Comparative Study on Leadership Styles and Customer Behavior: Environmentalist and Non-Environmentalist Students, Barcelona, Spain

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Abstract
The study delves into the relationship between sustainability, consumer behavior, and leadership styles among students at C3S Business School in Barcelona. It focuses on the impact of ecological consciousness, which refers to environmental awareness and concern, on purchasing decisions and leadership practices. In the current context, with sustainability increasingly crucial in decision-making, individuals and organizations are reassessing their actions considering ecological concerns. The literature suggests a growing demand for sustainable products driven by heightened environmental awareness among consumers, especially millennials. Despite this trend, there is a noticeable gap between attitudes and behaviors, with many environmentally conscious individuals needing help translating their values into consumer choices. The research uses a qualitative approach, combining semi-structured interviews and online questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews allow in-depth exploration of students' environmental attitudes and behaviors, while online questionnaires provide a broader perspective. This approach was chosen to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how students identify with environmentalism and its impact on consumer behavior. The study categorizes participants into environmentalist and non-environmentalist groups, analyzing their motivations, purchasing behaviors, and the influence of leadership styles on their decisions. Key findings reveal that transformational leadership styles significantly enhance pro-environmental behaviors among students, aligning personal values with sustainable practices. These findings have practical implications for businesses and educational institutions, highlighting the role of leadership in promoting sustainable behaviors.

Introduction

Recently, sustainability has become integral to consumption patterns as leaders and consumers factor environmental concerns into their decision-making processes (Vann et al.,

2024). Individuals and businesses consider the ecological impact of their actions to ensure they align with sustainability goals (Ones & Dilchert, 2012). Consumer behavior is how motivations and attitudes drive purchasing decisions (Sarigollu et al., 2020). In sustainable consumption, consumers increasingly evaluate the environmental impact of their choices, favoring eco-friendly products when the perceived individual and societal benefits are clear (Sarigollu et al., 2020). White et al. (2019) explained sustainable behavior as actions that decrease adverse environmental impact and decreased utilization of natural resources across the product's life cycle. According to Gershoff and Frels (2015), consumer demand for sustainable options has risen recently. Likewise, Nielsen (2015) stated that 66% of consumers (73% millennials) worldwide report being willing to pay extra for sustainable offerings.

Young et al. (2009) mentioned that consumers are said to have an 'attitude-behavior gap' or 'value action gap,' which means that 30% of people who report that they are very concerned about the environment struggle to translate this into their purchases. However, Ting et al. (2024) keep emphasizing that growing environmental consciousness shapes consumer behaviors, leading to change in organizational leadership practices, particularly in promoting environmentally responsible behaviors.

Environmental awareness significantly impacts companies adopting corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies that encourage environmentally sustainable practices (Ting et al., 2024). Ogiemwonyi et al. (2020) highlighted that green behavior among consumers is closely tied to environmental awareness, influencing purchasing decisions and behaviors. Leadership is crucial in shaping organizational success, with different leadership styles producing varying results. Organizational leaders influence various organizational outcomes, such as employees' attitudes and commitment and organizational performance, as well as diverse outcomes, such as safety and environmental performance (Barling et al., 2011).

According to Burns (1978), leadership styles can be broadly categorized into transformational and transactional. Transformational leadership is a kind of leadership in which leaders inspire and motivate followers to exceed their self-interests for the good of the organization and society (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Judge and Piccolo (2004) described transformational leadership as a leadership style where the leader works with teams to guide a change through inspiration and executing the change with committed group members. Environmentally specific transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style in which the content of leadership behaviors is focused on pro-environmental initiatives. On the other hand, transactional leadership is described by Bass and Riggio (2006) as a style that focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers, often involving rewards and punishment to achieve compliance. They further explained it as task-oriented, where leaders focus on clear goals and rewards for performance. Transformational leadership has recently become the most widely studied of all leadership theories and has been shown to influence diverse behaviors, including ensuring positive environmental impact (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Environmentalism is the ideology that promotes preserving and protecting the natural environment (De Canio & Martinelli, 2021). It emphasizes addressing climate change, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss through sustainable practices and policies. Environmentalist leaders are oriented toward creating policies, frameworks, and strategies prioritizing sustainability, advocating for renewable energy, waste reduction, and eco-friendly technologies (Martinelli, 2020). Environmentalists proactively align organizational strategy with environmental goals (Čapienė et al., 2022). Also, the researchers identified that environmentalist consumers, also known as sustainable consumers, are motivated by personal norms, environmental values, and their sense of responsibility toward mitigating ecological harm. Sustainable consumer behaviors could include voluntarily reducing or simplifying one's consumption in the first place (Leonard-Barton, 1981; McDonald et al., 2006); choosing

products with sustainable sources, production, features conserving energy, water, and products during use and utilizing more sustainable modes of product disposal (White & Sampson, 2013). In contrast, non-environmentalism refers to attitudes that either downplay or ignore environmental concerns and focus on economic growth, resource exploitation, and convenience-driven consumption.

Environmentalism profoundly impacts leadership and consumer behaviors in Candan and Yuksel (2021). Environmentally conscious students make purchases that align with their environmental values, favoring sustainable, ethically sourced products with minimal environmental impact. A recent study conducted by Abel and Anyankoha (2024) on students found that eco-labeling significantly influences the purchasing decisions of young consumers like students, especially those identified as more environmentally conscious and willing to pay for eco-friendly products. The study suggests that environmentalist students will likely prioritize economic considerations in purchasing decisions. Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas (2020) highlighted that students sampled from the research showed that environmentally conscious students are more inclined to evaluate the ecological impact of their purchases, driven by increased environmental awareness, while the non-environmental conscious ones behave otherwise.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping future leaders, making their leadership styles critical for sustainability and organizational success (Atalay et al., 2020 2019). Leadership within academic environments needs to adapt to the evolving challenges that arise from diverse and changing student populations, requiring an emphasis on ethical and empowering eco-friendly leadership styles (Aboramadan et al., 2020). This study aims to understand the changes in customer behavior among students with developed ecological consciousness at C3S Business School. The study also highlights the different leadership styles that future entrepreneurs could implement if their ecological consciousness could influence their decisions.

In today's business world, sustainability is a hot topic, and leaders and consumers are constantly encouraged to engage in eco-friendly behaviors. This study sought to enrich the literature on the ongoing eco–friendly practices campaign and highlight different leadership styles that future entrepreneurs could implement if their ecological consciousness could influence their decisions. This study compares environmentalist and non-environmentalist students' leadership styles and customer behavior at C3S Business School Barcelona. It will involve a sample of students from both groups to find differences and similarities in their leadership approaches and how this affects customer behavior. The study will focus only on the school's internal environment and exclude external factors like culture or specific events. The goal is to understand how environmental awareness influences the school's leadership styles and customer behavior.

1. Literature review
1.1. Impact of social and ecological consciousness on customer behavior

According to Tikhomirova et al. (2019), environmental consciousness is an integrative psychological state, a combination of human mental processes that engender various social behaviors about nature and the social environment. Moreover, purchase behavior that traditionally evaluates costs and benefits can transform into ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB) if it exhibits a future-oriented approach involving the impact of that purchase on the environment (Das & Ramalingam, 2019).

1.2. Factors influencing the development of ecological consciousness and eco-friendly customer behavior

Most scholars use the theory of planned behavior to understand and highlight the factors that predict eco-friendly customer behavior. The theory of planned behavior, created by Ajzen (1991), is a model used to indicate a person's intention to demonstrate a behavior at a specific time and place. This theory is based on motivation (purpose) and ability (behavior control). The subjective norms represent the social pressure that affects the behavior's performance. The model is shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behavior
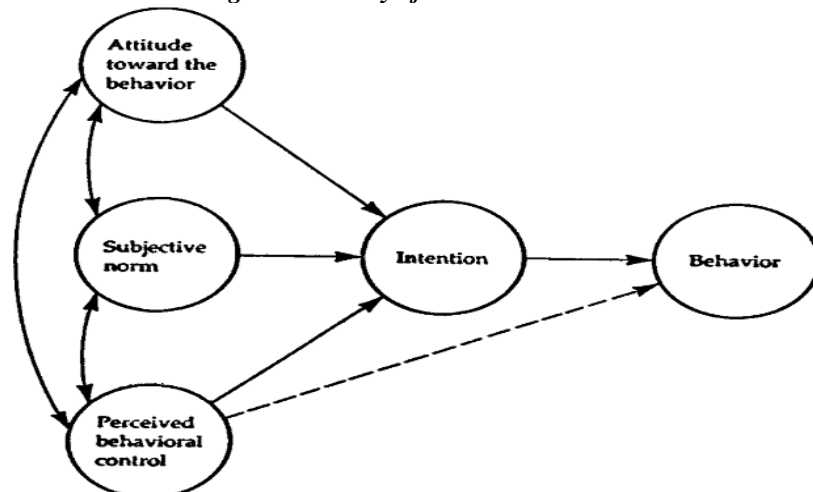
Source: Ajzen, (1991).

Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Ting et al. (2019) argue that green marketing positively influences and predicts eco-conscious consumer behavior. Moreover, the individual´s eco-consciousness and brand awareness can also play a role in predicting the ECB. The researchers say consumers are more tempted to engage in eco-conscious behavior when green marketing combines with solid brand awareness. Das and Ramalingam (2019) highlight that consumers with average to deep ecological concerns are likelier to demonstrate eco-friendly customer behavior than consumers with low environmental concerns.

1.3. The role of sustainable leadership in modern organizations

In the study by Liao (2022), sustainable leadership is discussed in depth and specifically defined as incorporating ESG factors. They talk about the changes in leadership from the short-term thinking process that is predominantly profit-oriented to the sustainable thinking process that is organizational, ecological, and social. Some include decision-making for ethical reasons, the building of diverse and sustainable leadership, and the building of organizational capacity to respond to global pressures such as climate change. The authors highlight the importance of the empirical examination of leadership for sustainable performance and suggest future studies of cross-cultural and sectorial sustainable leadership. It also stresses the engagement of stakeholders and the leaders' responsibilities in advocating for the sustainability of organizations. Further, Liao (2022) also explains that sustainable leadership means that individual, organizational, and societal values should be aligned and suggests that leaders should use practices that go beyond the short-term economic gain for the long-term good.

1.4. Green servant leadership and pro-environmental behavior: the role of motivation and self-efficacy

Faraz et al. (2021) examine green servant leadership and employees' pro-environmental behaviors with self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation as the mediators. The authors suggest that green servant leadership, where a leader supports environmental conservation and engages in servant leadership, enhances the capacity of the employee to perform environmental tasks (self-efficacy) and their intrinsic motivation. This leads to an increased level of pro-environmental behaviors in organizations. The study also establishes that inherent motivation is central to green leadership's ability to drive sustainable behavior change by embracing employees' roles to take charge of environmentalism even if it is not part of their official duties. The studies imply that CSR and environmental management practices are enhanced by supporting the leadership styles that foster the employees' voluntary engagement in environmentally responsible behaviors. The researchers note the need for more research to establish the versatility of this leadership model in various sectors and cultures to support the hypothesis of green servant leadership on organizational sustainability initiatives.

1.5. Determinants of green product development performance

Chen and Chang (2013) investigate the determinants of green product development performance, focusing on three critical drivers: green dynamic capabilities, green transformational leadership, and green creativity. Green dynamic capabilities are defined as the firm's competence to configure and reconfigure resources to address environmental dynamics and are essential in creating innovation for sustainable products. Green transformational leadership refers to the situation whereby leaders encourage the employees to adopt environmentally friendly practices. One step beyond green creativity, which implies the possibility of creating new environmentally friendly products, also helps create new sustainable products. The authors state that these three factors affect the capability of a firm to achieve success in green product development and show how these factors are interrelated to sustain green development.

1.6. The interactive effects of CSR and ethical leadership on employee behavior

De Roeck and Farooq (2018) examine the moderating relationships between CSR, ethical leadership, and employees' socially responsible behavior levels. Their research is in response to the emerging concern of how ethical values and leadership behaviors influence employee behaviors concerning CSR, the company's responsibility towards society and the environment. It is also evidenced by the encouragement of workers to behave ethically in line with the organizational culture. However, De Roeck and Farooq (2018) suggest that CSR substantially affects employees' behavior when ethical leadership is added. Ethical leadership is demonstrated by leaders who act pretty, with integrity, and make ethically sound decisions; this results in a workplace where employees are inclined towards acting ethically. The study also highlights that ethical leaders engage in the modeling process, thus supporting the identified organization's CSR initiatives and encouraging the staff members to embrace socially responsible behaviors actively. In their work, the authors establish that CSR and ethical leadership have a symbiotic relationship through which the two factors enhance the ethical behavior of employees in the organization, thus strengthening the organization's social responsibility.

1.7. Management styles and decision-making in pro-ecological strategies

Sulich et al. (2021) explore the connection between management styles and the decision-making process regarding pro-ecological solutions within organizations. Their research

highlights the need to incorporate sustainability in today's corporations, especially since managerial strategies play a significant role in implementing and efficiently using environmentally sound strategies. The authors discuss the type of management, which can be autocratic, bureaucratic, and participative, and their impact on pro-ecological decision-making. They opine that decentralized or employee involvement management styles are more effective in engaging and creating commitment towards sustainability initiatives, hence, implementation of green initiatives. Furthermore, Sulich et al. (2021) stress that implementing sustainable ecological solutions is impossible if decision-makers focus on short-term financial returns at the expense of long-term environmental consequences. The study, therefore, asserts that adopting adaptive management styles alongside proactive decision-making frameworks is crucial in a firm's quest for sustainable operation.

1.8. Leadership, operational practices, and institutional pressures in green supply chain management

The study conducted by Liao (2022) examines the interactions between leadership practices, operations strategies, institutional forces, and environmental results from a green supply chain perspective. It provides a theoretical background to explain different factors that affect the adoption of SC sustainable practices in terms of leadership behavior and environmental pressures. The authors further state a strong correlation between leadership and the greening of organizational practices through transformational leadership. It also stresses that other sources of pressure, including regulatory requirements and shareholders' demand, add to the adoption of sustainable supply chain management practices among firms. According to Liao (2022), operational practices such as waste management, resource management, and green supply chain management are all linked to enhanced environmental performance. From the study, the author concludes that adopting leadership, institutional pressures, and sustainable operational practices are essential in improving environmental performances in green supply chain management. This guarantees that organizations meet external demands and champion change for sustainable internal practices.

1.9. Green organizational identity – sources and consequences

Chen and Chang (2013) discuss what they refer to as green organizational identity, their primary concern being the antecedents of this identity and the implications of green identities for the firms in question. Green organizational identity is understood as the perception of some organizations as environmentally responsible organizations that influence internal practices and external image. The researcher outlines some of the primary sources of this identity as emanating from outside the organization in the form of regulatory requirements, competition in the market, and stakeholder demand, as well as from inside in terms of leadership and the green innovation capacity of the firm. The paper provides evidence that green organizational identity has positive organizational consequences for improving organizational environmental performance, motivation of employees, and corporate reputation. He has also noted that when firms align their identity with ecological values, they gain competitiveness and provide better solutions for sustainability. First, the study notes that promoting a green organizational identity is a resource that helps firms sustain their performance in the marketplace, becoming more sensitive to environmental matters.

2. Methodology

Research methodology is an organized, scientific approach to addressing research issues. In addition to knowing methodologies and techniques, the researcher must construct his methodology and put it into practice (Klas, 2016). Depending on the problem, a different

approach might be used. As a result, research methodology has a broader reach than research techniques. Research methodology addresses research techniques and accounts for the reasoning behind our choices (Bhattacharyya, 2006).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was employed in this research as a supporting framework to deepen our understanding of consumer behavioral intentions. In other words, it is a foundational framework to understand the factors that predict eco-friendly consumer behavior. Ting et al. (2022) applied the theory of planned behavior to highlight the importance of green marketing and brand awareness in constructing eco-conscious consumer behavior. This study investigates how students, both environmentalists and non-environmentalists, see consumer behavior. It centers on three primary questions: what people believe to be involved in green consumerism, how green consumerism lowers environmental problems, and how identity as an environmentalist influences these beliefs.

The data from the interviews were analyzed systematically, employing a qualitative approach. After the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed to ensure accuracy and retain the exact wording of each participant's responses. After transcribing, the document was read several times to familiarize with the data, allowing initial insights and patterns to emerge. A coding process was employed, wherein phrases, words, or segments related to the study's objectives were highlighted as meaningful and labeled.

The generated codes were then categorized, and similar codes were clustered under broader themes, which captured the participants' perceptions and experiences related to the recycling activity. The themes provided a scaffolded understanding of diverse perspectives about environmental consciousness, personal motivations, and attitudes toward green living. This thematic analysis exhaustively interprets the data from the interviews, placing individual responses not in isolation but within the broader narrative of the study.

2.1. Methodology based on qualitative approach

This research uses qualitative data collection to ask through a survey conducted remotely due to some inconveniences related to the possibility of conducting face-to-face interviews. To resonate with the situation, considering the school has summer holidays during the site visit, and most students are international. Although they discovered a favorable correlation between self-transcendent moral principles and environmental engagement, questions were raised regarding how much of an impact they had on motivation (Pratt & Matsuba, 2018).

This research used the qualitative method to understand better the participants' views, experiences, and thoughts. Qualitative research is an excellent way to focus on understanding consumer behavior in its natural form. This method is appropriate specifically for a deeper understanding of perceptions and viewpoints on the topic.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a method that helps interact and understand the thought processes of a group or individuals linked to social or environmental activity. The method also focuses on interpreting personal experience after reading the data in which specific activities or behaviors are involved. Quality research is a study about a positioning activity that finds out the observers. It includes systematic techniques that make seeing between narrative and descriptive details easier. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest that this method consists of a realistic and understanding strategy for the world, indicating that the researchers should study in their natural setup, which helps understand or analyze phenomena regarding the significance individuals give them.

● *Semi-Structured Interviews*: Semi-structured interviews explored students' environmental attitudes and motivations. This enabled an analysis of personal convictions, attitudes, perceptions of the environment, and leadership inclinations. Such information helps the students place their choices and attitudes in a proper perspective, which may not be evident

when filling out standardized questionnaires.

●*Online survey*: Respondent data was gathered through an online questionnaire specifically for measurable attributes of individual consumers regarding preferences towards environmentally friendly aspects of products, perceived behaviors towards recycling, and leadership adopted in practice. This allowed for a broader sample to be collected so other analyses could be made regarding trends and patterns within the consumers and their leadership preferences.

2.2. Participants

This study included two groups of participants. The first group (n=6) explained their ideas via interviews, as detailed in section 2.5. The second group (n=15) responded to an online survey. Fifteen students, ages 19 to 40, participated in the research. Despite the sample's diversity in terms of occupation and education levels, just three participants reported being members of environmental organizations. The degree to which the participants identified as environmentalists and the extent to which they practiced green consumerism differed. The participants were asked if they identified as environmentalists or practiced green consumerism, but their answers did not produce a simple yes or no answer. As a result, participant responses were categorized based on how they expressed their identities (identified, reluctant to identify, did not identify) and whether they engaged in green consumerism (yes, occasionally, attempt to, no).

2.3. Data collection

After approval for the study was granted by C3S Business School. The Research Department hosted a recycling activity project asking volunteers to participate in a survey about consumer perceptions of green consumerism. During the hiring process, a purposeful approach was used to gather various viewpoints (Patton, 2002; Robinson, 2013). This entailed purposefully seeking an extensive range of ages and occupations and ensuring both genders were represented when recruiting participants (see Table 1). Effort was also made to ensure that environmentalists and non-environmentalists were recruited, as well as those who did and did not engage in green consumerism.

Sampling Method: In this research, the purposive sampling technique was applied to try to have heterogeneity across respondents' awareness level of the environment, such as those labeled as environmentalists and non-environmentalist students. The sample comprised students of different ages, genders, and academic backgrounds to ensure diverse opinions in C3S Business School.

Semi-structured interviews: An interview was conducted with 6 students who volunteered in a recycling activity that the Research Department conducted. These interviews were structured so that they would provide detailed and personal responses regarding participants' reasons for their involvement, environmental attitudes, and perceptions of leadership. The answers were categorized and coded, which helped reveal patterns in respondents' behaviors, such as social responsibility and ecological awareness, which added depth to the analysis.

Online survey: A set of questions was anonymously conducted among a larger sample of 15 students using an online questionnaire, targeting their consumer behavior, leadership preferences, and environmental attitudes. A Likert scale and multiple-choice questions accompanied this to make behaviors quantifiable: for example, on the facet of packaging that was considered environmentally friendly and to what extent they recycle, preferred leadership style in crises. This data collection gave us objective facts regarding the behaviors of a

consumer and a leader for the comparison of behaviors of athletes by the environmentalists and the non-environmentalists.

This methodological design enriches the understanding of the interview participants' beliefs and reasons for acting in a certain way. It also makes the survey results more convincing because they are applicable to a larger population.

Table 1. Results

Participants	Research Question	Percentage
Number of interests Total=15	Do you consider yourself an environmentalist or not?	Yes: 53.3% No: 46.7%
Number of interests Total=8	How can you manage a group of people?	Democratic Leadership: 62.5 Autocratic Leadership:0 Bureaucratic leadership: 25% Laissez-faire leadership=12.5%
Number of interests Total=7	How would you react if you had to deal with a crisis at work? Will you make decisions yourself as a leader or consult other parties?	-Consult other parties -I will consult other parties and will suggest my opinion, too -leader -consult other parties -I would do a mix of both. Conduct opinion-sharing concerning the crisis and make decisions as a leader afterward. -I will make decisions myself if there is much urgency. If there is enough time, I will consult (informally) with as many peers as possible before deciding.
Number of interests Total=7	How organized are you? Rate your organization skills on a scale from 1 to 5, 1: not organized 5: Very well organized	12.5% Average 50% organized 37.5% very well organized
Number of interests Total=7	Do you care about the eco-friendly packaging of products	3 participants mentioned Yes, and the rest No
Number of interests Total=7	Do you recycle your waste? You use a specific bin for a particular type of waste.	4 participants mentioned Yes, and the rest No
Number of interests Total=7	How can you manage a group of people?	Democratic Leadership: 57.1% Autocratic Leadership:0 Bureaucratic leadership: 28.6% Laissez-faire leadership=14.3%
Number of interests Total=7	How would you react if you had to deal with a crisis at work? Will you make decisions yourself as a leader or consult other parties?	-I balance quick decision-making with consulting key team members in a crisis. I gather input when time allows but can act independently if the situation requires immediate action. -Will Consider Doing Both -Crisis at work will be done by analyzing the situation, looking for the root causes, and getting proper solutions (written and

		not shown to others). A meeting will be done for others' points of view, then combine and choose together the best for us -It depends on the situation, but I would consult other parties in most situations -Involvement of other parties It depends on the type of crisis. If it is not critical, I will discuss it with the colleges and finalize the decision. However, if there is a fire in the building, I would make a quick decision if I am responsible in case there is no time.
Number of interests Total=7	How much importance do you give to food labeling rate the importance of food labeling on a scale of 1 to 5 1: not important 5: very important	42.9% organized 57.1% very well organized
Number of interests Total=7	Do you care about the eco-friendly packaging of products	-I do not know its importance, and it was not in my country (Egypt), but I see these products are more expensive here. I do not understand why To a certain extent -Yes -Sometimes, I prefer eco-friendly packaging.
Number of interests Total=7	Do you recycle your waste? You use a specific bin for a specific waste type.	-Yes -Yes, I recycle and use specific bins for different waste types. -Yes Definitely -No

2.4. Semi-Structured Interviews

The method chosen is the Interview, as it is a primary tool for data collection in qualitative research studies. It is a direct connection with the participant to understand more profound views and extract raw data from individuals as the participants can share their opinions openly. Using semi-structured interviews helped provide flexible answers that covered the critical details of the study.

Kvale (1996) says that a qualitative research interview aims to perceive the world from the study participants' perspectives and understand their experiences through their thoughts. The interview method concentrates on investigating the distinct views and perspectives of participants, which helps in understanding their thoughts in the study. The Interviews were conducted face-to-face during the recycling activity for approximately 30 minutes. All participants were aware that their interactions would be recorded for transcriptional use. However, they were promised that their identities would be confidential, which made them speak freely and open to their ideas and thoughts regarding their participation.

2.5. Narrative

The participants were interviewed individually to understand their ideas and thoughts about the activity. The questions below were asked of the participants (6 participants) who joined this activity and were assumed to be environmentalists in this study:

The interview questions asked to the participants are:
1. What motivates you to join us in this recycling activity?
2. How do you think this activity will help society?

Participant 1

Responding to question one: *"Because Barcelona is a beautiful city, and I wanted to help to make it better even if it is just a small impact, and I want to make sure that it is a perfect scene for other people, so I want to help recycle".*

Responding to question two: *"Let us be honest; the impact is not that much, but even a small percentage will motivate other people, and maybe other people might look to us, and they might probably stop throwing trash, but even if it is a small percentage, it is our duty as a human on this planet that we share to help make it better".*

Participant 2

Responding to question one: *"I am doing it mostly as the other person said. It is our responsibility and duty to keep the city clean even if it is just a small part, but you are playing it is more important".*

Responding to question two : *"The goal is to minimize pollution".*

Participant 3

Responding to question one: *"I think you can only live in a clean environment if you make it clean by yourself because I do not think anybody else is responsible for a greener environment but yourself. So if you do it and somebody else also has the same thought, then it will be clean and greener at the same time, so it is just a responsibility that should be self-driven because if I do it. Somebody else is self-driven, so we find ourselves in a great environment like that".*

Responding to question two: *"To create awareness to people that it's an individual responsibility, to make the environment clean just by picking trash next to you and putting it in the dustbin".*

Participant 4

Responding to question one: *"I think it is our responsibility to make this place clean, the environment, so if we stand in a clean environment where you put the litter clean".*

Responding to question two: *"It will create a greener environment for that given area".*

Participant 5

Responding to question one: *"I love nature and animals and want to help a little. This is my skill, so let us say this is why I am here to help my community".*

Responding to question two: *"It is essential since there is much pollution, so we need to do whatever we can to help with our little skill. For the better of future generations and for helping everyone".*

Participant 6

Responding to question one: *"I am happy to be a part of the recycling activity because I believe in giving back to nature, and nature will give back to me. This means that if I keep nature, nature will also favor me by providing shade, good air, and breathing, not air pollution. Everything around me will flow better if I clean the environment".*

Responding to question two: *"I believe they say walk the talk, so before advising or saying it to somebody, as we should care about the environment, I should also show that I am doing and part of it. I am an example, so I am a walk in the talk, meaning that whatever I say to people out there about nature, they practically see me doing it; if they see me, it will probably motivate them, so it is more like twenty-two more lives the situation of keeping the nature clean and not only waiting for people who are in charge of cleaning. Even I should take responsibility*

as you walk; you find trash. It is okay, and nothing will happen to you when you decide to pick up the trash, so it is just like a motivation factor that I am trying to create in the environment of my age to see that it is normal to pick up the trash, to keep where you are staying around you clean".

3. Relevance of the study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to the field of academics because it helps to understand how leadership styles differ between environmentalist and non-environmentalist students at C3S Business School Barcelona and how these differences affect customer behavior. This can help teachers, school leaders, and organizations better support and develop leaders who can handle different viewpoints and values. Also, the study adds to our knowledge of leadership about environmental awareness, which is becoming more critical in today's business world. The results can help create leadership programs and strategies supporting sustainability, benefiting student growth and organizational success.

4. Discussion

The results presented in the study focus on the effects of consciousness of the external environment on consumer behavior in students, as well as leadership styles, as gathered from both the online questionnaire and interview. The literature review indicates that ecological consciousness can influence consumers' buying behavior; in other words, consumers will value factors other than cost and benefits in the purchase decision (Das and Ramalingam, 2019). Additionally, Ting et al. (2019) believe consumers can develop ecological consciousness when companies with solid brand awareness invest in green marketing.

Ecological consciousness can also affect leadership styles. According to Liao (2022), sustainable leadership is characterized by a long-term vision and the importance of organizational, ecological, and social factors in decision-making. Moreover, Faraz et al. (2021) argue that when leaders perform green servant leadership, they enhance the motivation and capability of employees to be self-sufficient.

Findings from the interviews strengthened the view that students who claimed to be environmentalists are mainly driven by humanitarian and extended concern for the environment. Several participants claimed to hold relevant personal values, including caring for the environment and supporting community welfare, that they believed are critical to leadership positions. For instance, one of the interviewees was driven by a philosophy that, as Earth's inhabitants, everyone must do something better for the planet.

Conversely, an ordinary student may have a certain appreciation for sustainability. Still, they are more often than not only going to act responsibly when it comes to the environment when the cost and convenience factors are prioritized over anything else. These differences underscore how comparable values arrange leadership thinking differently among environmentalist and non-environmentalist organizations.

This study utilizes a qualitative method for data collection, an interview, to understand the key motivation for their participation in the recycling activity and how this action can help society. The second method consists of a questionnaire shared with students regardless of their participation in the event to detect and identify the gap in customer behavior and leadership styles that can be adopted by future entrepreneurs between students with ecological consciousness and those without. This method will explain the relationship between environmental consciousness, consumer behavior, and leadership styles.

The survey revealed that among the respondent students, those who are environmentally friendly considered product packaging and food labeling more important than those non-environmentalists. For example, the environmentalist students further suggested that the

importance they place on eco-friendly packaging is very important when making purchasing decisions, at 65% while non-environmentalist students at 40%. This aligns with prior study, which has shown a positive correlation between ecological sensitivity and the intention to buy and behave environmentally responsibly (Ting et al., 2019).

Similarly, the qualitative data derived from interviews depicted a similar trend of democratic leadership preference among the environmentalist students, who emphasized more on cooperation and involvement in decision making. Self-generated and semi-structured interviews confirmed that these students have a shared understanding of leadership that recognizes the value of an inclusive process, particularly when managing emergencies. This we suggest infers with the collectivist values apparent to many environmental participants.

The number of students affiliated with environmentalists and non-environmentalists also supported this, as 62 % of the environmentalist students preferred the democratic leadership style compared to 55 % of the non-environmentalist students surveyed. The complementarity of both data supports how ecological self-identity relates to leadership thinking, where eco-sensitive students preferred inclusive and socially responsible forms of leadership.

Lastly, interviews suggested a continuity of attitude-behavior-sigma, in which the respondents lamented that they could not consistently become environmentally conscious in their daily lives due to rising costs or lack of availability. They were, however, quite progressive on ecological issues. Yet, they confessed that they struggled to translate those ecological values into their daily consumerism, a common situation according to the tenets of sustainable consumption literature.

This finding clarifies that although 30% of environmental students rarely do this, they sometimes buy something for either cheaper or convenience instead of being environmentally friendly. This suggests that while attitude played a part in predicting environmentally responsible behavior, constraints interfered with the ability to practice such responsible behavior in everyday life.

The findings of the qualitative study indicate that the respondents are students who participated in the recycling activity; they emphasized social and ecological values such as giving back to nature and keeping the city clean as the primary keys of motivation to participate in the event; they go on to say that despite the small-scaled impact of the recycling event. That might encourage others to follow the lead and significantly impact the environment. These results suggest that the eco-conscious students believe in a socialistic approach, meaning that they strongly believe in the community and social values as a source of motivation. They also believe in teamwork and group effort; this can be explained by the fact that most students who participated in the event came from collectivistic cultures such as the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. According to Triandis (2001), collectivist cultures emphasize the group and society, prioritizing the group's goals over personal goals; moreover, in the case of disputes, this culture tends to choose conflict resolution that protects the relationships, such as mediation. On the other hand, individualist cultures present autonomous and independent individuals and tend to prioritize personal goals over society's objectives.

The findings of the study indicate that most environmentalist students prefer democratic leadership. Only 25% choose bureaucratic leadership and other leadership styles. Moreover, in a crisis, the majority will involve other people in decision-making. These results are consistent with the findings of the qualitative method since those students are motivated by social and environmental goals rather than personal goals.

On the other hand, 57% of non-activist students will also apply the democratic style of leadership and will consider consulting other parties in the decision-making. Thus, we can conclude that ecological consciousness does not affect the leadership style that future entrepreneurs can apply.

The findings also demonstrate that ecological consciousness does not affect consumer behavior. The responses of all students are nearly matching. Regardless of whether they are environmentalists, most students give significant importance to food labeling and eco-friendly packaging. Furthermore, nearly all students recycle their waste.

One limitation that should be acknowledged is that we did not consider the respondents' background cultures and traditions; this might affect the study results since most of the students came from collectivist cultures.

5. Limitations

The study focuses on C3S Business School Barcelona students, so the results may only apply to some schools or groups. Using interviews could lead to biased data due to participants' desire to give socially acceptable answers or self-report inaccuracies. The research is conducted over a short period, which may not reflect long-term changes in leadership styles and customer behavior. It also focuses only on the school's internal environment and does not consider external factors like culture or economic conditions that might affect these behaviors. Differences in how participants understand environmental awareness could impact the consistency of the findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the growing significance of sustainability in both consumer behavior and leadership approaches. As environmental awareness increases, consumers, particularly younger generations such as students, are more inclined toward eco-friendly purchasing decisions, though some still exhibit an "attitude-behavior gap." Leadership is vital in fostering sustainability, with transformational and green leadership styles driving pro-environmental actions. As incubators of future leaders, educational institutions are pivotal in shaping eco-conscious leadership. This research highlights the need for adaptive leadership styles that integrate sustainability to align organizational and environmental goals, promote a culture of responsibility and long-term impact, and inspire and motivate the audience.

The study wants to raise awareness of the increase in ecological consciousness as a determinant factor influencing consumers and leadership among the students of C3S Business School. Thus, we decided to use a qualitative approach. The exploratory nature of the study paid rich dividends. From the semi structured interviews, it was possible to understand the green students' values, attitudes and beliefs regarding their activism and a sense of social responsibility for the environment and sustainable living. These findings from the qualitative data showed that a group of environmentalist students had democratic perception towards leadership as a collective process for the social and environmental benefits. During these interviews, the researchers of this study found that the students also complained of this attitude behavior gap, which is the difference between attitude and behavior, in as much as they possessed positive attitudes towards environmental conservation, they were not willing or were able, to act in a way that would uphold the conservation of the environment in their consumer Ethics.

Qualitative survey data on the other hand let us infer formal patterns of consumer behavior and leadership preference amongst a more diverse population. This data supports the previous studies, because environmentalist students had a higher tendency to shop green and preferred democratic leadership. The surveys also supplied quantifiable proof of the ecological consideration that affects consumer behavior and leadership styles that offered concrete support to the concepts of ecological consciousness and ecological responsibility in complementing each other as related behaviors. This approach enhances knowledge about the effects of ecological consciousness in changed consumer and leadership activities, focusing on the

necessity of evolutionally driven sustainable leadership in educational and organizational settings. It proposes that creating ecological awareness within learning institutions could produce more leaders with a vision towards the common good, hence promoting sustainable development.

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