

**Ethical Dimensions Of Sustainable Consumption And Production:
A Qualitative Study On Consumer Responsibility, Resource Scarcity, And Behavioral Ethics In
Surigao City**

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Abstract

This study explored the ethical dimensions of sustainable consumption and production through a qualitative, phenomenological approach, focusing on consumer responsibility, resource scarcity, and behavioral ethics. Thematic analysis of consumer experiences in Surigao City revealed that perceptions of ethical responsibility varied based on awareness, socio-economic conditions, and product accessibility. While sustainability awareness had grown, economic constraints and convenience often hindered ethical consumption. Cultural values, such as *bayanihan* (community cooperation), influenced sustainable behaviors, yet affordability and trust in sustainability claims remained critical barriers. Findings indicated that resource scarcity enhanced the perceived value of sustainable alternatives, though cost remained a decisive factor. Ethical decision-making, as framed by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, was shaped by attitudes, social norms, and perceived control over choices. Barriers to ethical consumption included greenwashing, misinformation, and limited government incentives, while motivations stemmed from health benefits, financial incentives, and community influence. Ethical dilemmas arose when economic priorities conflicted with sustainability, particularly in resource-extraction-dependent economies like Surigao City. To bridge the gap between ethical intentions and actions, this study recommended strengthening environmental education, ensuring corporate transparency, and implementing government policies that enhanced affordability and accessibility of sustainable products. Culturally aligned awareness campaigns and financial incentives could further reinforce ethical consumption behaviors. A collaborative effort among policymakers, businesses, and communities was essential to promoting sustainable consumption and production in Surigao City.

Keywords: Ethical consumption, sustainable production, consumer responsibility, resource scarcity, behavioral ethics

I. Introduction

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) have emerged as critical imperatives in addressing global environmental and socio-economic challenges (United Nations, 2015). Ethical consumerism, which entails making purchasing decisions based on moral and sustainability considerations, has gained momentum as consumers increasingly prioritize environmental and social responsibility (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2014). As the world faces issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and unethical labor practices, the ethical implications of consumer choices play a crucial role in promoting sustainability (Thøgersen & Schrader, 2012). The concept of responsible consumption is not only about reducing waste but also about ensuring ethical sourcing, fair labor conditions, and long-term ecological balance (Mont & Plepys, 2008). This study examines the ethical dimensions of

sustainable consumption and production by exploring consumer responsibility, resource scarcity, and behavioral ethics.

Southeast Asia grapples with pressing SCP concerns, including overconsumption, waste management, and unsustainable resource extraction. Rapid industrialization and urbanization have exacerbated resource scarcity and environmental degradation in the region (ASEAN Centre for Energy, 2020). Countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam have adopted sustainability policies to regulate production and consumption practices, yet economic growth often overshadows ethical considerations (Hedberg & Sipiläinen, 2019). The ethical challenges associated with reducing global overconsumption and waste remain significant, requiring a collective effort from governments, businesses, and consumers (Tan et al., 2021). This study aims to assess these regional ethical challenges and propose viable solutions for sustainable consumption and production.

Sustainable consumption and ethical consumerism have become pressing concerns in policymaking and business practices. The Philippines, for instance, has integrated SCP principles into its national framework through the Philippine Development Plan (National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2021). The country's efforts focus on promoting sustainable production processes, reducing environmental degradation, and encouraging ethical consumer behavior. Despite these initiatives, challenges remain in shifting consumer mindsets and enforcing corporate accountability (Lopez, 2020). The slow fashion movement, which emphasizes ethical and sustainable fashion choices, has been gaining traction in the Philippine retail industry but still faces hurdles due to market accessibility and affordability (Ragragio, 2019). Understanding these ethical implications within the national context is crucial for developing effective strategies to promote SCP. Additionally, behavioral ethics plays a crucial role in influencing consumer choices and promoting sustainability. Psychological and moral factors drive consumer decisions, impacting their willingness to engage in sustainable consumption practices (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Ethical marketing strategies, social norms, and corporate transparency contribute to shaping responsible consumer behaviors (Griskevicius, Cantú, & Vugt, 2012). Understanding these behavioral dynamics can help policymakers and businesses implement effective interventions to encourage ethical consumption habits. This study investigates the role of behavioral ethics in fostering sustainable consumer behavior and its implications for ethical consumerism.

One of the central issues in ethical sustainable consumption and production is the ethics of resource scarcity and sustainable material sourcing. As natural resources become increasingly limited, businesses and consumers must adopt responsible sourcing practices to ensure long-term environmental and economic stability (Bocken, Short, Rana, & Evans, 2014). The shift towards circular economies and sustainable material use is gaining prominence, yet ethical dilemmas persist in balancing economic interests with environmental responsibility (Ghisellini, Cialani, & Ulgiati, 2016). With these problems, the researcher opted to analyze the ethical implications of sustainable consumer behavior and responsible consumption choices, examine the ethical challenges associated with resource scarcity and sustainable material sourcing, assess the impact of the slow fashion movement on ethical consumerism, evaluate the ethical challenges in reducing global overconsumption and waste, and explore the role of behavioral ethics in promoting sustainable consumption.

This study was conducted in Surigao City, Philippines, a coastal and resource-rich urban center known for its economic activities, including mining, fishing, and tourism. As a city heavily dependent on natural resources, Surigao faces challenges related to environmental sustainability, resource scarcity, and ethical consumption. According to Brundtland Commission (1987), sustainable consumption and production involve meeting present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own. With increasing global concerns about sustainability (United Nations, 2015), understanding how residents of Surigao City perceive and practice ethical responsibility in their consumption behaviors is crucial. By exploring the local context, this study aims to provide insights into how Surigaonons navigate sustainability-related decisions in their daily lives, considering factors such as cultural values, economic constraints, and environmental awareness.

This study aimed to examine how consumers in Surigao City perceived their ethical responsibility in sustainable consumption and production while identifying the factors that influenced their decision-making regarding resource scarcity and sustainability. It sought to analyze the role of ethical considerations in shaping consumer behavior and explored how personal values, cultural norms, and local practices contributed to consumer responsibility. Additionally, the study intended to determine the barriers and motivations that affected the

adoption of ethical consumption behaviors and investigated how consumers navigated ethical dilemmas when faced with conflicting sustainability choices.

1.1 Literature Review

Consumer Perceptions of Ethical Responsibility in Sustainable Consumption

Understanding consumer perceptions of ethical responsibility in sustainable consumption is crucial for promoting environmentally responsible behaviors. Various theories provide a structured framework to explain how individuals navigate ethical consumption decisions amidst environmental and socio-economic challenges. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) stresses the role of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping consumer behavior toward sustainability. Consumers are more likely to engage in ethical consumption when they believe in the benefits of sustainability, perceive social support for such behaviors, and feel capable of making sustainable choices (Han & Hyun, 2017). However, economic constraints and social influences may either facilitate or hinder these behaviors. Research by White, Habib, and Hardisty (2019) stresses that awareness, accessibility to sustainable options, and social influence shape consumer responsibility perceptions, though practical action is often impeded by cost and convenience factors (Johnstone & Tan, 2015).

Factors Influencing Consumer Decision-Making on Resource Scarcity and Sustainability

Resource Scarcity Theory (Myers & Simon, 1994) explains how limited access to resources affects consumer behavior. Industries such as mining, fishing, and agriculture impact resource availability, influencing consumer decisions. When resources are perceived as scarce, individuals may prioritize immediate economic needs over longterm sustainability (Van den Bergh, 2011). Peattie and Peattie (2015) argue that scarcity leads to behavioral shifts, where consumers either seek sustainable alternatives or continue unsustainable consumption due to affordability concerns. Testa et al. (2019) further assert that product quality, price, and trust in sustainability claims significantly shape purchasing decisions. In economically diverse settings, accessibility issues and financial constraints often limit consumer engagement with sustainable products (Vermeir et al., 2020).

Ethical Considerations in Shaping Consumer Behavior

Ethical considerations play a central role in consumer decision-making. The Ethical Consumption Framework by Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt (2010) suggests that purchasing decisions are influenced by personal values, economic trade-offs, and corporate accountability. Ajzen's (1991) TPB remains relevant in explaining ethical consumption, where attitudes, social expectations, and perceived control dictate behavior (Kumar et al., 2017). Consumers who feel a moral responsibility toward environmental preservation are more likely to make sustainable choices, provided they trust sustainability claims and perceive their actions as impactful (Ghazali et al., 2017). However, external constraints such as price sensitivity and greenwashing skepticism moderate ethical consumption behavior (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018).

Role of Personal Values, Cultural Norms, and Local Practices

Cultural norms and values significantly influence consumer attitudes toward sustainability. Triandis' (1995) Cultural and Social Norms Theory explains how traditions and societal expectations shape ethical consumption. In collectivist societies, values like "bayanihan" (community cooperation) and "malasakit" (concern for others) foster sustainable behaviors (Doliente, 2020). Abdelradi and Serra (2021) stress that local traditions influence consumption patterns, either reinforcing or discouraging sustainability efforts. Studies indicate that community-oriented societies are more likely to support sustainability initiatives, especially when aligned with traditional ecological knowledge (White et al., 2019). However, in regions where consumerism is dominant, economic incentives and regulatory frameworks become necessary to drive sustainable behavior (Testa et al., 2019).

Barriers to Ethical Consumption

Despite increased awareness of sustainability, multiple barriers prevent consumers from adopting ethical consumption behaviors. Cost, product availability, misinformation, and a lack of regulatory incentives are primary obstacles (Carrigan & Attalla, 2015; United Nations, 2015). Economic disparities and reliance on traditional production systems may hinder sustainable shifts. Additionally, skepticism toward corporate sustainability claims, or greenwashing, reduces consumer trust in ethical products (Testa et al., 2019). Inadequate sustainability education and inconsistent marketing messages further discourage sustainable purchasing behaviors (Vermeir et al., 2020).

Motivations for Adopting Ethical Consumption Behaviors

Consumers are motivated to engage in ethical consumption when they perceive tangible benefits, such as improved health, economic savings, and social approval (White et al., 2019). Awareness campaigns and education can foster sustainable habits, particularly when consumers see a direct impact on environmental and social well-being (Ghazali et al., 2017). Government sustainability programs and environmental advocacy groups play a vital role in promoting ethical consumption behaviors (Kumar et al., 2017). However, motivation alone is insufficient without structural support, such as incentives and affordable sustainable products, to enable long-term behavior change (Testa et al., 2019).

Navigating Ethical Dilemmas in Conflicting Sustainability Choices

Consumers frequently face ethical dilemmas when balancing affordability, convenience, and sustainability. Research indicates that individuals often prioritize economic needs over environmental concerns when making purchasing decisions (Vermeir et al., 2020). In industries where economic benefits come at the cost of environmental degradation, ethical conflicts arise, and choices are shaped by personal values, financial constraints, and product availability (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018). Effective sustainability policies and ethical business practices can help mitigate these dilemmas by making sustainable options more accessible and economically viable (White et al., 2019).

Sustainability Policies and Corporate Influence on Ethical Consumption

Government policies and corporate strategies play a significant role in fostering ethical consumption. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015), particularly Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, stress regulatory measures and corporate accountability in promoting sustainability. Testa et al. (2019) argue that corporate transparency, ethical supply chains, and eco-labeling increase consumer trust and drive sustainable purchasing decisions. Strengthening policy frameworks, enforcing sustainability regulations, and encouraging responsible business practices are crucial to bridging the gap between consumer awareness and ethical consumption action (Abdelradi & Serra, 2021).

Synthesis of the review. The reviewed literature demonstrated both similarities and differences in understanding consumer behavior regarding sustainable consumption. Studies consistently stressed that consumer perceptions of ethical responsibility were shaped by personal awareness, cultural values, and economic constraints (White et al., 2019; Johnstone & Tan, 2015). A common finding was that while consumers recognized the importance of sustainability, their actions were often hindered by affordability concerns and accessibility issues (Joshi & Rahman, 2019; Testa et al., 2019). However, differences emerged in how these factors influenced decision-making. In collectivist societies, cultural norms significantly promoted sustainability behaviors (Triandis, 1995; Abdelradi & Serra, 2021), whereas in market-driven economies, economic incentives and corporate transparency were primary motivators (Vermeir et al., 2020; Jaiswal & Kant, 2018). While Ajzen's (1991) TPB provided a strong foundation for ethical consumption, external constraints such as price sensitivity and greenwashing skepticism limited its applicability (Carrigan & Attalla, 2015; Kumar et al., 2017). In general, the literature suggested that individual motivation and cultural values influenced ethical consumption, but systemic

barriers, including economic limitations, misinformation, and policy gaps, remained significant obstacles. An integrated approach involving education, government regulations, corporate accountability, and economic incentives was necessary to bridge the gap between consumer intention and action.

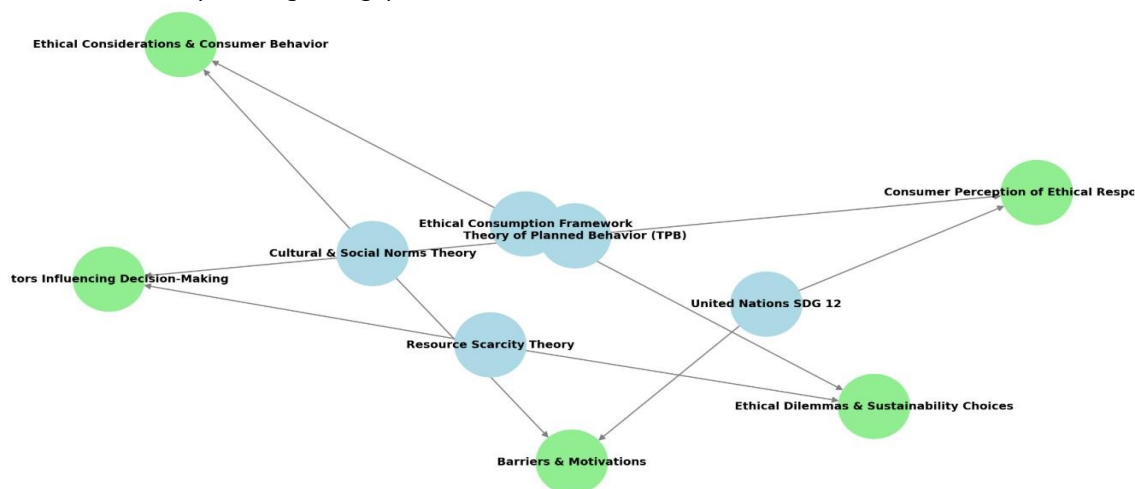


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram illustrating the relationship between theories and the study on "Ethical Dimensions of Sustainable Consumption And Production: A Qualitative Study On Consumer Responsibility, Resource Scarcity, And Behavioral Ethics in Surigao City"

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Sustainable consumption and production have become critical issues in addressing environmental and socioeconomic challenges worldwide (United Nations, 2015). However, the extent to which consumers in Surigao City, Philippines, understand and practice ethical responsibility in their consumption behaviors remains unclear. As a resource-rich yet environmentally vulnerable city, Surigao faces challenges related to resource scarcity, consumer decision-making, and ethical considerations in sustainable consumption. The increasing demand for natural resources, coupled with unsustainable consumption patterns, raises concerns about long-term environmental and economic sustainability. Given these challenges, it is essential to examine how consumers navigate ethical dilemmas when making consumption decisions and what factors influence their behaviors.

This study seeks to explore the ethical dimensions of sustainable consumption and production in Surigao City by addressing the following key problems:

1. How do consumers in Surigao City perceive their ethical responsibility in sustainable consumption and production?
2. What factors influence consumer decision-making regarding resource scarcity and sustainability?
3. How do ethical considerations shape consumer behavior toward sustainability?
4. What role do personal values, cultural norms, and local practices play in consumer responsibility?
5. What are the barriers and motivations for adopting ethical consumption behaviors in Surigao City?

II.METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the ethical dimensions of sustainable consumption and production, focusing on consumer responsibility, resource scarcity, and behavioral ethics. A

phenomenological research design was utilized to gain in-depth insights into consumers' lived experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes regarding sustainability. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, wherein narrative literature review and discussion were incorporated. The findings from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of sustainability challenges and potential strategies for fostering ethical consumption practices in Surigao City.

III.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumer Perceptions of Ethical Responsibility in Sustainable Consumption and Production

Consumers in Surigao City perceived ethical responsibility in sustainable consumption based on their awareness, economic capacity, and access to sustainable products. Many individuals acknowledged the importance of sustainability; however, their ability to engage in ethical consumption was hindered by affordability constraints and product availability. Some consumers demonstrated strong environmental consciousness but struggled to translate their awareness into action due to financial limitations and convenience-driven choices. Others relied on traditional knowledge and community-led sustainability efforts, indicating a localized understanding of environmental responsibility. These findings underscored the role of personal values and external conditions in shaping consumer perceptions, highlighting the necessity for policies that address economic and accessibility barriers.

Transitioning to broader research, studies indicate that consumers' perceptions of ethical responsibility in sustainable consumption vary depending on awareness, socio-economic conditions, and accessibility to sustainable products. While individuals recognized the importance of sustainability, their actual engagement in ethical consumption was influenced by various factors (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Some exhibited high environmental awareness and expressed willingness to engage in sustainable practices; however, economic constraints and convenience often hindered their ability to follow through (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). In developing regions, consumers often relied on traditional knowledge and community-driven sustainability practices, reflecting a localized approach to environmental responsibility (Joshi & Rahman, 2019). Understanding how consumers defined their ethical responsibility remained crucial for designing policies and programs that aligned with their values and practical realities.

Factors Influencing Consumer Decision-Making Regarding Resource Scarcity and Sustainability

Consumers in Surigao City made decisions about resource scarcity and sustainability based on economic factors, product availability, and trust in sustainability claims. Many consumers valued sustainable alternatives, but affordability remained a primary concern that dictated purchasing behavior. Government incentives, awareness campaigns, and eco-labeling played a role in influencing consumer choices, yet these factors were not always sufficient to shift consumption patterns significantly. Consumers in environmentally vulnerable areas exhibited higher sensitivity to sustainability issues, yet external constraints limited their ability to prioritize sustainable consumption. Regulatory frameworks and corporate transparency emerged as critical elements in promoting ethical consumer decisions.

Similarly, research suggests that consumer decisions about resource scarcity and sustainability are shaped by economic, environmental, and social factors. Resource scarcity heightened the perceived value of sustainable alternatives, yet affordability remained a major determinant of purchasing decisions (Peattie & Peattie, 2015). Additionally, consumers were influenced by product availability, trust in sustainability claims, and government incentives promoting sustainable consumption (Testa et al., 2019). In regions facing environmental degradation, awareness campaigns and eco-labeling proved effective in altering consumption patterns by fostering informed decision-making (Vermeir et al., 2020). Government regulations, subsidies, and infrastructure improvements played a crucial role in ensuring that sustainability was not merely an aspirational concept but a viable choice for consumers (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018).

Ethical Considerations in Shaping Consumer Behavior Toward Sustainability

Consumers in Surigao City exhibited ethical considerations in sustainability based on their perception of environmental impact, moral responsibility, and societal norms. Many consumers demonstrated a willingness to engage in ethical consumption when they believed their choices had a direct effect on sustainability. However, ethical decision-making was often hindered by misinformation, price sensitivity, and skepticism toward corporate sustainability claims. Social influences also played a significant role, as peer behaviors and community expectations shaped individual accountability toward ethical consumption. Strengthening transparency in corporate sustainability claims and providing consumer education emerged as key strategies to promote ethical behavior.

In support of these findings, ethical considerations significantly shape consumer behavior, reinforcing the moral obligation to adopt sustainable practices. Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that ethical decision-making is driven by personal attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control. Studies found that when consumers perceived their choices as having a direct impact on environmental sustainability, they were more likely to adopt ethical consumption behaviors (Ghazali et al., 2017). However, challenges such as price sensitivity, misinformation, and greenwashing skepticism undermined ethical consumerism (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018). Ethical consumption was also influenced by peer behavior and community expectations, where individuals felt a sense of accountability to contribute to collective sustainability efforts (White et al., 2019).

Role of Personal Values, Cultural Norms, and Local Practices in Consumer Responsibility

In Surigao City, personal values, cultural norms, and local traditions played a crucial role in shaping consumer responsibility. Collectivist values encouraged community-oriented sustainability efforts, while traditional ecological knowledge influenced resource conservation practices. Cultural beliefs such as "bayanihan" (cooperative community effort) reinforced shared environmental responsibility. However, modern consumer trends sometimes conflicted with these values, requiring a balance between cultural traditions and contemporary sustainability initiatives. Leveraging cultural values to promote sustainability emerged as a strategic approach to strengthening ethical consumption practices.

Extending this discussion, cultural norms and personal values significantly shape ethical consumption behaviors. Collectivist societies often emphasized community well-being, which fostered sustainable consumption patterns (Triandis, 1995). Traditional Filipino values such as "bayanihan" (community cooperation) and "malasakit" (compassion) encouraged shared responsibility for environmental preservation. Abdelradi and Serra (2021) found that cultural traditions could either enhance or hinder sustainable consumption, depending on how deeply ingrained they were in consumer habits. Moreover, local practices such as indigenous ecological knowledge and traditional resource management systems provided valuable sustainability models that could inform modern policy approaches (White et al., 2019). However, in consumer-driven societies, shifting toward sustainability often required a combination of cultural reinforcement and regulatory incentives to overcome entrenched consumption habits (Testa et al., 2019). **Barriers and Motivations for Adopting Ethical Consumption Behaviors**

Consumers in Surigao City faced various barriers that prevented the adoption of ethical consumption behaviors, including financial constraints, lack of sustainable product availability, and corporate greenwashing. Many consumers expressed concerns about the authenticity of sustainability claims, leading to hesitancy in purchasing ethical products. On the other hand, motivations such as health benefits, financial incentives, and social influences encouraged sustainable consumer behavior. Effective policy support, corporate transparency, and consumer awareness campaigns emerged as key strategies to address these barriers and reinforce motivations for ethical consumption.

Likewise, despite increasing awareness of sustainability issues, several barriers prevented consumers from adopting ethical consumption behaviors. Economic constraints, limited availability of sustainable products, lack of regulatory support, and skepticism about corporate sustainability claims remained primary obstacles (Carrigan & Attalla, 2015). Greenwashing—where companies falsely marketed products as environmentally friendly—reduced

consumer trust and discouraged ethical purchasing decisions (Testa et al., 2019). Additionally, a lack of education about sustainability often led to confusion and inaction among consumers (Vermeir et al., 2020). Conversely, motivations for ethical consumption included health benefits, financial incentives, social approval, and education (White et al., 2019). Government programs, environmental advocacy efforts, and corporate responsibility initiatives had been shown to encourage long-term sustainable behavior change (Kumar et al., 2017).

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The complexity of ethical consumption and sustainability, highlighting the interplay between consumer awareness, economic constraints, cultural values, and systemic barriers. While many consumers recognize their ethical responsibility in sustainable consumption, affordability, accessibility, and trust in sustainability claims remain significant concerns. Ethical considerations and cultural norms influence sustainable behaviors, yet regulatory support and corporate transparency are essential in bridging the gap between consumer intentions and actions. Overcoming barriers to ethical consumption requires an integrated approach involving education, policy reforms, corporate accountability, and community-driven initiatives. By understanding these factors, stakeholders in Surigao City can develop strategies to promote sustainable consumption and production more effectively.

To foster ethical consumption in Surigao City, policymakers should prioritize initiatives that enhance accessibility to sustainable alternatives, strengthen environmental education, and provide financial incentives for ethical purchasing decisions. Local businesses and corporations must uphold sustainability commitments by ensuring product transparency and reducing greenwashing practices. Community-driven campaigns that align with Surigaonon cultural values can further reinforce sustainable behaviors, making ethical consumption more achievable and widespread. Through a collaborative approach involving government agencies, businesses, and local communities, Surigao City can advance toward a more sustainable future. For future researchers, further studies can explore the long-term impact of sustainability initiatives on consumer behavior in Surigao City, particularly the effectiveness of policy interventions and corporate sustainability efforts. Comparative studies between urban and rural areas can provide deeper insights into regional differences in ethical consumption. Additionally, research on digital and social media's role in promoting sustainable consumption can help identify modern strategies for increasing consumer awareness and engagement.

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