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Research Article

Investigating the Sensitivity of Generation Z Towards Sustainable Consumption Practices- A Study on Organic Food Consumption in Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

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ABSTRACT

Businesses are shifting away from old-school manufacturing and focusing more on people and sustainability. In India, there's a strong push for industries to go green and adopt sustainable methods, not just for local benefit, but to stand out on the global stage. Organic food has gained a lot of attention due to sustainable living. Generation Z born in 1997 to 2012 are leading the charge in this shift. However, the degree to which young consumers, especially in urban India, are embracing this shift remains uncertain. The study aims to understand the sensitivity of Generation Z from Mumbai metropolitan city towards organic food consumption—looking into their awareness, environment, health concern, social influence etc. To this purpose, study use the mixed methods approach to find out Generation Z purchase intention towards organic product. The findings aim to help businesses align with Gen Z's values, fostering stronger connections and promoting eco-friendly consumption in a fast-changing market.

Keywords: Generation Z, Organic food, sustainable practices

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sustainability is now salient priority in many industries, especially in retail due to its large environmental footprint. Companies are taking a closer look at how they produce goods, package items, manage logistics, and handle waste. With more consumers caring about the planet, the push for eco-friendly practices is growing worldwide, helping build a more sustainable future. As stated in Abdulnour, S. (2023) , World Bank Group. (2022).

The circular economy promotes smart, sustainable living by reusing, recycling, and repurposing goods. It encourages people to make thoughtful choices, helping cut down carbon emissions and grow the economy in a way that's kinder to the planet and future generations.

According to research by Statista. (2023), the estimated revenue from circular economy transactions reached $388 billion in 2022, with projections indicating it will nearly double to $712 billion by 2026. As per G.M, Mubarak & Nilashi, M. (2022) Industry 5.0 technology is crucial for promoting sustainability and a circular economy. It is powered by AI and IoT, supports eco-friendly processes and products. Together, they drive responsible consumption, linking innovation with sustainability to create a regenerative industrial framework. Naturally grown product is one step towards sustainable consumption. As per research 2020-2030F and Organic food market in India. Statista (2023). Organic food market in India valued at USD 1.60 billion in 2024, is projected to grow at a CAGR of 12.1% through 2030. India ranks fifth globally in organic food production, with 2.6 million hectares (1.5% of its agricultural land) dedicated to organic farming. The organic food market in India is growing fast, driven by rising health awareness and interest in eco-friendly farming. Organic farming has expanded massively, reflecting changing consumer habits and a shift toward healthier lifestyles. Generation- Z, born between 1997 and 2012, plays a key role in driving market trends. Their growing health awareness and environmental concerns strongly changing the buying intention. Social media and peer influence also shape their choices, especially around sustainability, food waste, pesticides, and eco-friendly packaging preferences. According to Kamenidou, Stavrianea, and Bara (2020), Trudel (p.85) defines sustainable consumer behaviour as meeting current needs while minimizing environmental harm. Kotler and Keller view consumer behaviour as how people choose, use, and dispose of products. In studying Generation Z in Mumbai,

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this includes the attitudes, motivations, and preferences driving their choices toward organic and sustainable food consumption. As per Q. F., & Mohammad, J. (2020) Sustainable consumption is a vital component of sustainable development and aligns with SDG 12, contributes to sensible spending habit and manufacturing. It goes beyond product choice, involving how goods are acquired, used, and distributed to reduce environmental and social impact. Literature serves as a vital lens through which the interconnectedness of environmental and health concerns with sustainable consumption can be understood. These literary insights contribute to a broader cultural understanding of sustainability, encouraging both individual and collective responsibility in addressing environmental and health-related challenges.

This study explores how Generation Z interacts with sustainable consumption, with a focus on their unique values, choices, and behaviours. Given their growing influence on market trends and environmental impact, the research aims to understand their motivations and intentions toward organic food consumption. The study uses a mixed-methods approach for findings. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, has been strictly followed while highlighting Gen Z's potential to shape a more sustainable consumer culture.

The review tries to address below questions:

1. How do sustainable practices—such as food waste reduction, limited pesticide use, eco-friendly packaging, and sustainable production processes—shape Generation Z's perceptions of organic products?
2. How do health consciousness and environmental concern influence the sustainable consumption amongst Generation Z?
3. How social influence impact Generation Z buying intention towards organic product?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Environmental Concern: United Nations (2017) - SDG 12 focuses on Responsible Consumption and Production, aiming to promote sustainable practices through national policies. SDG encourage environment consciousness. Generation Z (born between 1997 to 2012) as per Wijaya, D. I., & Kokchang, P. (2023) are more environment conscious while purchasing the product. Environmental awareness positively influences Generation Z's sustainable product purchasing decisions. Marinova, D., & Bogueva, D. (2022) Generation Z, the largest cohort, is environmentally conscious and socially active, supporting climate strikes and related sustainability movements. Kim, N., & Lee, K. (2023) and Chekima, B., Chekima, K., & Chekima, K. (2018). Found that consumers' strong interest in environmental and social concerns shapes their perception which promotes eco-friendly buying behaviour. As per Wang, X., & Zhao, S. (2023) it is true that consumer perception could directly influence purchase intention.

H1: Environmental concern positively influence Generation - Z's purchase intention of organic products.

Health consciousness: Consumer associates organic product with healthy choice. Dangi, N.,- Narula, S. A.- (2020) study indicate that, user decisions for organic product are majorly influenced by health consciousness , process and ingredient use. As per Ditlevsen, K., Sandøe, P., & Lassen, J. (2018). and Guru,- Thanki, S., & Thakkar, J. J. (2024) Shoppers associate organic product with sense of purity, natural , less processes ,high nutritional value and health benefit, these attribute creates positive perception in the minds of prospective consumers . Pant, S. C., Saxena, R., Pant, D. K., & Singh, R. (2024) analysed that health consciousness and food safety are key factors motivating consumers to prefer organic products over conventional. options. Varma, N. (2021) Organic food has become a growing sector, valued for its chemical-free production, nutritional benefits, and positive health and environmental impact.

H2: Health - consciousness positively influence Generation – Z purchase intention of organic products.

Social Influence: As per Chaturvedi, P., Kulshreshtha, K., & Tripathi, V. (2020) Media influencer attributes like credibility, knowledge, and appeal play an important role in shaping the Generation -Z attitudes and online buying behaviour. Mukherjee, S. (2023c) mentions that, consumer landscape is evolving with rising incomes, a younger population, increased smartphone use, and social media, driving preferences for healthier, eco-friendly alternatives influenced by social networks. Baroom, H., & Al-Adaileh, R. M. (2020) social networking sites , electronic word of

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mouth publicity (e WOM) and friends and relatives reviews influences purchase intention. Sharifpour, Y. (2018) reviewed that purchase intention and brand association of students are majorly influenced by online communication channel ,social gathering and social sites.

H3: Social influence positively impact Generation Z's purchase intention of organic products.

Sustainable Practices: As per Roy, M. (2020) changing consumption and production patterns is crucial for sustainable development, prompting global policies to encourage eco-friendly consumer behaviours in response to environmental challenges. Saxena, R., -Pant, D. K., & Singh, R. (2024) mention that prospects cognizance towards sustainability and environment concern led them to favour organic products in their purchasing decisions. Asper Khizar- Imran, M. (2021) revels that environmental friendly packaging and sustainable production practices increases the purchase intention of the prospective consumer . As per World Economic Forum (2024) Generation Z prefer the brands who are engaged in sustainable practices , they prioritizes sustainability over brand recognition.

H4: Sustainable practices and perceptions of organic products shows positive relationship.

The research indicates that environmental concerns and health consciousness shape organic food perceptions, influencing sustainable practices and purchase intentions. Social influence reinforces these attitudes, guiding Generation Z in Mumbai toward healthier, sustainable choices.

3. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING:

The Value-Attitude-Behaviour model, introduced Homer, P. M., & Kahle, L. R. (1988) is a framework that explains the complex phenomenon of value, attitude and behaviour. This model has been applied to understand consumer perspectives on organic food, particularly in relation to environmental values and purchasing behaviours. Generation Z in Mumbai, values linked to health and environmental sustainability lead to positive opinion towards organic products, as these are seen as both healthier and more eco-friendly. Social influences, such as peer opinions and social media, further reinforce these attitudes, making organic purchases more desirable. By applying the VAB model, this study can explore how these factors influence Generation Z's intention to purchase organic products, offering valuable insights for marketers and policymakers.

4. PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Mumbai, a rapidly growing urban centre, faces rising environmental and health concerns, making it an ideal context for exploring sustainable consumption, especially in the organic food market. Generation Z, a key consumer group, is largely unexplored in terms of their attitudes toward sustainability. Despite global sustainability trends, little research exists on how this demographic engages with organic product options in Mumbai.

5. RESEARCH GAP:

The existing research on Generation Z's perceptions and purchase intentions regarding organic food primarily focuses on global settings, often overlooking the unique context of the Mumbai Metropolitan Area in India. The VAB model helps explain how health and environmental values shape Generation Z's attitudes and intentions toward organic products in Mumbai. Social influences like peers and media further strengthen these attitudes, offering insights for marketing and sustainability strategies.

6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To investigate the impact of health consciousness and environmental concern on the purchase intention of organic products among Generation Z consumers of Mumbai metropolitan city.
2. To examine the impact of social influence on Generation Z's purchase intention of organic products.
3. To analyse the impact of sustainable practices on Generation Z's perceptions of organic products, focusing on food waste, pesticide exposure, eco-friendly packaging and production process.

7. SOCIAL RELEVANCE:

This study is socially relevant as it offers insights into the sustainable consumption behaviours of Generation Z in Mumbai. By understanding what drives Gen Z toward organic products, it can guide better policies, promote public health, and support sustainable living in line with India's environmental goals.

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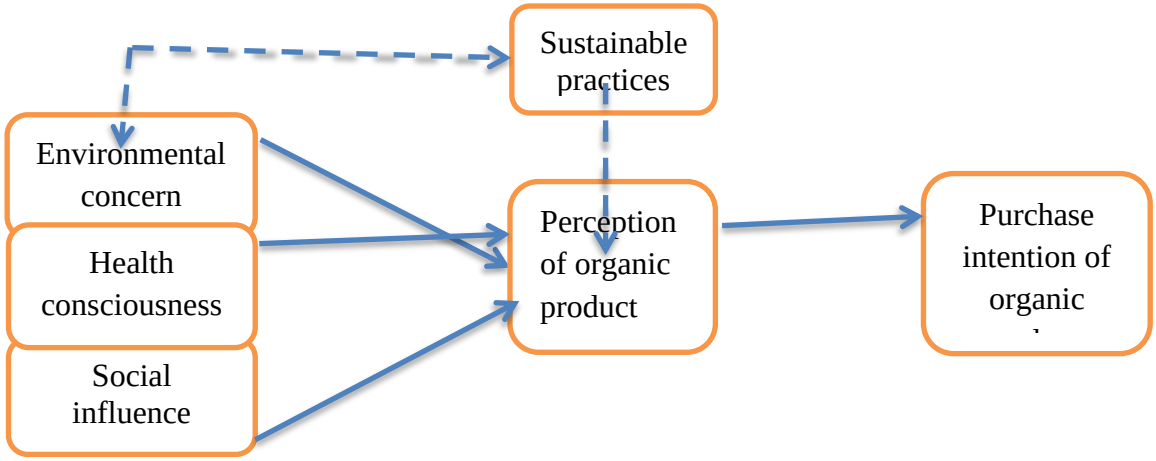
8. VARIABLE UNDER STUDY:

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Health- consciousness	Purchase intention of organic products
Environmental - concern	
Social influence	
Sustainable practices	Perception of organic product

9. CONCEPTUAL MODEL:



10. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research aimed to explore the purchase intention and sensitivity of young, educated Generation Z of Mumbai metropolitan city towards organic products. Study focuses on 384 participants. It includes both quantitative and qualitative methods for a comprehensive analysis. As part of the qualitative research, 25 respondents in-depth personal interviews were conducted using convenience sampling as per Schmidt, P., & Plies, K. (1995).

11. DATA ANALYSIS:

11.1 Overview: Generation Z's buying behaviour is analysed across three hypotheses: impact of health/environmental concerns on organic purchase intent, influence of social factors, and connection between sustainable practices and perceptions of organic products.

11.2 Data Description: Total respondents 384 Generation Z variables Health -consciousness, Environment concern, Social - Influence, Sustainable practices, Purchase intention and Perception was measured on 5-point Likert scale.

Demographics:

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	231	60.2
Female	153	39.8
Total	384	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percent
12 to 17	53	13.8
18 to 22	311	81.0
23 to 27	20	5.2

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Total	384	100.0
Education	Frequency	Percent
High School	16	4.2
Undergraduate	336	87.5
Postgraduate	32	8.3
Total	384	100.0

Interpretation: The sample is predominantly young adults (ages 18-22), with a strong representation of undergraduates (87.5%). Males constitute the majority of the sample (60.2%), and there is a relatively smaller representation of females (39.8%). Most participants have completed or are pursuing an undergraduate education, while high school and postgraduate individuals make up a much smaller portion of the sample.

11.3 Descriptive Statistics:

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environmental Concern	384	4.2771	.48808
Health Consciousness	384	4.1771	.51697
Social Influence	384	3.6948	.58312
Sustainable Practices	384	4.0630	.50552
Purchase Intention	384	3.9010	.57684
Perception Of Organic Products	384	4.1120	.56593

Interpretation: Descriptive statistics show strong concerns for the environment (mean = 4.28) and health (mean = 4.18), indicating their importance to respondents. Sustainable practices (mean = 4.06) also receive solid support, with moderate variability. Purchase intention (mean = 3.90) is lower, suggesting a gap between concern and action. Perception of organic products is positive (mean = 4.11), though opinions vary. Social influence (mean = 3.69) is the least significant factor, indicating that health, environmental, and sustainability concerns have a stronger impact on behaviour than social factors. In summary, environmental and health factors strongly influenced attitudes, but social influence was less significant.

11.4 Reliability Testing:

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Environmental Concern	.772	5
Health Consciousness	.734	5
Social Influence	.795	5
Sustainable Practices	.744	5
Purchase Intention	.755	5
Perception Of Organic Products	.766	5

Interpretation: All constructs have Cronbach's- Alpha values ranging from 0.734 to 0.795, hence good internal consistency and reliability in each scale as any value above 0.7 is acceptable. Since every construct comprises 5 items, the analysis show that measures utilized for environmental -concern, health- consciousness, social influence, sustainable practices, purchase intention, and perception regarding organic products can be very reliable to analyze further.

11.5 Regression Analysis (for Testing Hypotheses):

To test the predictive power of the independent variable(s) on the dependent variable(s), performed regression analysis for each hypothesis.

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H1: Health and Environmental Concern → Purchase Intention

Here stepwise regression analysis used to examine how health consciousness and environmental concern predict purchase - intention.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.491[a]	.241	.239	.50310
2	.610[b]	.372	.369	.45839
a. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Concern				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Concern, Health Consciousness				

Interpretation: Environmental -Concern alone (Model 1) explains 24.1% of the explained variance in the dependent variable, showing a moderate correlation (R = 0.491) as well as a Std. Error of Estimate of 0.50310 with some amount of error involved in predicting it. Health Consciousness added to the model increases its explanatory ability to 37.2% (R = 0.610) accompanied by a Std. Error of Estimate of 0.45839, indicating more precise predictions. This is an improvement that shows Health Consciousness makes a significant improvement in the explanatory power of the model for the dependent variable.

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.418	.227		6.254	**.000**
	Environmental Concern	.581	.053	.491	11.022	**.000**
2	(Constant)	.526	.230		2.288	**.023**
	Environmental Concern	.335	.055	.284	6.055	**.000**
	Health Consciousness	.465	.052	.417	8.896	**.000**
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention						

Interpretation: In Model 2, the constant (B = 0.526, p = 0.023) points out that when both Environmental -Concern and Health- Consciousness are zero, Purchase Intention is 0.526, and this result is statistically significant. The coefficient for Environmental Concern (B = 0.335, Beta = 0.284, t = 6.055, p = 0.000) suggests that a one-unit increase in Environmental Concern results in a 0.335 increase in Purchase Intention, while Health Consciousness (B = 0.465, Beta = 0.417, t = 8.896, p = 0.000) has a 0.465 increase in Purchase Intention. Both predictors are significant.

H2: Social Influence → Purchase Intention

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.539[a]	.291	.289	.48650
a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Influence				

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Interpretation: The regression analysis shows a moderate relationship between Social Influence and the dependent variable, with an R value of 0.539. The R Square of 0.291 indicates that Social Influence explains 29.1% of the variance. The Adjusted R Square is 0.289, suggests that adding more predictors would not remarkably improve the model. The Standard Error of Estimate is 0.48650, pointing the average deviation of observed values from the model's predictions. While predictive, the model could be enhanced with additional variables. On the whole, though this model has some predictive capability, it may possibly be complemented if other variables that would improve its explanatory strength are included in the model.

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.931	0.159		12.109	**0**
	Social Influence	0.533	0.043	0.539	12.508	**0**
a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention						

The coefficients table shows that Social Influence has a significant positive impact on Purchase - Intention. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.533 means that for every unit increase in Social Influence, Purchase Intention increases by 0.533 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.539 indicates a moderately significantly positive relationship. The t-value of 12.508 and p-value of 0.000 confirm the statistical significance of this effect. The intercept is 1.931, meaning Purchase Intention is predicted to be 1.931 when Social Influence is zero. Both values are highly significant, confirming the model's reliability. Overall, the analysis suggests that Social Influence is a strong and significant predictor of Purchase Intention.

H3: Sustainable Practices → Perception of Organic Products

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.610[a]	.372	.371	.44898
a. Predictors: (Constant), Sustainable Practices				

The model summary reveals that Sustainable Practices explain a moderate proportion of the variance in the dependent variable, with a moderate to effective positive relationship (R = 0.610). The R Square value of 0.372 indicates that 37.2% of the variance is explained by Sustainable Practices. The Adjusted R Square of 0.371 is very similar, suggesting that adding more predictors will not remarkably improve the model's fit. The Standard Error of Estimate of 0.44898 reflects the average deviation from observed values. While the model shows moderate explanatory power, other factors likely contribute to the variation.

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.337	.186		7.195	.000

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	Sustainable Practices	.683	.045	.610	15.050	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Perception of Organic Products						

The coefficients table indicates a highly positive and notable connection between Sustainable Practices and Perception of Organic Products. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.683 means that for each one-unit increase in sustainable practices, the perception of organic products increases by 0.683 units. The Beta value of 0.610 shows a moderate to notable positive relationship. With a t-value of 15.050 and a p-value of 0.000, both the intercept and the effect of sustainable practices are statistically significant. These results suggest that sustainability plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of organic products.

11.6 Hypothesis Testing:

Hypotheses	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Sig.
H1: Health Consciousness and Environmental Concern positively influence Generation Z's purchase intention of organic products.	Health consciousness Environmental concern	Purchase Intention of Organic Products	**.000** **.000**
H2: Social Influence positively impact Generation Z's purchase intention of organic products.	Social Influence		**.000**
H3: There is a positive relationship between the implementation of sustainable practices and Generation Z's perceptions of organic products.	Sustainable Practices	Perception of Organic Product	**.000**

Interpretation: All the three hypotheses proposed are supported through the statistical procedure (Regression) because all of them depict an intense inter-relationship of independent with dependent variable.

For H1, Health Consciousness and Environmental Concern significantly influence Generation Z's purchase intention (p-value = 0.000), confirming Hypothesis H1 with a strong positive relationship. We therefore accept Hypothesis H1; and indeed, health awareness as well as environmental concerns are what urge Generation Z towards the intention to purchase organic products.

Similarly, H2 Social Influence positively affects Generation Z's purchase intention for organic products (p-value = 0.000), confirming Hypothesis H2. Peer influence and social trends significantly shape Generation Z's intention to buy organic products.

Last, H3 tests the link between sustainable practices and perception of organic products among Generation Z. With a p-value of 0.000, the relationship is highly indicative and positive, supporting H3. This suggests that as sustainable practices increase, Generation Z's perception of organic products becomes more favourable.

Thus, all hypotheses are accepted since there are significant high positive relations, according to the statistical analysis, among the independent variables: Health -Consciousness, Environmental - Concern, Social - Influence, and Sustainable- Practices with their relevant dependent variables: Purchase Intention and Perception of Organic Products, as such values for p-values were well below the threshold of 0.05.

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12. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS:

The comparative analysis between Generation- Z and parents reveals nuanced perspectives on organic food consumption, driven by distinct motivations and shaped by generational priorities. Generation –Z associate organic food with health, fitness, and a modern, conscious lifestyle, often influenced by digital media, social networks, and environmental triggers like plastic waste and pesticide concerns. Their interest in sustainable practices such as eco-friendly packaging is genuine yet tempered by cost-related hesitations. In contrast, parents adopt a more traditional and protective stance, prioritizing their children's health and safety. Their decisions are guided by trusted sources like doctors, family customs, and perceived product authenticity, with environmental concerns playing a secondary role.

Despite these differences, both groups demonstrate a growing openness to organic consumption when convinced of its health benefits, safety, and credibility. The key takeaway is that while Generation Z are digital-first consumers responding to branding and peer influence, parents are cautious decision-makers valuing trust and long-term wellbeing.

Way forward: To effectively promote organic food, marketers and policymakers must adopt a dual-targeted approach. For students,

13. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The study on Generation- Z sensitivity to sustainable consumption, particularly organic food consumption in Mumbai, has a few limitations. It is geographically restricted, may lack demographic diversity, and relies on self-reported data. Its cross-sectional design misses behavioural changes over time, and it overlooks factors like price, accessibility, cultural influences, and digital media's role in shaping sustainable consumption attitudes and behaviours.

14. CONCLUSION:

This analysis reflects the growth of health awareness, environmental consciousness, and social factors related to sustainability as core driving factors that might alter Generation Z's consumption behaviour in organic products. Therefore, the study has implications for marketers and companies in terms of strategies, which should focus on digital engagement—leveraging influencers, authentic online reviews, access-based consumption ,traceable organic supply chains, augmented reality shopping , and price-sensitive trial options. For parents, campaigns should emphasize credibility through certifications, expert endorsements, and educational outreach about the tangible health benefits of organic choices. Bridging these generational gaps with transparent, relatable messaging can foster a more unified shift toward sustainable consumption.

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