

Why Buy? The Impact of Social Media on Young Consumers' Perceived

Environmental Responsibility

Alyssa Rhodes (3118767)

26312 Twp 514, Spruce Grove,

Alberta, T7Y-1C8

Rhodesa2@mymacewan.ca

780-718-1820

Abstract

Environmental issues and consumerism are becoming critical to young people's lives and identities. This is an important trend to note as they are emerging as a vital segment in the consumer market. This seemingly contradictory connection can be better understood when considering social media's place in young people's lives. Social media is a powerful tool for consumers and companies, as it is a place to promote products and perceptions. However, the role of social media in shaping young people as shoppers is largely overlooked, especially in the literature regarding sustainable shopping practices. Thus, this qualitative study used a grounded theory approach to investigate this topic through one focus group and 50 online survey responses. In it, many participants spoke about their struggle to balance a desire to make environmentally responsible choices with the pressures of social media, affordability, and lifestyle aspirations. They explained how these competing interests and obstacles create a complicated social landscape that young consumers must navigate. Thus, there was a call against the current system. Most respondents expressed heavy frustration about companies' roles in promoting overconsumption and continuing to overproduce, with little regard for the environment. This suggests that individuals feel negatively about environmental responsibility being cast onto consumers instead of corporations. However, participants still emphasize individual efforts to be environmentally conscious. Therefore, this study offers thoughtful and creative insights into how young people understand sustainability and their role in it. It also showcases young consumers' feelings and beliefs about how they can comfortably impact their environment, offering perspectives on healing relationships with companies and the environment.

Key Words

Consumerism, Environmental Responsibility, Grounded Theory, Social Media

Introduction

According to the Canadian Government (2019), today's young Canadians are the most educated, connected, and diverse generation the country has known. In 2018, the government launched a Youth Policy recognizing young people as important social advocates. This policy formalized several vital pillars that young people found most important, one of which was environmentalism and climate change. This showcases that a healthy Earth is a key concern for many young people. Additionally, the policy emphasizes how young people are incredibly well-connected to others. Social media undoubtedly plays a significant role in this connectivity. Social media has become a dominant global force, shaping how individuals, especially young people, interact with the world around them (Hoskins, 2011, p. 20). Online platforms have become potent social worlds where one can interact with trends, opinions, and information (Hoskins, 2011, p. 1). It is also a place where companies and influencers can push their products and build communities around items. Hence, it is essential to consider platforms as a force that shapes young people's behaviours and heavily influences the creation of norms, which shape how these young people buy.

Considering social media is a global phenomenon and environmental issues are a worldwide concern, an important question arises: how do these two influential aspects of young people's lives intersect? Moreover, how do young people perceive their environmental roles in a world that feels so interconnected? This study explored these questions through a grounded theory methodology, with data collected through a focus group of three participants and 50 anonymous survey responses from different participants. By examining social media's role in shaping young people's values, wants, and realities regarding sustainability and consumerism,

this paper will explore how social media mediates young individuals' sense of perceived environmental responsibility.

Literature Review

Environmental issues have recently emerged as major social concerns and are becoming increasingly central today (Kim & Lee, 2023, p.1). According to Kim and Lee (2023), in the past, people were mainly indifferent to the production and consumption of products (p. 1). Instead, they focused on the afterlife of products, prioritizing recycling behaviour (Kim & Lee, 2023, p.13). However, individuals today are less interested in “retroactive compensation” through reusing and recycling (Tagliabue & Łęgosz-Tagliabue, 2023, p. 20). Instead, their interest is increasingly shifting towards eco-friendly and sustainably produced goods (Kim & Lee, 2023, p.12). This shift in consumer perception has increased the demand for green, eco-friendly products (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p.8).

According to García-Salirrosas et al. (2024), this phenomenon is particularly apparent in post-COVID society, where health and wellness have emerged as key motivations driving environmentally friendly consumerism (p. 2). Their research supports how social norms heavily influence these consumer trends (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p.9; Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p.15). The influence of social norms is particularly evident, as the shift towards a healthier society and planet is most pronounced among younger generations (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p. 2; Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p. 4). Van Hoang and Tung (2024) found that Generation Z's purchasing habits are primarily based on pleasure but often incorporate personal, societal, and environmental values (p.4). Thus, they are a critical segment of the market for green marketing as their environmental consciousness encourages green purchasing habits (Van Hoang

& Tung, 2024, p. 4). This trend suggests a reciprocal relationship between marketing, knowledge, and green purchasing behaviours. Kim and Lee (2023) further support this notion, as their research found that environmental knowledge plays a crucial role in an individual's purchasing behaviour (p. 12). This mutual influence showcases how consumer behaviour is complicated by social settings and situational contexts (Kim & Lee, 2023, p.19).

Generation Z also exemplifies the influence of perceived environmental responsibility, as Van Hoang & Tung (2024) found it to be a critical factor in how they shop. Many young people acted upon their environmental beliefs by purchasing sustainable products, reducing irresponsible consumption, and engaging with conservation initiatives (Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p. 5). This study defined perceived environmental responsibility as the degree to which individuals consider themselves responsible for improving ecological well-being (Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p.9). This impact of responsibility aligns with García-Salirrosas et al.'s (2024) findings on perceived behavioural control. They found that the extent to which individuals feel their actions, like buying green products, will make a difference influences their willingness to participate in environmental initiatives (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p. 8).

Similarly, Kim and Lee (2023) emphasize the impact of situational context on consumers' purchasing behaviours (p.2). Their study found that the knowledge, care, and sense of purpose behind a person's purchase predict their intention to buy green products. Nevertheless, factors like product availability and the credibility of eco-labels minimized this intention. Similarly, Tagliabue and Łęgosz-Tagliabue (2023) explored the consequences of a lack of trust in brands by exploring "greenwashing," when an organization falsely promotes its environmental efforts. This undermines consumer confidence, especially those committed to or attempting to purchase sustainable products (p. 29). Their study also discusses how consumers may become suspicious

of companies that create artificial needs through marketing and social norms (Tagliabue & Łęgosz-Tagliabue, 2023, p.29).

These studies provide valuable insights into the dynamics between buyers and producers, which shape the environmentally conscious consumer market. However, this means that much of this research, while sociologically informed, is limited to consumer-based policy. Hence, they overlook influential factors influencing young people, like the creation and perception of social norms, perceived responsibility, and trust in companies. Moreover, they only allude to how these factors affect how individuals and institutions interact without exploring how these relationships influence perceptions and attitudes.

Therefore, when considered together, this existing research lays the groundwork for more comprehensive studies on the formation of social norms, particularly among younger generations, who are the primary green consumers (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p. 9; Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p. 22). Hence, it is intriguing that the literature overlooks a potent mediator influencing behavioural control, perceived responsibility, and social norms prevalent in most young people's lives: social media. While research regarding social media and social movements exists, the literature largely overlooks how these facets connect to consumer behaviour. The rise in social awareness seems to mirror the rise of social media consumption among young people. This potential connection suggests that social media is a significant factor in shaping young people's green intentions, making it a crucial area for future research.

Social media is an extraordinary marketing tool. It allows consumers to inform each other's shopping decisions by promoting and displaying certain products and practices online. Van Hoang & Tung (2024) found that consumers are more likely to act in environmentally responsible ways when they feel they can influence others (p. 19). This phenomenon shows that

social media is vital in shaping young people's understanding of their environmental responsibility.

In conclusion, previous studies thoroughly investigate the factors contributing to the “green gap,” which refers to the difference between intention and actual eco-friendly purchasing (Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p.15). However, they do not investigate how these social norms and values manifest in young people's lives. Nor how these principles are created and spread online. This oversight minimizes the impact of social media in shaping informal and formal pressure and, thus, young consumer behaviour. This gap leaves a crucial question: How does social media influence young people's perceptions of their environmental responsibility?

Methodology:

The newness of the relationship between social media and environmental responsibility and the diversity of the data, is why I chose grounded theory as the methodology for this study. Grounded theory aims to develop a theory that explains social processes in the specific setting where the behaviours occur (Stark & Trinidad, 2007, p.1374). This approach was particularly suitable for this study due to the gap in the literature regarding young people as prominent consumers in the green market and the impact of social media on the market as a whole. Therefore, I chose this methodology to develop a framework that highlights the influence of social media on young people's buying practices regarding the environment.

This study used a combination of focus groups and qualitative surveys to explore the connection between social media and young adults' perceptions of environmental responsibility. I chose these two methods to capture rich, narrative data from the focus group and a broad range of responses from the survey. By using this triangulation of methods, my data collection partner

and I were able to gain a deeper understanding of how young adults view environmental responsibility in the context of social media. Additionally, these data techniques were the most suitable for this research project because they allowed individuals to reflect on and share their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to environmentalism and shopping, creating a strong framework for understanding an emerging consumer market heavily influenced by social media.

Focus Group:

My data collection partner and I first conducted a focus group to explore young people's perspectives on how social media influences their concept of environmental responsibility. Participants were recruited through pre-existing social networks, as all three participants were students from Soci 418: Qualitative Research Methods (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p.62). Therefore, this sample was found through convenience sampling. Before the interviews, my research partner and I developed a focus group guide, which included background and demographic questions, experience and behaviour questions, and feeling questions to keep the conversation focused (King et al., 2019, p. 66). This semi-structured format allowed for flexible and organic discussion among the participants (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 70; King et al., 2019, p. 63). For further convenience, the focus group was held in a classroom at MacEwan University, providing a familiar place for the participants to discuss the topic.

The room was arranged with participants seated next to each other and across from my data collection partner, who acted as an observer, and me, the moderator. Participants faced the front of the room toward the whiteboards. We chose this arrangement so they could see their responses to the icebreaker exercises, which asked them to list all the words and things they thought of when they thought of “consumerism” and “environmental responsibility” throughout the rest of the interview.

The table between us allowed the observer to put their computer down, which allowed them to take notes on participant behaviours, interactions, and group dynamics. As Starks and Trinidad (2007) recommended, these observations provided valuable insights into the underlying intent behind participants' words and actions (p. 1375). The table between us also allowed us to keep a handheld recorder to tape the focus group, which allowed us to transcribe and code the interview. Immediately upon completing the interview, we uploaded the audio file from the recorder to each of our laptops and erased it from the device. We then worked together to transcribe the file by each typing half of the audio into a shared password-protected Google Drive document.

Surveys:

In addition to the focus group, my research partner and I developed a qualitative questionnaire based on the previously mentioned focus group guide. After receiving approval from MacEwan's Research Ethics Board (REB), I created and published the survey using the Qualtrics platform. The survey included thirteen closed-ended and two open-ended questions, all probing participants about their shopping choices, values, and beliefs on how social media influenced these decisions. The survey was open to individuals aged 18-30 active on social media. We kept the inclusion criteria broad to capture a wide range of perceptions of environmental responsibility among young adults, who are primary social media consumers and key participants in green initiatives (Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p. 29).

My research partner and I could easily access this population by posting our survey on our personal Facebook and Instagram accounts and encouraging those in our social networks to share it with others. Thus, we relied on convenience sampling as our primary source of recruitment (Stark & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1370). This approach allowed us to reach a range of

participants with diverse experiences and reach the standard sample size for a grounded theory project of 10-60, as we collected 50 submitted surveys over two weeks (Stark & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). Therefore, his approach was intentional and strategic, as it was the most effective way to reach our target sample of young consumers on social media (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 70).

Ethics:

This study acknowledged the potential psychological and emotional risks involved in participating in either the focus group or the survey, as either could cause emotional discomfort (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 61). Further, Lune and Berg's (2012) work (p. 61-104) regarding informed versus passive consent, confidentiality, and data protection strengthened my research partner and I's ability to protect the research process and the participants' safety and well-being.

Focus groups, in particular, posed emotional or social risks, such as emotional distress, peer judgment or the spread of responses outside the group (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 72). To minimize these risks, I gave participants a walk-through of the study and their roles, which included a reminder that everyone had signed a confidentiality agreement before signing up for the interview. I also explained the research purpose and potential risks. Participants were then informed that they could skip any question or withdraw from the study without facing any consequences. We also outlined the withdrawal process to ensure clarity, allowing them to leave the room or contact us if they decided to revoke their participation at any point. Participants then gave their consent to start the interview on the record, which confirmed that they understood these points (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 89). At the end of the focus group, the observer turned off the recording device. Then, we went through a debriefing session, reiterating confidentiality

protocols and providing our contact information for any follow-up concerns, such as if anyone needed the contact details for MacEwan's Psychological Services.

Participants who completed the anonymous survey received a similar breakdown of the study through a consent form on Qualtrics, which participants had to agree to before starting the survey. The form required respondents to confirm their understanding of the study, including the potential risks involved, their right to skip uncomfortable questions or take breaks if needed, and that the survey was completely anonymous. The form also provided our contact information, as Berg & Lune (2012) suggested, should participants require debriefing or support after participating in the study (p. 89). Responses were stored on the Qualtrics platform until submissions closed on November 7, 2024. Afterward, the survey responses were transferred to MAXQDA for coding and analysis. After all the data was disseminated and the study concluded, all participant data was deleted.

Analysis

After transcribing the transferred focus group data, I uploaded the completed transcript to MAXQDA, where I began my first cycle of open coding (Jacques, 2021, p.22). Coding involves labelling parts of the data that help categorize, summarize, and explain ideas. In grounded theory, coding helps make sense of the stories, statements, and observations to clarify the experience of interest, which leads to a theory (Charmaz, 2014, p.110).

To begin this process, I followed Charmaz's (2014) approach by conducting an initial coding phase in which I aimed to name or code each word or sometimes a line of the data (p. 113). I attached a memo for every code to help me organize and clarify the ideas the codes represent. This step supported a deeper engagement with the data and allowed emergent patterns to be recorded as they appeared. Once the initial codes were in place, I began grouping them into

code sets. This helped me sort and synthesize the data more effectively. This strategy, modelled after Jacques's (2021) coding procedure, supported deducting more significant themes from the transcript (p.17).

After collecting the survey responses, I uploaded that data into the same MAXQDA file used for the focus group. I applied the same coding and memo schemes to the survey data. Using a consistent approach across both data sources allowed for thematic coherence and helped to build stronger connections between the participants' responses.

Results and Discussion:

Participant responses in this study reflected themes similar to those in the existing literature, indicating that perceived environmental responsibility significantly influenced young consumers' purchasing behaviour. However, the surveys and the focus group also offered new and interesting perspectives on social media's role. Many study participants reported feeling that their purchasing habits are unaffected by others online. Instead, they believed their values shaped their algorithms rather than the algorithms shaping their attitudes. Moreover, many found it much easier to discuss consumerism than environmentalism, as many participants described their environmental consciousness as a "work in progress." However, respondents also reported feeling like their actions and choices have little impact on the general well-being of the earth, which translates to a low willingness to engage in environmental practices (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p. 8). Others even expressed negative emotions regarding environmental talk and believed they had little role. Instead, they discussed that higher institutions like mega-corporations and the government should be held responsible for environmental issues like climate change, pollution, and waste.

Nonetheless, the results suggest that environmental awareness and responsibility shape young people's shopping habits and social media engagement. This matches Van Hoang and Tung's (2024) research, which found that environmental awareness substantially impacts consumer decisions (p. 18). My study furthered this notion as participants explained that their sustainability values influence their purchasing and the content they engage with on social media. As one focus group participant, J, noted, "I feel like I follow people who match more my mindset." This observation suggests that their social media intake is curated to reflect their environmental values, as this participant spoke about how their feed has shifted towards more consumer-conscious influencers. Similar responses support how young people's following habits are motivated by environmental values and consumer interests.

However, the participants' media habits were far from uniform. The results showed a diversity of social media behaviours, highlighting the complexity of young consumers' relationship with environmental responsibility. While some participants strongly preferred following influencers who promote sustainable practices, others admitted to following various accounts, including those who promote overconsumption. One participant explained, "I follow a range between everything. There are people who thrift, and then there are also the overconsumers, to be honest." This level of breadth shows that while environmental responsibility is influential, it is not the only force influencing young people's behaviour, suggesting the power of situational context (Kim & Lee, 2023, p.19). This behaviour goes along with other research that says behaviours and interests, such as taste and admiration for lifestyles, influence how individuals buy (Van Hoang and Tung, p.30).

Furthermore, many participants acknowledged that watching videos about luxury and indulgence allowed them to live vicariously through influencers whose consumption habits they

likely could not afford. For instance, Participant X from the focus group shared, “It's like living vicariously through other people who consume because I'm like, I can't afford it.” This thought reflects how social media shapes consumer ideals, even when those aspirations are not rooted in sustainability, as participants admit wishing they could live a high-buy lifestyle as they see online. This also alludes to how many respondents spoke about how media moguls influence their shopping, often overriding thoughts about consciously consuming. Some surveys spoke clearly about this impact:

Seeing social media personalities online whose content is directly related to consumerism sometimes makes me feel the want to purchase similar products as well, or a sense of wishing that I could. (Survey Participant, personal communication, October 29, 2024)

Both focus group participants and other survey respondents echoed this sentiment. However, differences in participants' social media intake highlight how social media is a powerful tool for creating and condemning conscious consumerism. This connection highlights the role of norms in young people's consumption (García-Salirrosas et al., 2024, p. 2; Van Hoang & Tung, 2024, p.4).

However, other participants reported feeling "numbed" or overwhelmed by overconsumption due to social media's constant portrayal of consumerism. Yet, they did not blame influencers. Instead, participants recognized that promoting products and shopping is part of an influencer's job. However, many participants referenced the damaging consequences of trends and influencers' roles in creating and spreading them. Yet, many more expressed anger, frustration, and defeat regarding the larger capitalistic system, which creates needs and norms to sell products (Tagliabue & Łęgosz-Tagliabue, 2023, p.29). As focus group participant P put it, these feelings of mistrust are grounded in the 'repeating cycle of capitalism.'

Many respondents echoed this, discussing how overproduction would never end as big companies continue to market their products as fulfilling and necessary. One survey response summed up many of the frustrations related to environmental issues:

[Environmental responsibility] is a term used by those who have successfully been tricked by mega-corporations that individuals are responsible for what has happened to our planet. Most pollution does not come from one guy driving his car to work every day. (Survey Participant Z, personal communication, October 20, 2024)

These feelings align with Tagliabue and Łęgosz-Tagliabue's (2023) argument that a deep mistrust of corporations often undermines consumers' environmental efforts. This understanding of environmental responsibility also alludes to García-Salirrosas et al.'s (2024) findings on how the extent to which individuals feel their actions matter impacts their willingness to participate in environmental initiatives (p. 8).

While both surveys and focus group participants addressed the corporation's neglect of environmental responsibility, surveys specifically called for company transparency. Survey respondents often addressed how companies refuse to change their production practices or pretend to act environmentally consciously as a ploy to encourage consumers to buy. This view builds upon the negative impact greenwashing has on consumers' intention to purchase green (Tagliabue & Łęgosz-Tagliabue, 2023, p.29). It also reflects how many participants considered production and sourcing concerns when referencing corporations. These perceptions emphasize a shift in consumer perspective regarding environmentalism, as people are no longer only focused on the afterlife of products (Kim & Lee, 2023, p.12).

Another survey response expresses the negative relationship between environmental responsibility and corporations exceptionally well:

I try my best, but there is no ethical consumption under capitalism (including environmentally), and until major corporations make changes to their ridiculous levels of emissions, nothing will change. (Survey Participant E, personal communication, October 24, 2024).

This sense of futility suggests that, while perceived environmental responsibility does influence young consumers' purchasing behaviour, it is not the sole factor in their decision-making process. Nor is social media the only factor in their perceived environmental responsibility. The results suggest that positionalities like social media intake, personal values, and affordability impact young people's buying behaviours. These results highlight the need for a more nuanced approach to understanding how environmental responsibility interacts with other factors guiding young consumers' buying behaviours. This need is critical in today's digital and consumer-driven age (Tagliabue and Łęgosz-Tagliabue, 2023, p. 40). However, it is largely overlooked in existing literature, so this research employed a grounded theory approach to explore the underlying processes shaping young consumer behaviours.

In doing so, it provided insight into how environmental responsibility intersects with digital trends and influences consumer decisions. The study also demonstrated how young people express and internalize sustainable initiatives and purchasing behaviours based on online interactions and how their social media intake reflects their often competing shopping and environmental ideals. A sense of futility exacerbates this conflict, as consumers feel their choices don't matter or that the responsibility should fall on them, even when corporations continue to

operate as they do. Hence, this study emphasized the overwhelming conflicts of interest that young consumers carry when navigating the green market.

Conclusions:

Environmental awareness, much like the impact of social media, plays a significant role in shaping the values and behaviours of young people today. However, young people do not report a clear and direct link between social media and their idea of perceived environmental responsibility. Instead, the data implied that these young people curate algorithms and social media practices that reflect their values. However, these values are not always situated in green initiatives. Despite efforts to incorporate environmentalism into their lives, respondents were generally open about their admiration for luxury or impulse consumption. This reality was reflected in and inspired by their social media intake. Participants' broad array of opinions regarding the influence of social media on their perceptions of environmental responsibility further highlights this trend. Some respondents found the internet to be a place to encourage environmental awareness and education. Others, however, felt it was a way to normalize and promote overconsumption. Still, others thought it was irrelevant to their purchasing behaviour.

Interestingly, a significant theme across participants is that focusing on social media and personal responsibility overlooks the main perceived environmental threats: big companies. The study revealed positive associations with overconsumption on social media, with some participants feeling jealous of or idealizing the lifestyles, while others appreciated the content. Contrarily, there were strong negative attributions toward corporations and their overproduction. This suggests that while many participants expressed a desire to be more environmentally

responsible, they felt that the responsibility should not rest solely on individuals but should instead be placed on corporations.

Limitations

While this study provided a strong foundation for understanding the role of social media in young people's lives as activists and consumers, time constraints were a significant obstacle in conducting this study. For convenience, participants from the focus group were all from Soci 418: Qualitative Research Methods. Hence, there was coercion to participate as students received course credit for completing at least one focus group out of a set number of options. Participants may have also filtered their answers, as we would continue the class together after the focus group. Additionally, I could not analyze the data as thoroughly or cleanly as I would have liked because of the extremely tight turnaround and the density of the information we collected. For this reason, I did not code in cycles, which would be ideal for thoroughness (Charmaz, 2014, p. 112; Jacques, 2021, p. 15). Instead, I often swapped between the transcripts and survey files to recode data. However, this approach allowed me to be more dynamic in my coding, creating new, more accurate codes as I worked through my data.

Moreover, this project was my first time working with MAXQDA, so I wish I had more time to learn the program, as it presented obstacles. Nevertheless, my thematic data analysis revealed rich and complex insights from young people regarding social media's impact on their perceived environmental responsibility. These outlooks focused on the effects of norms created by companies and spread through social media, emphasizing how young people are educated, aware, and connected.

Nonetheless, this study emphasized social media as an important tool in the modern age for expressing wants, needs, and ideals, which are increasingly tied to environmental awareness. It also highlighted the very social and active nature of young people. Their willingness to reflect and share their consumption was deeply appreciated and revealed how thoughtful and ready these young people are to improve the future that they are meant to lead. It also highlighted young people's sense of agency, as many reported the obstacles in making actual changes to protect and heal the environment. Thus, this study offered a chance for young people to express their opinions on an understudied topic and fostered time for reflection on how environmental responsibility is a part of their lives. Hence, it also became a platform for informed and creative perspectives on fostering positive ecological change. This offered opportunities to discuss how trust between consumers and companies can be achieved through transparency and accessibility, translating into greater environmental responsibility across the market.

Next Steps:

Since grounded theory aims to deduce a theoretical framework from the study, it takes an impressive amount of time and work. Thus, based on the limitations, it would be interesting to revise and redo this project with more resources. Time would be a valuable resource in replicating this study, particularly given that our focus group relied solely on respondents' reports of self-perception. More time would allow researchers to make nuanced and complex focus group guides and surveys that may more accurately assess the relationship. It would also enable researchers to find interview participants outside their social network and avoid coercion.

Furthermore, when considering the research findings and limitations, several potential future projects emerge, particularly regarding the impact of social media on young people's

relationships with companies. Many participants expressed how their social media reflects the things they may not have the means or access to, whether luxury buying or self-sustaining lifestyles. However, social media offers consumers a platform to actively or vocally resist brands that fail to meet socially acceptable values rather than silently boycott products. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate how young people use social media as a place for activism against brands that don't engage in environmental responsibility.

Ultimately, this study contributed insights into how environmental concerns are increasingly important in young people's lives, as many are moving toward environmentally conscious practices. It also highlighted young people's sense of agency, as many reported the obstacles in making actual changes to protect and heal the environment. Thus, the study provided valuable insights from a vital segment of the green-consuming market.

References

- Berg, B. L., & Lune, H. (2012). Ethical issues. In *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (8th ed., pp. 61–104). Pearson Education.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). The logic of grounded theory coding practices and initial coding. In *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed., pp. 109–137). Sage Publications.
- Feldman, M. S., Bell, J., & Berger, M. T. (2003). Making initial contact. In *Gaining access: A practical and theoretical guide for qualitative researchers* (pp. 23–34). AltaMira Press.
- Jacques, D. N. (2021). Using MAXQDA in ethnographic research: An example with coding, analyzing, and writing. In M. C. Gizzi & S. Radiker (Eds.), *The practice of qualitative data analysis: Research examples using MAXQDA* (pp. 17–33). MAXQDA Press.
- Kamberelis, G., & Dimitriadis, G. (2013). Fundamental elements of effective focus group research practice. In *Focus groups: From structured interviews to collective conversations* (pp. 61–84). Routledge.
- King, N., Horrocks, C., & Brooks, J. (2019). Designing an interview guide. In *Interviews in qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 52–70). Sage Publications.
- García-Salirrosas, E. E., Escobar-Farfán, M., Gómez-Bayona, L., Moreno-López, G., Valencia-Arias, A., & Gallardo-Canales, R. (2024). Influence of environmental awareness on the willingness to pay for green products: An analysis applying the

theory of planned behaviour in the Peruvian market. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1282383. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1282383>

Government of Canada. (2019). Canada's Youth Policy 2019. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/youth/programs/policy.html>

Hoskins, A. (2011). Media, memory, metaphor: Remembering and the connective turn. *Parallax*, 17(1), 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2011.605573>

Kim, N., & Lee, K. (2023). Environmental consciousness, purchase intention, and actual purchase behaviour of eco-friendly products: The moderating impact of situational context. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20, Article 5312. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20075312>

Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372–1380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307307031>

Tagliabue, M., & Łęgosz-Tagliabue, I. (2023). Culturo-behavioral contributions to a sustainable market: The interplay of producers' and consumers' practices. *Behaviour and Social Issues*, 33, Article 10.1007/s42822-024-00159-4. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-024-00159-4>

Van Hoang, D., & Tung, L. (2024). Environmental concern, perceived marketplace influence, and green purchase behaviour: The moderation role of perceived environmental responsibility. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 44, Article 10.1108/IJSSP-03-2024-0111. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-03-2024-0111>