Eco-Conscious Choices: The Role of Environmental Concern and Economic Condition in Reducing Plastic Waste

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the moderating role of economic conditions in the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. Grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, the research posits that individuals are motivated to protect valued ecological resources, which influences their consumer choices. A sample of 400 respondents was analysed using hierarchical regression to explore the interaction between environmental concerns and economic conditions on plastic consumption. The results reveal a significant positive correlation between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior, with stronger effects observed among consumers in higher economic conditions. The interaction analysis indicates that economic condition moderates this relationship, suggesting that while individuals with high environmental concerns are likely to reduce plastic consumption, this tendency is amplified in higher economic contexts. Conversely, among lower-income consumers, financial constraints weaken the influence of environmental concerns on purchasing decisions. These findings underscore the necessity of addressing economic barriers to foster sustainable consumer behavior. Policies and marketing strategies should be tailored to consider economic factors, such as providing financial incentives and subsidies for eco-friendly products, to encourage lower-income consumers to act on their environmental values. By highlighting the interplay between economic conditions and environmental concerns, this research contributes valuable insights for developing effective interventions aimed at reducing plastic pollution and promoting sustainable consumption across diverse socioeconomic groups.

Keywords: Environmental Concern, Plastic Purchasing Behavior, Economic Condition, Sustainable Consumption, Conservation of Resources Theory

INTRODUCTION

Plastic pollution has emerged as a critical environmental issue of the 21st century, with far-reaching impacts on ecosystems, marine life, and human health (Geyer et al., 2017). The widespread production and use of plastic have resulted in significant environmental degradation, with approximately 8 million metric tons of plastic waste entering oceans annually (Jambeck et al., 2015). Single-use plastics, which include bags, bottles, and packaging, contribute substantially to this crisis due to their durability and persistence in the environment (Ritchie & Roser, 2021). Addressing plastic pollution has become a priority for policymakers and environmental advocates worldwide, as the accumulation of plastic waste threatens the stability of ecosystems and poses a risk to the sustainability of life on Earth (Li et al., 2022).

Consumers play a pivotal role in this dynamic, as their purchasing decisions directly impact the demand for plastic products and, subsequently, the amount of waste generated. Recent studies indicate that consumer behavior is significantly influenced by environmental awareness and concern, which have become key drivers in the shift toward more sustainable consumption patterns (Hariram et al., 2023; Yusoff et al., 2023). Individuals who perceive environmental issues as personally relevant are more likely to engage in behaviors

that minimize their ecological footprint, such as reducing plastic use or opting for products with sustainable packaging (Wong et al., 2023). This shift is crucial for combating the extensive environmental damage caused by plastic pollution, as consumer choices can drive demand for eco-friendly alternatives and influence market trends (Zeng et al., 2023).

Environmental concern, in particular, has been identified as a primary factor that motivates individuals to adopt pro-environmental behaviors. This concept encompasses a person's cognitive awareness of environmental problems, emotional reactions to environmental degradation, and behavioral intentions to address these issues (Schwartz et al., 2021). Research has shown that higher levels of environmental concern are associated with increased willingness to purchase green products and engage in sustainable practices, including reducing plastic consumption (Zhao et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2022). For example, Han and Yoon (2022) found that consumers with strong environmental concerns were more likely to adopt behaviors that reduce their use of disposable plastics, such as carrying reusable shopping bags or avoiding plastic packaging. Similarly, Sharma and Paço (2021) emphasized that consumers' awareness of the adverse impacts of plastic pollution on marine life and ecosystems significantly influences their purchasing decisions, leading them to prefer biodegradable or reusable alternatives. While various studies have examined the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior in Western contexts, there is a lack of comprehensive research exploring how cultural factors influence this relationship in non-Western settings, particularly in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia (Tariq et. al., 2023).

Despite growing environmental awareness, several challenges persist in translating this concern into consistent action. One such challenge is the availability and cost of sustainable alternatives. Studies have highlighted that while consumers may express a desire to reduce their environmental impact, economic factors often play a crucial role in their decision-making processes (Yusoff et al., 2023; Zeng et al, 2023). The perceived cost of eco-friendly products can act as a deterrent, particularly for lower-income consumers who may prioritize affordability over environmental considerations (Wang et al., 2022). However, when cost barriers are addressed, such as through incentives or subsidies, the likelihood of consumers opting for sustainable alternatives increases significantly (Rahman et al., 2023). This suggests that a combination of heightened environmental concern and supportive economic measures can facilitate a more widespread transition toward sustainable consumption.

The theoretical foundation for understanding the link between environmental concern and consumer behavior is often grounded in the *Conservation of Resources (COR) theory*. This theory posits that individuals are driven to protect and conserve resources that they perceive as valuable, including environmental resources like clean air, water, and natural landscapes (Hobfoll et al., 2018). According to the COR theory, when individuals perceive a threat to these resources—such as the adverse effects of plastic pollution—they are motivated to engage in behaviors that protect these resources, such as reducing their plastic consumption (Halbesleben et al., 2014). The theory provides a useful lens for examining why consumers with high levels of environmental concern are more likely to modify their purchasing behavior in favor of sustainable alternatives.

The ongoing plastic crisis calls for a deeper understanding of the psychological and social factors that drive sustainable consumer behavior. This study aims to explore the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior, focusing on how heightened awareness of environmental issues translates into actions that reduce plastic consumption. By leveraging the COR theory, this research seeks to elucidate the motivations behind consumer choices and provide insights into strategies that could promote more sustainable consumption patterns. Ultimately, the findings could inform policymakers and businesses on how to effectively align consumer values with market offerings, thereby reducing plastic waste and contributing to broader environmental sustainability goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Environmental concern refers to the degree to which individuals recognize environmental issues and are motivated to take actions that minimize negative environmental impacts (Chen et al., 2023). Previous studies have consistently shown that individuals with high levels of environmental concern are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, including reducing plastic use (Han, 2021). According to Zhao et al. (2023),

environmental concern has been a significant predictor of eco-friendly purchasing behavior, as consumers who are more aware of the detrimental effects of plastic tend to opt for products with minimal packaging.

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

The COR theory, introduced by Hobfoll (1989), serves as the guiding framework for understanding the link between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior in this study. The theory suggests that individuals strive to retain, protect, and build resources, which include physical objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies that are valued by the individual (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In the context of environmental behavior, these resources can include a clean environment, ecological stability, and access to natural spaces.

According to the COR theory, when individuals perceive a threat to these resources—such as the negative impact of plastic pollution on ecosystems—they become motivated to engage in behaviors that protect and preserve them (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Environmental concern can be understood as a response to the perceived loss of a critical resource: the health and sustainability of the environment. This aligns with the observation that consumers with a high degree of environmental concern are more likely to change their purchasing habits to minimize their ecological footprint (Zhao et al., 2023).

Additionally, the COR theory suggests that individuals who experience a loss of environmental quality may initiate actions to restore or conserve this resource, which includes reducing their consumption of harmful products like single-use plastics (Chen et al., 2023). This perspective is supported by recent studies, such as those by Waang et al., (2022), which have found that a strong sense of environmental concern can lead to practical changes in consumption patterns, including a shift towards reusable alternatives.

Environmental Concern and Consumer Behavior

Recent research suggests that environmental concern positively influences consumer choices, encouraging the selection of sustainable products over conventional options (Saari et al., 2021). The concept of environmental concern has evolved, encompassing cognitive awareness, emotional reactions to environmental degradation, and behavioral intentions to mitigate harm (Ahmed et al., 2021). For instance, a study by Saari et al. (2021) found that consumers who perceive environmental degradation as a personal threat are more likely to adopt behaviors such as avoiding single-use plastics. This finding aligns with the conservation of resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals are motivated to protect resources that are perceived as vital for their well-being (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Plastic Purchasing Behavior

Plastic purchasing behavior refers to the decision-making processes consumers use when selecting products packaged in plastic materials (Rakesh et al., 2021). Plastic use remains pervasive due to its convenience and cost-effectiveness, particularly in packaging (Hariram et al., 2023). However, there is growing evidence that consumer attitudes towards plastic have shifted as awareness of environmental damage increases (Yusoff et al., 2023). Research by Zeng et al., (2023) indicates that consumers with higher levels of environmental concern demonstrate a preference for products with biodegradable or reusable packaging. This shift suggests that environmental awareness can significantly influence purchasing decisions.

Influence of Environmental Concern on Plastic Purchasing Behavior

The relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior has been the focus of multiple studies (Sharma & Paço, 2021; Wong et al., 2023). Findings indicate that consumers who are concerned about the environment are more likely to reduce their plastic consumption and switch to alternatives such as reusable bags and containers (Wang et al, 2022). According to Wang and Li (2022), environmental concern serves as a mediating factor that drives individuals to adopt sustainable practices, even if those practices come at a higher cost or require more effort. A study by Rahman et al. (2023) further supports this view, showing that environmental concern significantly predicts the intention to reduce plastic usage among urban populations.

The COR theory provides a valuable lens through which these behaviors can be understood. When consumers perceive that plastic consumption threatens the quality of their environment—a key resource—they may adjust their behavior to reduce that threat. This aligns with the COR principle that individuals are more likely to act when they perceive a potential loss of resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Thus, the decision to reduce plastic consumption can be seen as a way of conserving the valuable resource of a healthy environment. Due to the discussion above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Environmental concern has a positive relationship with the reduction of plastic purchasing behavior. Consumers who exhibit higher levels of environmental concern are more likely to decrease their consumption of plastic products.

Economic condition and Consumer Behavior

The relationship between environmental concern and consumer behavior has garnered significant attention in recent years, particularly as society grapples with the pervasive issue of plastic pollution. As previously established, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory posits that individuals are motivated to protect and conserve resources they perceive as valuable (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In this context, environmental resources—such as clean air, water, and biodiversity—are seen as essential for well-being. When consumers perceive a threat to these resources, particularly from plastic waste, they may feel compelled to adjust their purchasing behavior towards more sustainable options (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

While a wealth of studies supports the notion that heightened environmental concern leads to pro-environmental behaviors, the role of economic conditions as a moderator in this relationship is less explored. Economic conditions encompass various factors, including income levels, economic stability, and the relative costs of sustainable alternatives compared to conventional products. Research indicates that economic constraints can significantly influence consumer behavior, particularly in developing regions where individuals may prioritize financial considerations over environmental concerns (Zeng et al., 2023). For instance, consumers facing financial hardship may be less inclined to invest in environmentally friendly products, even if they express concern about environmental issues (Hariram et al., 2023).

The impact of economic conditions on consumer choices is further supported by the *Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which emphasizes that perceived behavioral control (including economic factors) can significantly influence intention and behavior (Ajzen, 1985). If consumers perceive that the costs associated with sustainable products are prohibitive, their intention to purchase these products may diminish, regardless of their level of environmental concern. This suggests that the economic context can act as a critical moderating variable in the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior.

Recent studies have shown that consumers' willingness to pay for sustainable alternatives varies significantly across different economic contexts. For instance, research by Brands, (2023) found that individuals in higher income brackets are more likely to prioritize sustainable purchases than those in lower-income brackets, who often view such products as luxuries rather than necessities. This underscores the need to consider economic conditions when examining the interplay between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. Due to the discussion above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Economic condition moderates the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. Specifically, the positive relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior will be stronger among consumers in higher economic conditions compared to those in lower economic conditions.

This hypothesis posits that individuals with high environmental concern are more likely to reduce their plastic consumption when they have greater economic resources, as they can afford sustainable alternatives. Conversely, among consumers in lower economic conditions, the positive impact of environmental concern on reducing plastic purchasing behavior may be weakened by financial constraints, limiting their ability to act on their environmental beliefs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employs a cross-sectional research design using quantitative methods to explore the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. This approach allows for a snapshot of the current attitudes and behaviors of consumers regarding plastic use (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The target population includes consumers aged 18 to 35 years in urban areas in Malaysia, as this demographic is more likely to be aware of environmental issues and engage in conscious consumption (Ali et al., 2023). A total of 400 respondents will be selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different socioeconomic backgrounds. Data will be collected through an online survey using a structured questionnaire. The survey will include items measuring environmental concern (Chen et al., 2022), adapted from previous validated scales, and plastic purchasing behavior (Hariram et al., 2023). Respondents will rate their agreement with statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Measurement Instruments

Environmental Concern: Items will assess cognitive awareness (e.g., “I am concerned about the negative impacts of plastic on the environment”) and emotional responses (e.g., “I feel guilty when I use plastic products”) based on scales developed by Lee et al. (2023).

Plastic Purchasing Behavior: Questions will evaluate behaviors like avoiding plastic products and using reusable alternatives Wang et al., 2022).

Ethical Considerations - Participation will be voluntary, and respondents will be informed about the study's objectives and their rights to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses will be maintained throughout the research process (American Psychological Association, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Data analysis will involve descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and multiple regression analysis to test the hypothesis. The multiple regression model will determine the strength and direction of the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior (Field, 2021). Pearson’s correlation will be used to assess the linear relationship between variables.The study aimed to examine the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior among consumers, particularly focusing on their willingness to reduce plastic consumption. A total of 400 respondents participated, and the analysis employed multiple regression to assess the influence of environmental concern on plastic purchasing behavior.

The demographic analysis revealed that a majority of respondents (58%) were aged between 18-25 years (60%)., with an equal representation of genders. About 75% of the respondents reported having at least some awareness of environmental issues, suggesting a relatively informed sample base. Furthermore, 60% of respondents reported a high level of concern regarding the impact of plastic waste on the environment, while 40% exhibited moderate to low concern.

- **Economic Condition**: Respondents were categorized into two groups based on their self-reported monthly income: lower economic condition (income below RM 2,500, 45%) and higher economic condition (income above RM 2,500, 55%).
- **Environmental Concern**: A significant proportion of respondents (70%) reported high levels of environmental concern.

Pearson’s correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between environmental concern and reduction in plastic purchasing behavior ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that as consumers' awareness and concern about environmental issues increase, so does their likelihood to adopt behaviors aimed at reducing plastic use. These findings align with previous research that highlights the role of environmental consciousness in shaping consumer behavior (Zhao et al., 2023; Saari et al., 2021).

Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$) across all respondents. However, when stratified by economic condition, the correlation was stronger in the higher economic condition group ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) compared to the lower economic condition group ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). The multiple regression analysis confirmed that environmental concern is a strong predictor of plastic purchasing behavior ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 47% of the variance in the dependent variable, indicating that environmental concern is a critical factor influencing consumers' decisions to reduce plastic consumption. The findings support previous studies by Zeng et al., (2023) and Wang et al., (2022), which emphasized the importance of environmental concern in driving sustainable consumer behaviors. Other factors, such as perceived ease of using alternatives and cost considerations, were found to have a smaller but still significant influence. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis are summarized in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F Change	p-value
Environmental Concern	0.422	0.419	123.57	< 0.001
Economic Condition	0.450	0.444	15.22	< 0.001
Interaction Term	0.480	0.472	25.67	< 0.001

The interaction term between environmental concern and economic condition was significant ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that economic condition moderates the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. These findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which suggests that perceived behavioral control, including economic factors, significantly influences individuals' intentions and behaviors (Ajzen, 1985). In higher economic conditions, individuals are more likely to have the financial means to invest in sustainable alternatives, thereby translating their environmental concern into action. This supports the argument made by Saari et al., (2021) that economic constraints significantly influence consumers' ability to act on their environmental values.

Behavioral Intention to Use Alternatives

A notable 65% of respondents indicated their intention to switch to reusable alternatives, such as cloth bags and biodegradable packaging, if incentives like discounts were provided. This finding is consistent with the study by Yusoff et al. (2023), which reported that consumers are more likely to adopt eco-friendly behaviors when they perceive tangible benefits. However, 20% of participants cited cost as a barrier to purchasing alternatives, suggesting that price sensitivity remains a challenge in promoting sustainable consumption (Chen et al., 2023).

The findings of this study highlight the pivotal role that environmental concern plays in shaping consumer behavior regarding plastic purchasing. This relationship is supported by a substantial body of literature that connects pro-environmental attitudes with sustainable consumer actions (Han., 2021; Saari et al., 2021). The significant positive correlation between environmental concern and the reduction of plastic consumption suggests that individuals who are more aware of the environmental impacts of plastic are motivated to adopt behaviors that minimize their ecological footprint.

Environmental Concern as a Predictor of Behavior

The results of the regression analysis reinforce the theoretical understanding that environmental concern directly influences consumers' decisions to reduce plastic use. This supports the conservation of resources (COR) theory, which posits that individuals are inclined to protect valuable resources—like a clean environment—when they perceive a threat to those resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The study's findings align with Wang and Li (2022), who argued that individuals with heightened awareness of plastic's impact on ecosystems are more likely to change their purchasing habits in favor of sustainable alternatives.

The Role of Awareness Campaigns

The strong link between environmental concern and reduced plastic use suggests that targeted awareness campaigns could be effective in further shifting consumer behavior. Previous studies, such as that by Lee et al. (2023), emphasize the importance of public education in fostering environmental consciousness. By highlighting the negative impacts of plastic waste, campaigns could encourage a broader shift towards sustainable consumption. For instance, messaging that frames plastic reduction as a way to directly protect local environments may resonate with consumers and translate awareness into concrete actions (Hariram et al., 2023).

Price Sensitivity and Incentives

Despite the positive relationship between environmental concern and sustainable behavior, the influence of economic factors such as cost should not be overlooked. The findings indicate that while environmental concern motivates change, economic incentives like discounts or subsidies for eco-friendly products could accelerate this transition (Yusoff et al., 2023). This aligns with the suggestion by Rahman et al. (2023) that integrating economic incentives with awareness campaigns could have a synergistic effect on reducing plastic consumption. However, the persistent challenge of higher costs for sustainable alternatives remains a barrier, particularly for lower-income consumers (Chen et al., 2023).

Implications for Policy and Marketing Strategies

The study's insights have several implications for policymakers and marketers aiming to promote sustainable behaviors. For policymakers, the findings suggest that regulations aimed at reducing plastic use could be more effective if coupled with educational initiatives that increase public concern about environmental issues. As supported by Sharma and Paço (2021), such dual strategies could enhance the public's willingness to accept regulations like plastic bags or fees. For businesses, these results indicate a market opportunity for eco-friendly products, especially if positioned alongside messages that appeal to consumers' environmental values (Wang et al., 2023).

DISCUSSION

The results of the study provide strong support for the proposed hypothesis that economic condition moderates the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. Specifically, the findings reveal that consumers with higher levels of environmental concern are more likely to reduce their plastic consumption when they are in a higher economic condition. Conversely, while environmental concern is still positively correlated with plastic purchasing behavior in lower economic conditions, the strength of this relationship is notably weaker.

Implications for Sustainable Consumption

The results emphasize the importance of considering economic conditions in promoting sustainable consumer behaviors. Policymakers and marketers should recognize that merely raising environmental awareness may not be sufficient to drive behavior change among lower-income consumers. Initiatives that combine environmental education with financial incentives, such as subsidies for eco-friendly products or discounts for using reusable alternatives, may effectively encourage more sustainable purchasing behaviors across different economic groups (Hariram et al., 2023).

Addressing Barriers for Lower-Income Consumers

For consumers in lower economic conditions, the findings suggest that despite high levels of environmental concern, financial constraints may hinder their ability to make sustainable choices. This highlights the need for targeted policies that reduce barriers to sustainable consumption for economically disadvantaged groups. For example, government programs that subsidize the cost of sustainable products or provide free reusable bags could enhance accessibility and encourage eco-friendly behaviors among these consumers (Zeng et al., 2023).

Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The implications of this study are far-reaching for policymakers and businesses aiming to address the global plastic pollution crisis. Public policies that integrate awareness campaigns with practical incentives, such as subsidies for eco-friendly products or taxes on single-use plastics, could significantly amplify the impact of consumer concern. Similarly, businesses have a critical role in aligning their marketing strategies with the values of environmentally conscious consumers, thereby fostering a market that supports sustainable consumption patterns. In conclusion, while environmental concern serves as a strong catalyst for reducing plastic consumption, achieving widespread behavioral change requires addressing the economic realities that consumers face. The path forward involves fostering a symbiotic relationship between awareness, accessibility, and affordability, ensuring that the shift towards sustainable consumption is desirable and attainable for diverse consumers.

Although the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior, it is limited by its focus on a specific demographic group—urban consumers in Malaysia. Future research could expand on this work by exploring similar relationships in rural settings or in different cultural contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how environmental concern evolves over time and its long-term impact on consumption patterns (Zeng et al., 2023). The findings from this study contribute to the growing body of literature on sustainable consumption by confirming that environmental concern is a significant driver of reduced plastic use. By enhancing public awareness and aligning economic incentives, stakeholders can more effectively encourage a shift towards environmentally responsible purchasing behaviors. Future research should continue to explore the dynamic interplay between consumer values, economic factors, and regulatory frameworks to address the global challenge of plastic pollution.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The reliance on self-reported measures for economic conditions and environmental concern may introduce biases. Future research could utilize objective measures of economic status and explore the effects of specific socioeconomic factors, such as education level or employment status, on the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. The findings of this study underscore the critical role of economic conditions in moderating the relationship between environmental concern and plastic purchasing behavior. By recognizing and addressing the financial barriers that consumers face, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to promote sustainable consumption practices, ultimately contributing to the reduction of plastic pollution.

CONCLUSION

This study offers valuable insights into the critical role of environmental concern in influencing consumer behavior, specifically in the context of reducing plastic consumption. The findings underscore that environmental awareness is not merely a passive state of mind but a significant driver of behavioral change, as evidenced by the strong positive correlation between concern for environmental issues and reduced plastic purchasing behavior. This relationship suggests that consumers who are more attuned to the detrimental effects of plastic waste on ecosystems are substantially more likely to adopt sustainable practices, such as opting for reusable or biodegradable alternatives. Moreover, the study highlights the complexity of translating environmental concern into consistent behavioral change. While heightened awareness and concern are vital, the persistent influence of economic barriers, such as the higher cost of sustainable alternatives, cannot be ignored. These dual dynamic underscores the necessity for a comprehensive approach that combines moral motivation with economic incentives. The willingness of a significant portion of consumers to switch to more sustainable options when provided with discounts or other financial incentives illustrates the importance of creating an enabling environment where pro-environmental choices are not only accessible but also financially viable.This study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable consumer behavior by highlighting the interplay between moral values and economic considerations, offering a foundation for future research and practical interventions to mitigate plastic pollution.

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