

Consumer Engagement for Responsible Consumption & Production

SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

The UN's 12th sustainable development goal is to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”. Consider the following (per the UN's SDG website):

- The global material footprint grew from 73.2 billion tons to 85.9 billion in the period from 2010 to 2017, an increase of 17%;
- Electronic waste grew by 38%, but less than 20% is recycled;
- 13.8% of food is lost in supply chains;
- Rising fossil fuel subsidies are contributing to the climate crisis (\$427B in subsidies in 2018, a 34% increase from 2015).

In early 2020, Deloitte conducted a survey into consumer attitudes in the UK towards environmental and ethical sustainability, which was subsequently updated in March 2021. According to the study, consumers equally value 5 environmentally sustainable or ethical practices:

- Waste reduction;
- Reducing the carbon footprint;
- Producing sustainable packaging;
- Committing to ethical working;
- Respect of human rights.

Consumers demonstrate their commitment to sustainability in different ways. According to the study, the most common ways were to limit use of single-use plastic, buy seasonal produce, buy local, reduce air travel, reduce the amount of new products and goods purchased, choosing brands that have environmentally sustainable practices and values, reducing consumption of meat and animal products, avoiding certain brands or products due to ethical or sustainability related concerns, and opting for modes of transport with lower carbon emissions.

Yet, despite this, there are still many reasons that consumers do not embrace sustainability when making purchasing decisions. The top three reasons why consumers haven't adopted a more sustainable lifestyle were lack of interest, costs, and not having enough information. This suggests that there are opportunities to increase consumer engagement on the topic, lower costs of making sustainable choices, and providing consumers with increased information that can support their choices.



How can you entice consumers who are uninterested today in making more sustainable buying decisions? This could be across all demographic groups or focusing on those are most reluctant today. How can you lower costs of sustainable purchasing decisions, such that costs (real or perceived) are equalized with less sustainable options? And how might this opportunity manifest itself in less developed markets? How can you educate consumers and provide the information that they are looking for in order to make buying decisions that are more aligned with the 5 environmentally sustainable and ethical practices outlined above?

Your Challenge

What can your company do to lift the barriers to more sustainable purchasing and demonstrably shift consumer patterns? Consider the three top obstacles: lack of interest, costs, and not having enough information. Work on a solution (product, service or other) that your company could deliver, build the business case and prove that it will work, with impact!

SDG 12 at a Glance...

Be sure to explore the goals further!

Further resources to get started: [SDG 12](#)

