need to maintain proportional, specific, and understandable claims, accompanied by transparency regarding the limits of those claims to protect public trust. Retailers and brand managers need to organize the availability and display of green products so that such choices become normal rather than marginal, while also providing a price spectrum so that green consumption does not become an exclusive symbol. Public education practices should emphasize gradual learning and an ethic of decency, so that green norms invite without shaming and prevent moral competition that drives symbolic consumption. Further research is suggested to detail normative indicators for the honesty of claims, the minimization of data in green marketing, and consumer protection standards against deception, so that the framework developed can serve as a reference for market governance that respects consumers and sustainability goals.

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