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# Summary

Encouraging Consumers to Engage in Sustainable Behaviors

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Climate change, undeniably a critical issue confronting humanity, has far-reaching implications that threaten both human and planetary wellbeing. This report delves into comprehensive analyses of factors that hinder consumers from adopting sustainable behaviors, while also exploring potential solutions to address these impediments. Specifically, I examine factors at three levels: individual factors (e.g., knowledge), social factors (e.g., social environmental), system-related factors (e.g., fairness of economy). Below, I report the most important implications of our findings which based on 33 experiments and interviews.

## Self-related factors

### Unique messages and Recycling accuracy

Enhancing the utilization of recycled materials in production is crucial for mitigating companies' environmental impacts and aligns with circular economy principles. The usability of recycled materials is significantly impacted by their quality, underscoring the necessity for well-sorted and uncontaminated waste in the recycling process. To reduce recycling

contamination (consumers' habit of placing non-recyclable materials, such as black plastic, into recycling bins with the expectation of recycling):

- Organizations and public policymakers should make greater use of proscriptive information ("do not recycle these items") to reduce recycling contamination in society.
- Although numerous organizations encourage recycling behavior through prescriptive information ("recycle these items"), our findings demonstrate that such messages prompt consumers to place non-recyclable items in recycling bins with the expectation of recycling.
- Unique messages that discourage the recycling of specific items can enhance consumer education. These messages can assist policymakers, the waste management industry, and retailers in purifying recycling streams and facilitating the shift towards a circular economy.

## Repair decisions and Brand loyalty

In the marketplace, numerous brands have started to offer repair services (e.g., H&M, Patagonia, Levi's), and these repair services usually promote repair behavior by emphasizing the environmental advantages of opting for repairs. However, our findings indicate that promoting repair behavior as an environmentally friendly choice may not always resonate with all consumers.

- If a consumer is loyal to a specific brand, promoting repair behavior as a product commitment (e.g., "Stay committed to your products") can be a more effective than environmental approach.
- Brand loyalty is a commonly utilized segmentation variable, discernible through behaviors such as repeat purchases, loyalty program memberships, or mobile app usage. Therefore, brands can readily distinguish between loyal and non-loyal consumers, enabling them to tailor different messages to these two segments.

## Social Factors

### Becoming a Parent and Sustainable behavior

How does becoming a parent influence consumers' engagement in sustainable behavior? While nonparents predict that their engagement in sustainable behavior would increase upon becoming a parent, our results show that when individuals become parents, they are less likely to engage in sustainable behavior because

they emphasize efficiency goals (i.e., saving time).

- We also demonstrate that this is not the case for all parents and under all circumstances. When parents perceive that adopting sustainable behavior would not require additional time, we do not observe this correlation between parenting and their sustainable choices.
- Furthermore, as children grow older, we do not observe this correlation either.
- Retailers and policymakers can encourage sustainable behavior among parents by presenting sustainable options in a manner that helps consumers save time (e.g., "reduce your food waste, save time"), thereby enhancing parents' intention to engage in sustainable behavior.

### Perceived Environmental Impact

Our results show that when consumers perceive sustainable behavior as uncommon in their social environment (i.e., only a few people engaging in sustainable behavior in their surroundings), they consider their own sustainable behavior to have less impact on the environment. This perception, in turn, is associated with reduced engagement in sustainable behavior.

- Presenting the potential positive impact of an individual's engagement in sustainable behavior can help individuals perceive their actions as having a

more significant environmental impact, subsequently boosting their engagement in sustainable behavior.

- These findings imply that retailers, observing low demand for sustainable products in specific areas, should emphasize the potential positive impact of individual engagement in sustainable behavior. For example, they can highlight the extent of CO<sub>2</sub> savings achievable with every sustainable product purchase. Such messages have the potential to motivate consumers, especially when they perceive sustainable behavior as uncommon in their surroundings.

## System-related Factors

### Fairness of the economy and Sharing economy

Our results show that consumers who believe the economic system to be fair express stronger interest in peer-to-peer sellers (P2P) than those who believe the economy unfairly distributes economic rewards and punishment. This happens because consumers who believe in the fairness of the economic system perceive peer-to-peer sellers as more entrepreneurial and independent. Interestingly, these beliefs do not influence consumers' interest in traditional commercial sellers, such as established companies.

These results suggest that sharing economy platform should look to segments that justify the economic system to bolster outcomes. How can such segments be identified and targeted? With the proliferation of big data analytics, inferring individuals' beliefs and preferences has never been more feasible, faster, or more efficient.

- One suggestion is to track segments' (states', cities', or neighborhoods') voting behavior for various economic policies to infer their beliefs about economic fairness.
- Another is to target programs and channels such as Draknästet, which naturally attract audiences that believe in the fairness of the economic system and markets.
- A final suggestion is to use brand stories to highlight the entrepreneurial spirit of peer-to-peer and traditional sellers; this can attract consumers who perceive the economic system to be fair who naturally value entrepreneurial qualities in their exchange partners.

In summary, these results suggest that retailers and policymakers should consider these three levels when encouraging consumers to engage in sustainable behavior.