

Towards a Standardized Scale for Measuring Consumer Sustainability Fatigue

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Abstract. In recent years, sustainability has become a central focus for businesses, policymakers, consumers, and researchers. However, the increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices has led to a psychological state known as sustainability fatigue, where consumers feel overwhelmed or disillusioned by the constant demands and messages surrounding sustainability. This fatigue often results in a disengagement from sustainable behaviours.

While green marketing traditionally aims to inspire sustainable behaviour (Akram et al. 2024; Chia-Jung and Pei-Chun 2014; Dang-Van et al. 2023; Phang, Balakrishnan, and Ting 2021), limited research has examined the point at which consumers begin to feel fatigued or disengaged. Some studies have touched on this, such as Rakib, Chang, and Jones (2022), who found that poorly framed messaging can exacerbate fatigue by overwhelming consumers with excessive sustainability-related information. This highlights the importance of strategically crafted messaging in sustainability campaigns to avoid increasing consumer fatigue. Furthermore, Le (2020) identified that emotional factors like nostalgia and self-construal can influence consumers' willingness to continue engaging with sustainable practices, suggesting that emotional connections to sustainability may either enhance or diminish consumer engagement.

This research aims to address a significant gap in the marketing literature by exploring sustainability fatigue. Grounded in sustainable marketing frameworks, the study examines the circumstances under which sustainability efforts may unintentionally decrease consumer engagement. As consumers become more disillusioned and sceptical of sustainability claims, their intentions to make green purchases and their brand loyalty tend to diminish. Businesses risk eroding consumer trust through ineffective communication or perceived greenwashing, while policymakers may inadvertently provoke consumer resistance. Researchers also confront challenges due to the absence of a unified framework and limited empirical data on sustainability fatigue. This study seeks to fill these research gaps by developing and validating a comprehensive measurement tool to evaluate sustainability fatigue among consumers. The research follows a systematic process, which includes item generation through a literature review, content validity testing by experts, a pilot study, and survey data collection. The scale's structure and reliability will be evaluated using both Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses, with final validation linking sustainability fatigue to consumer behaviours.

This study seeks to enhance marketing strategies that foster lasting consumer engagement by gaining deeper insights into sustainability fatigue, ensuring that consumers are not overwhelmed. The development of this measurement tool will yield both theoretical and practical insights, providing researchers with a robust framework for studying sustainability fatigue and assisting businesses and policymakers in designing strategies that foster trust and long-term commitment to sustainability.

Keywords: sustainability fatigue, measurement tool, consumers, sustainable marketing

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