SUSTAINABILITY IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS: A CONSUMER-CENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: In today's business world, supply chain management (SCM) is very important in shaping various industries and economies around the world. When we take a closer look at the complex SCM network, it becomes clear that sustainability is not just a buzzword, but also a key element for the future. Introducing sustainable practices into SCM is becoming imperative due to growing concerns about environmental impact, ethical issues and the overall challenges of globalization. This article presents a new perspective on sustainable supply chain management (SCM) from the consumer's perspective, with particular emphasis on Generation Z. The aim of the study is to understand how consumer choices are influenced by sustainable and ethical practices in SCM. A comprehensive survey targeting a young, educated demographic was conducted to collect data on sustainability, ethical considerations, globalization challenges, technology integration and customer service in global SCM. The results highlight consumers' significant emphasis on environmental responsibility, ethical business practices and the need for transparency in global supply chains. The study's innovative approach takes a detailed look at consumer attitudes towards sustainability and ethics in supply chains, offering valuable perspectives for businesses looking to align with contemporary consumer values. With these results, the study provides practical guidance for companies to adopt sustainable, consumer-centric strategies in global supply chains.

1. INTRODUCTION

With rapid growth, organizations need to take the right steps to keep up with any trends. Companies that want to meet the growing demands of their customers need to learn about their needs and manage the entire supply chain in an appropriate way. The process of shaping customer loyalty is a complex undertaking. This is due to the fact that elements such as sales, invoicing and complaint handling are important in the customer area. At the same time, beyond the customer's direct gaze, there are various operations, procedures, systems, and inventory management. Effective supply chain

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management is one of the key factors influencing the development of customer loyalty to the company (Huczek, 2014).

Global Supply Chain Management (GSCM/SCM) is a comprehensive approach that includes the coordination and supervision of all stages of production and distribution. Starting from the sourcing of raw materials, through the production process, to the final delivery of the product to the end customer, GSCM/SCM takes into account global business aspects. In this context, it is important not only to effectively manage logistics and quality control, but also to consciously adapt to customer expectations and needs, which is becoming a key element of sustainable development in the context of global economic operations (Sanders, 2020; Alkaf *et al.*, 2023).

Today's companies are increasingly seen as being responsible for the environmental, social and economic consequences of both their internal operations and their interactions with suppliers. Businesses are increasingly aware of the role they play in a global context and are striving to make informed decisions that have a positive impact on the world around them. Recognizing these broad areas of responsibility supports the development of sustainable business practices that integrate ecological, social, and economic aspects for sustainable success (Koberg & Longoni, 2019).

As future entrepreneurs or employees with a real impact on supply chain management, together with other Logistics students, we decided to develop a survey and make it available to customers of different nationalities. The purpose of this exploration is to gather valuable insights to better understand consumer attitudes and preferences in the context of global supply chain management. The study addresses key aspects such as sustainability, ethical considerations, customer service factors, and the challenges of globalization and technology integration.

The aim of this study is to synthesize the collected data and draw meaningful conclusions about the perspectives shaping consumer choices in the field of global supply chain management. By understanding these perspectives, companies can refine their strategies by aligning them with consumer values and expectations, promoting a more sustainable and consumer-centric approach in the global supply chain.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Before developing the survey, it was necessary to acquire knowledge about what a supply chain is. Although there is a wealth of information available on the Internet and in libraries, it may be easier to understand this concept thanks to definitions that were formulated several years ago. P.K. Bagchi states that "the supply chain consists of a network of plants and contractors who supply raw materials and components, then process them into semi-finished products and components, then produce the final product from them, and then allow them to be consumed by the final consumer" (Bagachi, 2000). Matrin Christopher, with a similar point of view, wrote that "a supply chain is a network of organizations involved, through links with suppliers and customers, in the various processes and activities that create value in the form of products and services provided to end consumers" (Christopher, 1998). On the other hand, the 'latest' definition to which I refer was proposed by H. Stadtler and Ch. Kilger in 2008, and it reads as follows: 'a network of organisations that are involved, through links up and down the chain, in various processes and activities that create value in the form of products and services intended for the end customer' (Stadtler & Kilger, 2008). Despite the passage of so many years, these definitions are very up-to-date and help to understand what a supply chain is. However, it should not be forgotten that many things change over the years and these definitions need to be broadened to include aspects such as sustainability, ethical considerations, customer service factors, and the challenges of globalization and technology integration.

To develop the survey, we had to select the right group of respondents. Throughout the supply chain, there are many elements worth exploring, and the following illustration shows the groups that were considered.

Figure 1. Supply chain

As customers are very important throughout the supply chain, and their preferences have a real impact on how companies manage it. They are a group whose answers to the questions asked can be analyzed and conclusions can be drawn that can be used as a basis for actions aimed at the development of companies. It should be noted that customers were the easiest group to get answers from.

An interesting aspect was also the determination of the age of the respondents to whom the survey was to be sent. In many online articles, we can read that Generation Z is becoming a new generation of customers. These are people born after 1995, who set new trends with their creativity and make specific purchasing decisions. Generation "Z" – young people who are starting to take their first steps in their professional careers, already have their own budget, and as it turns out, they are quite demanding and critical (Okaz, 2023). Due to the above arguments, Generation Z was the target group for the survey.

Supply chain management is a broad topic, so it's important to pay attention to the most important aspects of supply chain management that customers can pay attention to. Sustainable development is currently a strategic response to growing social, economic and environmental challenges (Ahi & Searcy, 2013; Hong et al., 2018; Signori et al., 2015; Nusraningrum et al., 2023). Its priority is not only the satisfaction of the end consumer, but also taking into account the needs of all participants in the supply chain, paying particular attention to environmental aspects (Panigrahi et al., 2019). In the face of growing public awareness and the urgent need to protect our planet, sustainable development is becoming an indispensable pillar of modern business practices (Kołosowski & Jóźwiak, 2012). Therefore, it is important to get to know customers' opinions on the achievement of sustainable development goals by companies, the reduction of the carbon footprint and environmental protection in general (Grzegory, 2012; Zastempowski & Cyfert, 2023).

Understanding customer feedback on how to respond to delivery inquiries, the availability of information and support, the flexibility to resolve issues, and the quality of shipment status communication helps organizations assess the importance of these aspects throughout the supply chain management process. (Tseng et al., 2019). The resulting assessments will provide valuable insights into prioritizing and optimizing customer service strategies in the global supply chain (Rita et al., 2019).

Customers are increasingly being ethical when shopping due to growing social awareness, easy access to information, increased interest in personal values, the influence of social media, and increased competition in the market. Companies that actively engage in business practices that align with social values can enjoy greater customer loyalty, a positive image, and a better competitive position. Today's consumer prefers to work with companies that not only provide products or services, but also represent ethical values such as equality, sustainability, and social justice. Companies that implement ethical business practices usually incur additional costs, but it is worth noting that business ethics is a real added value for customers, which translates into a potential increase in the profitability and efficiency of the company. Investing in ethical standards not only builds customer trust, but can also contribute to the long-term growth of your business through customer loyalty and

the benefits of a positive company image. As a result, while the initial costs may be higher, the long-term benefits of ethical business practices may outweigh these expenses, resulting in positive outcomes for the company (McMurrian & Matulich, 2016). For these reasons, it is also important to know your preferences regarding ethical aspects.

Sustainability, while undeniably crucial to the future of our planet, is not without its financial challenges. Adopting practices based on sustainable sourcing and production often comes at an additional cost for businesses. (Manguszewski, 2012). Nevertheless, should we be willing to incur these higher expenses in the name of environmental protection and an ethical approach to business? In the face of sustainability challenges, taking on additional costs for companies in favor of sustainable sourcing and manufacturing practices is crucial (Zimon *et al.*, 2020). While the initial expenses may be higher, the long-term benefits include improved reputation, customer loyalty, and a positive environmental impact. Support from consumers willing to pay a little more for products based on sustainable practices not only supports companies' green initiatives, but also shapes the market towards a more ethical and sustainable approach to business. Thus, the integration of sustainable practices into the supply chain is becoming not only a business necessity, but also an essential contribution to creating a better future for both companies and global society (Case, 2023). In this context, theories of sustainable supply chain management have been emerging in recent decades (Khan *et al.*, 2021). This framework is primarily based on product life cycle and operational impacts (Genovese *et al.*, 2017). This includes activities such as design, production, marketing, distribution, communications, financial services and end-consumer support. The activities that make up the value chain may be contained within one company or divided among different companies. Activities in the value chain produce goods or services and may cover a single geographic location or extend over larger areas (Acquaye *et al.*, 2023). It also means designing them to effectively and efficiently manage the flows of materials, information and capital, which in turn are related to the purchase and distribution of products or services, in order to meet the needs of stakeholders and improve the profitability and competitiveness of the company. The design of such a chain focuses on the voluntary integration of social, economic and environmental aspects into business systems, leading to a coordinated supply chain concept enabling the effective management of materials, information and capital related to logistics processes, in order to improve the profitability of flows (Tundys, 2020).

Supply chain transparency is a key element for businesses and consumers, enabling them to fully understand the processes involved in the production and distribution of goods. It is not only information about where and how products are manufactured, but also insight into employment practices and awareness of the route that products take from their place of origin to the final consumer (McGrath & Jonker, 2023). Asking the question about supply chain transparency in the survey contributes to building corporate social responsibility, fosters conscious consumption and can be an element of competitiveness by increasing trust on the part of customers and business partners.

Greenwashing is the manipulative practice of deliberately providing false or misleading information about the environmental aspects of a company's products or operations. The idea is to create the appearance that the company is more committed to protecting the environment than it actually is. It is an unfair form of marketing that aims to build a favorable brand image at the expense of real concern for the environment. In today's world, where sustainability has become an important aspect for many consumers, companies often seek to capitalize on this trend to increase their popularity. However, it is worth being aware of greenwashing practices and critically evaluating companies' declarations to avoid supporting companies that only pretend to care about the environment for purely marketing purposes (Roye, 2023). Customers are becoming more and more aware of greenwashing practices,

noting that not all companies' declarations regarding ecology have a real basis in their actions and it is worth getting to know their opinion on this topic.

Globalization in supply chain management is a dynamic process that opens up global markets for companies, but at the same time brings with it challenges related to cultural differences, international regulations, and logistical challenges. Successfully adapting your supply strategy to global realities requires flexibility, innovation and the ability to effectively manage risk on an international scale. With the growing importance of global supply chains, companies are required to continuously improve practices to meet changing market conditions and remain competitive (Li & Zhou, 2022; Vela, 2023). A survey inquiry about the challenges of globalization in supply chain management is an essential part of researching the customer's perspective. This kind of question is crucial to assess what difficulties are relevant to consumers, which in turn allows companies to better adapt their supply strategies.

Technological integration in supply chain management refers to the introduction of modern information, communication and analytical technologies into processes related to delivery, production, warehousing and customer service. With this approach, the different elements of the supply chain can be coordinated and work together effectively, which contributes to increased efficiency and reduced operating costs (Patel, 2022). Asking about various customer insights about technology integration can provide feedback from consumers, allowing companies to better understand their needs and concerns about technological changes in supply chain management.

To delve deeper into the complexities of sustainable supply chain management and its impact on consumer behavior, the following research questions have been formulated:

- Does the consumer express concern for a total sustainable supply chain management when making purchasing decisions for the end product?
- Is the customer fully aware of the sustainability practices integrated into the supply chain management system?

These research questions aim to explore the level of awareness, concerns, and preferences of consumers regarding sustainability in supply chain practices. By understanding these aspects, businesses can develop strategies that align with consumer values and contribute to both environmental preservation and business success.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve optimal results and enable effective analysis, it was necessary to formulate clear questions. This process was based on a literature review that carefully analysed key issues. These relevant aspects were then put into clear questions that provide a solid basis for further research. Two main types of questions have been adopted: the first is a single-choice question with 'yes' or 'no' options, while the second is a question based on a five-point scale that allows respondents to indicate the importance of each issue (1 - not important, 5 - very important). An important element of this methodology was the involvement of students from the Logistics faculty, which made it possible to obtain data with an international reach. From October 2023 to November 2023, questions were collected via an online survey. This period was a time when researchers gathered information from respondents to gather valuable data and opinions on a variety of topics. The online survey, as a form of data collection, enabled wide reach and participation of people from various places. The 140 responses received, representing geographical diversity, were carefully collected and quantified. This provided a solid basis for drawing important conclusions. The respondents were people from

countries such as Bangladesh, Nigeria, Poland, and Turkey. The responses, which were then appropriately presented in a spreadsheet, were quantitatively analysed to produce meaningful insights. This methodology aims to capture a comprehensive picture of consumer sentiment, providing valuable information to businesses and researchers interested in understanding the dynamics of global supply chain management from a consumer perspective.

4. RESULTS

This analysis takes into account responses from a survey of 140 consumers to understand their attitudes, values and expectations on a range of topics including sustainability, ethical business practices and the challenges inherent in modern consumption. By in-depth examination of the demographic characteristics of respondents and their views on various issues, this report aims to provide valuable insights into prevailing consumer trends, highlighting the growing emphasis on environmental awareness, social responsibility, and the need for transparency and fairness in business operations. The findings offer a comprehensive overview of the profile of the modern consumer, shedding light on the changing paradigms of consumer behavior and the implications for companies seeking to adapt to the changing expectations of an informed and conscientious market.

The age distribution in the survey highlights a clear majority in the 21-25 age range, encompassing 92 respondents, with an additional 48 participants falling between 26-30 years old. The results shows a dominant preference for the 21-25 age group, making up a significant portion of the survey's demographic. This age group's predominance suggests that the opinions and responses may be influenced by the values and perspectives common among younger adults, who are often more receptive to new ideas and changes, including sustainability and technological innovation.

The gender distribution in the survey indicates a fairly balanced representation, with 70 female respondents, 68 male respondents, and 2 individuals identifying as "Others". This balance provides a variety of perspectives, but any inequality can introduce bias in responses to gender concerns or priorities, especially on topics related to diversity in the workplace, work-life balance, and social issues.
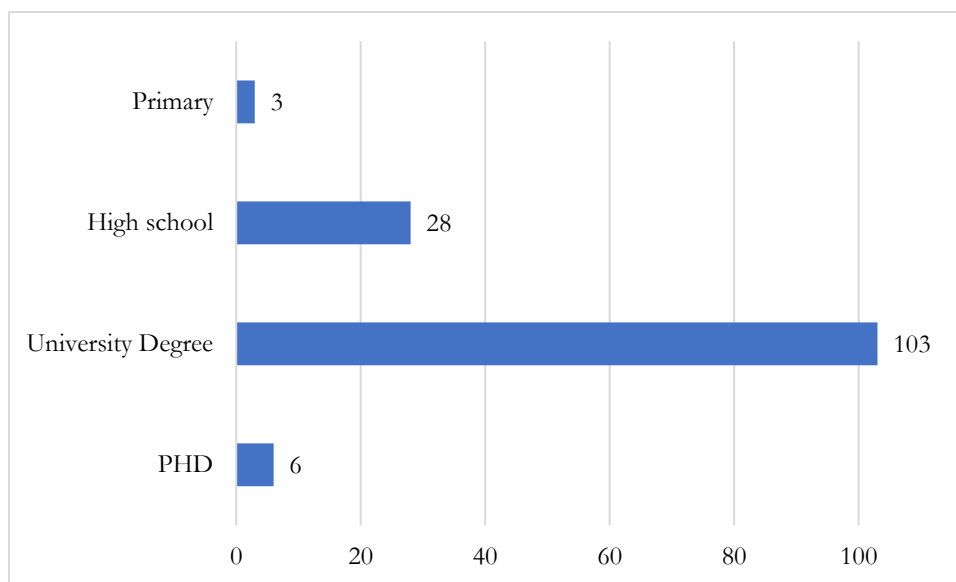

Figure 2. Education level of responders

A significant tilt towards respondents with university degrees indicates a highly educated pool. This educational background may lead to more nuanced and informed responses, particularly on complex issues like environmental policies, sustainability practices, and technological advancements.
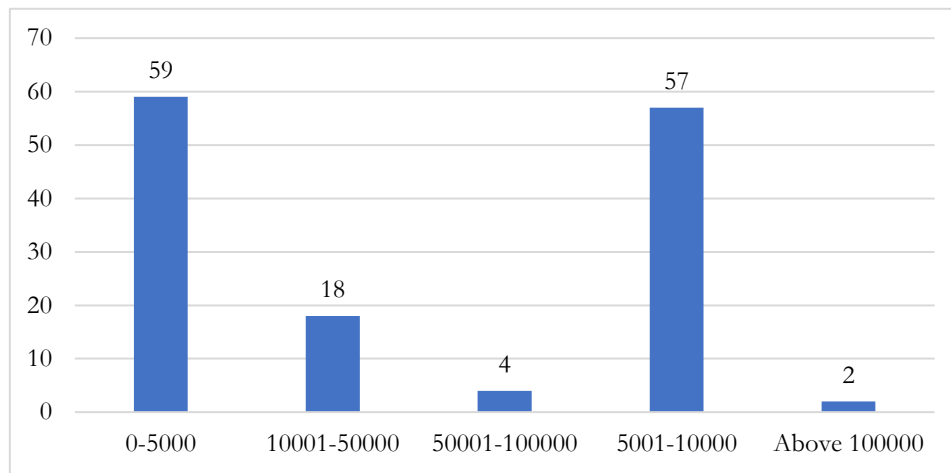

Figure 3. Income of responders

Concentration in lower income brackets, with fewer respondents in higher-income categories, may reflect the economic diversity of participants. This distribution is critical to understanding the affordability, value for money, and financial priorities of sustainable products and technologies.
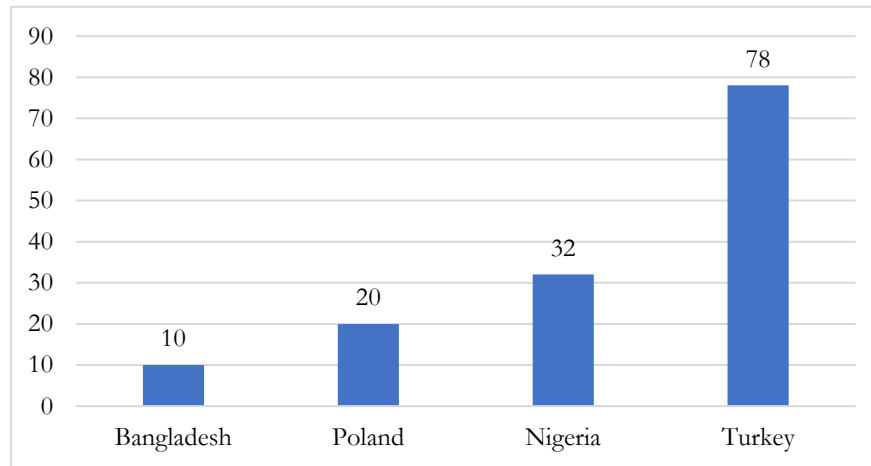

Figure 4 Country of Origin

The responses come from a variety of countries, suggesting that the responses will map a variety of geographic regions. This can affect aspects such as transportation costs, sustainability, and ethical practices, which may vary depending on local conditions.

The findings of the analysis of demographic questions provide a fascinating insight into the diversity of the study participants. The perceived diversity of the sexes contributes to the richness of perspectives, although even small differences require a delicate interpretation of topics of particular gender relevance.

The high level of education of the respondents is a key element, suggesting that the survey data collected is likely the result of an informed and reflective approach. This, in turn, adds depth to topics that require specialized knowledge or critical thinking.

The economic diversity among participants highlights the varying degrees of financial flexibility, which may influence their views on financial issues. The suggestion of a potential demand for cost-effective yet sustainable options points to the importance of taking this perspective into account in further analysis.

Cultural diversity is another important element, requiring careful interpretation due to the cultural differences in the participants' responses. Ultimately, taking into account these diverse demographic aspects provides a comprehensive view of the issues studied, which certainly increases the value and validity of the results obtained.
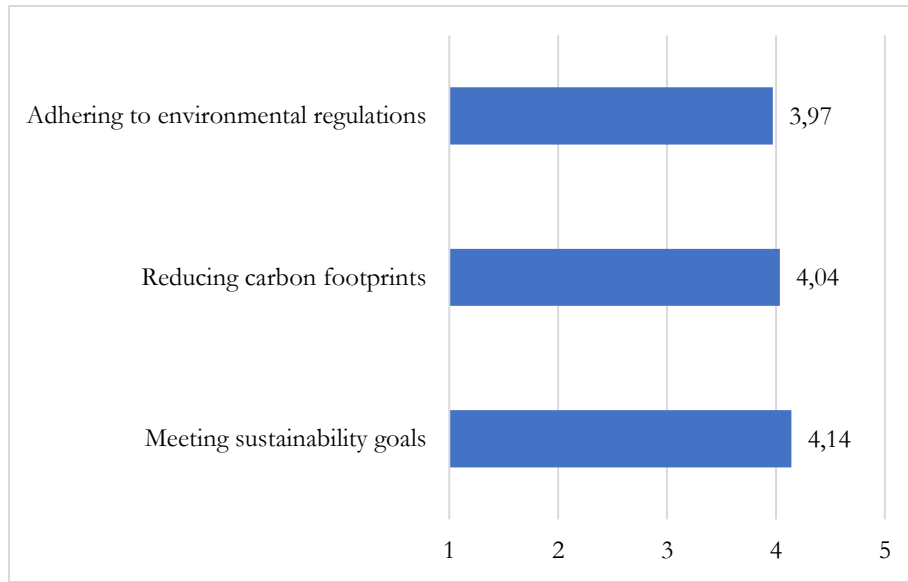

Figure 5. Importance of sustaiability in SCM - average values of all responses

Meeting sustainability goals with a score of 4.14 out of 5 indicates that customers place a high value on whether companies are meeting the sustainability goals. This suggests that it is important to them that the companies they work with operate in a way that contributes to sustainability.

Reducing carbon footprints with an average rating of 4.04 suggests that customers also place importance on the actions companies take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and on actions to reduce their environmental impact in general.

Although the rating for "Environmental Compliance" was slightly lower (3.97), it still indicates that customers consider it important for companies to comply with environmental regulations. This may suggest that customers expect companies to be legally responsible and comply with environmental regulations.

In summary, customers show understanding and support for the actions taken by companies to achieve sustainable development and expect companies to take concrete actions in terms of achieving the SDGs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and complying with environmental regulations. For companies operating in the supply chain, these results indicate the need to incorporate sustainability into their business strategies to meet the expectations of their customers.
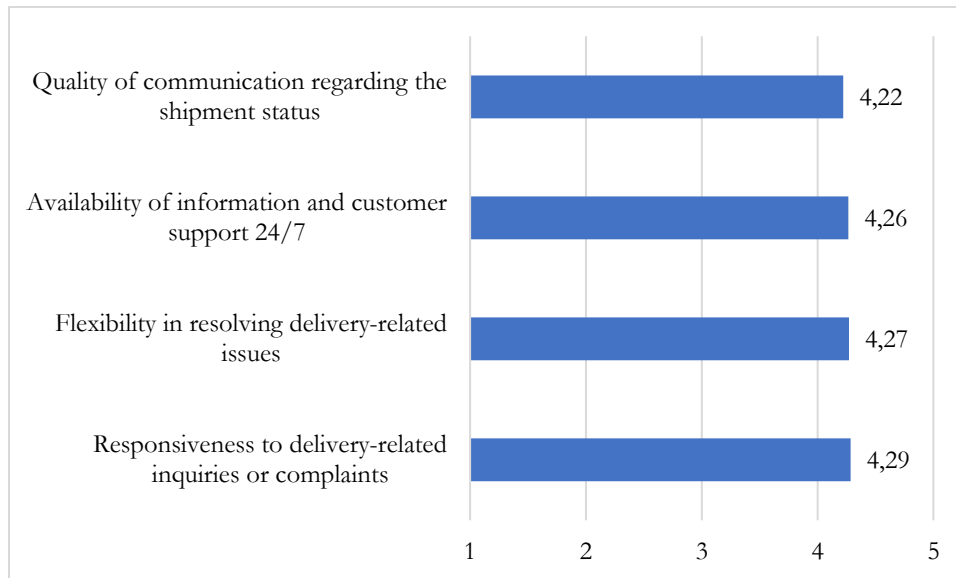
Figure 6. Importance of various costumer service factors - average values of all responses

By analysing customer responses to the question about the importance of various customer service factors, the following conclusions can be drawn:

"Responses to inquiries or complaints related to delivery": A score of 4.29 suggests that customers place great importance on prompt and efficient service in case of questions or complaints related to delivery. It is essential for customers that their problems are resolved in a quick and professional manner.

"24/7 availability of information and customer support": A score of 4.26 indicates that customers would value the availability of customer service around the clock, suggesting that it is important for them to have access to help and information at all times, even outside of standard business hours.

"Flexibility in resolving delivery issues": An average rating of 4.27 suggests that customers expect flexibility in resolving delivery issues. This is important so that the company can respond quickly and effectively to changing customer needs and resolve any delivery issues.

"Shipment status communications": Although the rating for this factor was slightly lower (4.22), it still indicates that customers place a high value on clear and reliable communication regarding the status of their shipment. Customers expect regular updates on the status of their shipments, which helps them track and schedule order pickups.

In conclusion, customers show a need for fast, effective and accessible customer service, especially when it comes to questions and complaints about delivery. Flexibility in problem solving, round-the-clock customer service, and clear communication regarding the status of your shipment are also crucial for customer satisfaction and building loyalty to your business. For companies serving customers, these results suggest the need to focus on streamlining these areas to meet customer expectations and increase customer satisfaction.
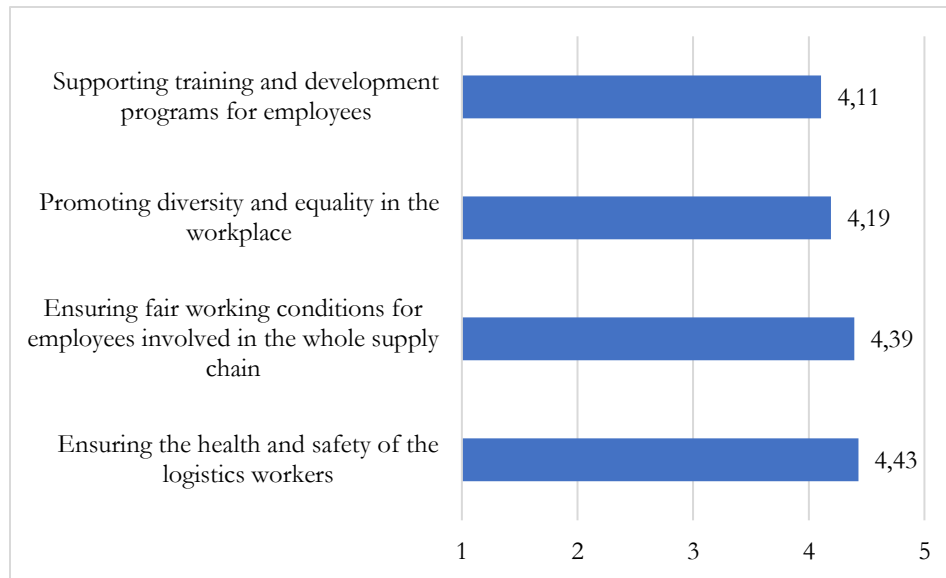
Figure 7. Ethical aspects related to employees in SCM - average values of all responses

An analysis of the survey results indicates that participants who are consumers attach great importance to the ethical aspects related to employees in the global supply chain. Below you will find brief conclusions on each of the aspects:

Ensuring fair working conditions for employees involved in the entire supply chain with an average rating of 4.39 may suggest that consumers want workers at various stages of the supply chain to have fair working conditions. This can mean taking care of proper wages, working hours, and counteracting the exploitation of workers.

Ensuring the health and safety of logistics workers with an average rating of 4.42 suggests that the safety and health of logistics workers is crucial for consumers. Companies should take measures to ensure safe working conditions in transport, warehouses, and other logistics areas.

Supporting employee training and development programs with an average rating of 4.11 indicates that consumers want companies to engage in the professional development of their employees. Training programs can help employees develop skills and advance in their careers.

Promoting diversity and equality in the workplace with an average rating of 4.19, indicates that consumers care about equal treatment of all employees, regardless of gender, origin or other factors. Companies should actively promote diversity and equality in the workplace.

Overall, the results suggest that ethical work practices and sustainability are important to consumers. Companies that take action in these areas can gain the trust and loyalty of customers who place a value on social and ethical values.
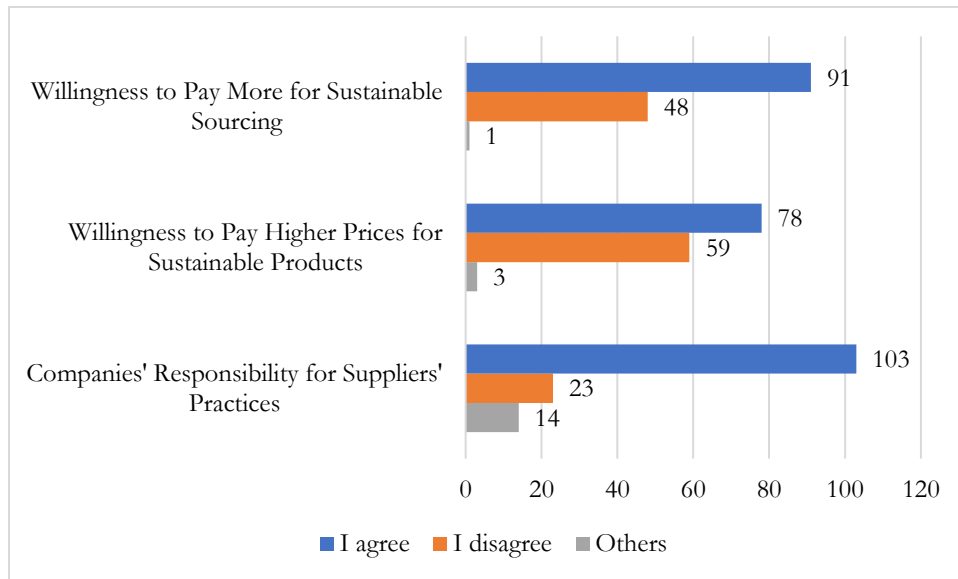
Figure 8. Consumer Sentiments Towards Sustainable Practices in Supply Chains

An analysis of the results shows that the majority of respondents (91) agree that companies should be willing to pay more for sustainable sourcing and production methods, even if it means passing on higher costs to consumers. On the other hand, 48 responders disagree with this statement. The vast majority of respondents support the idea of sustainable business practices. This may suggest a growing public interest in environmental and social issues. Respondents seem to be aware that sustainable methods can generate higher costs for companies. However, despite this, most of them are willing to accept this fact, even if it means higher prices for consumers. There is a group of respondents (48) who disagree with the proposal to pay higher prices for sustainable practices. This may be related to concerns about rising costs of living or economic preferences.

Responses indicating a willingness to pay more for sustainably produced products highlight the trend of conscious consumerism, where environmental impacts influence purchasing decisions. The willingness to pay more for sustainability reflects the growing consumer demand for environmentally friendly products, signaling the market's shift towards green consumerism.

Companies' high responsibility ratings for supplier practices suggest a desire to ensure accountability throughout the supply chain, highlighting the importance of ethical sourcing of raw materials. A strong belief in corporate responsibility is indicative of consumer expectations for transparent and responsible supply chain management, with a focus on ethical sourcing of raw materials.
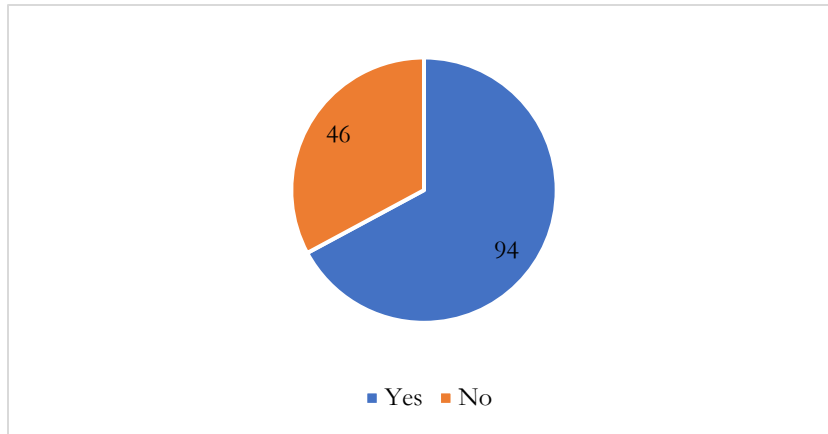
Figure 9. Transparency in the Supply Chain

Responses show that customers prefer transparency in the supply chain, with 94 out of 140 respondents expressing a positive attitude. This suggests a high demand for information on product origin, manufacturing processes and compliance with environmental regulations. Almost twice as many affirmative responses compared to negative responses underline the importance of transparency in building consumer trust. Companies should recognize this trend and consider incorporating clear and accessible information about their supply chain practices into their communication strategies. While the minority of respondents (46) who indicated a lack of interest in transparency should not be ignored, the overall findings highlight the value of promoting transparent supply chain practices to meet customer expectations and foster brand loyalty.
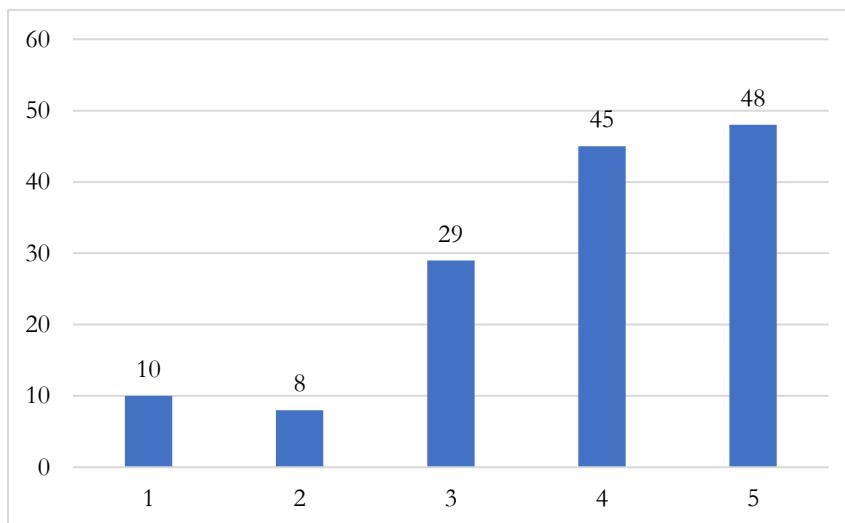

Figure 10. Impact of Environmental Responsibility on Brand Image

Strong agreement on the positive impact of environmental responsibility on brand image suggests that sustainable practices are not only ethically important, but also beneficial to a company's reputation. The link between environmental responsibility and brand image highlights the business value of sustainability, suggesting that green practices can improve brand perception and competitiveness.
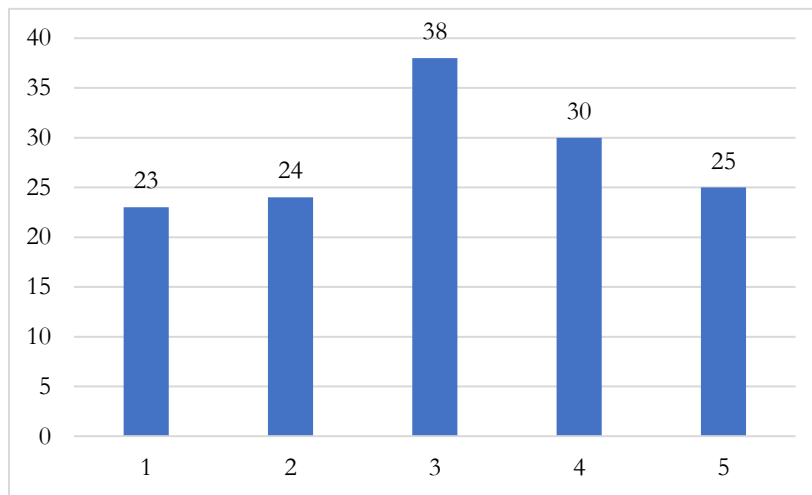
Figure 11. Trust in Environmentally Friendly Companies

Varying levels of trust in companies claiming to be environmentally friendly indicate a critical consumer approach, highlighting the need for verifiable and authentic sustainable practices. Prudent trust reflects the need for real sustainability efforts, indicating a consumer base for whom actions are more important than claims, emphasizing the importance of credibility in environmental initiatives
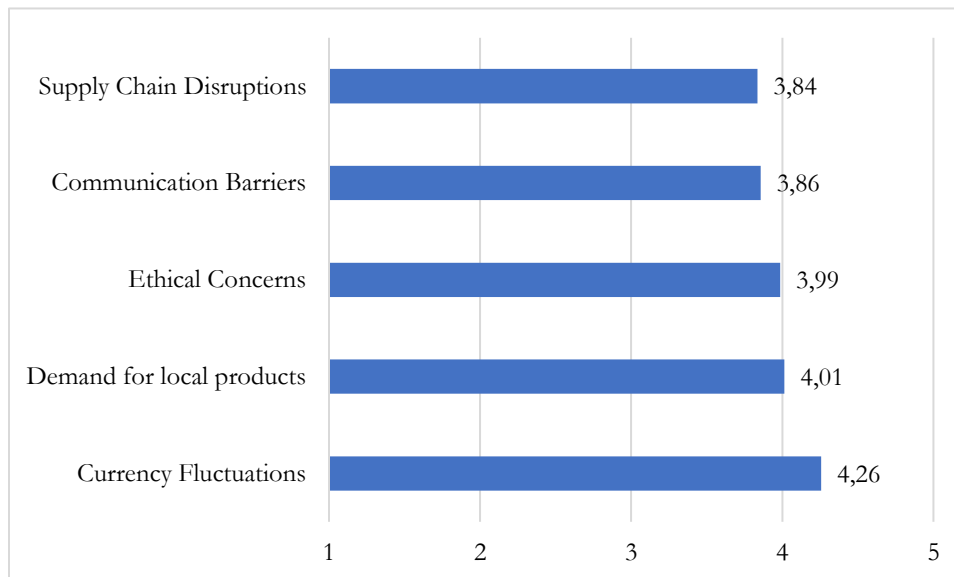

Figure 12. Challenges for the consumer - average values of all responses

Currency fluctuations it is a challenge that received the highest average rating (4.26), indicating that consumers consider it a significant issue. Currency fluctuations can affect product prices, and consumers can be sensitive to changes in the cost of imported goods.

Demand for local products with an average rating of 4.01, demand for local products is also considered important by respondents. This suggests that consumers value products that relate to their local or regional identity. This preference may be due to factors such as support for local businesses, promotion of sustainability, or a desire to own culturally relevant products.

The average score for ethical issues is 3.99, indicating that consumers consider issues such as human rights violations, conflict minerals and waste mismanagement to be quite significant. This suggests a growing awareness and concern among consumers about the ethical aspects of the products they purchase.

With an average rating of 3.86, communication barriers are seen as a moderate challenge. This may indicate that while consumers understand the importance of effective communication in the supply chain, they do not consider it as important as other factors such as currency fluctuations or ethical issues.

Supply chain disruptions received an average rating of 3.84. While consumers are aware of the impact of natural disasters, political instability, and health crises on global supply, they may not see it as urgent as other challenges.

Taken together, the responses indicate that consumers are aware of various challenges in global supply chain management, with currency fluctuations as the most significant concern. Companies operating in these global supply chains should take these consumer preferences and concerns into account when incorporating them into their strategies to build trust, address ethical concerns, and possibly explore options for mitigating the impact of currency fluctuations on prices and supply chain stability.
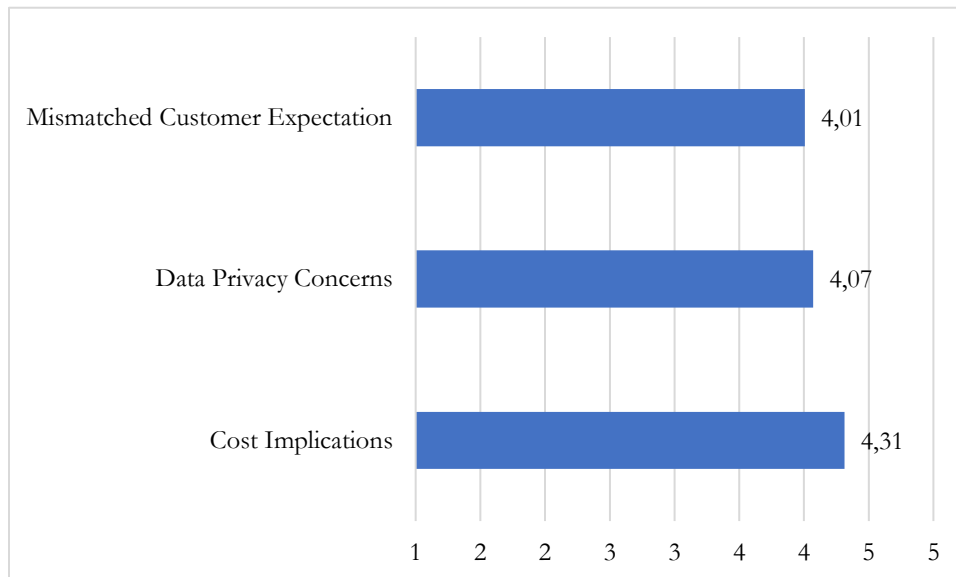

Figure 13. Importance of technology integration in SCM - average values of all responses

The highest-rated challenge according to respondents is the cost implications of technology integration, which scored an average of 4.31. This suggests that consumers are particularly sensitive to how technology adoption may affect the overall cost structure, and are likely concerned about potential increases in product prices or fees passed on to them.

The second highest-rated challenge is data protection concerns, with an average of 4.07. This means that consumers are paying attention to how their personal data is collected and shared in the context of supply chain technology. Ensuring robust data protection measures and transparent practices can be crucial for companies seeking to build customer trust.

Although the rating is slightly lower, the challenge of misaligning customer expectations is still considered relevant by respondents. This indicates that consumers are worried about potential discrepancies between their expectations and the actual functioning of technologically integrated processes, such as product lifespan or the returns process.

In conclusion, understanding and effectively addressing these consumer concerns can be crucial for companies planning to effectively integrate technology into their supply chain management processes while maintaining positive customer relationships.

4.1   Observations

Bangladesh: The respondents show clear unanimity at the upper end of the scale (4-5) on selected questions, indicating a high level of concern for environmental issues, responsiveness to delivery inquiries, and the health and safety of logistics workers. This may suggest greater awareness or prioritization of these issues among Bangladeshi respondents.

Nigeria: Respondents in Nigeria also rate environmental protection and workers' health and safety highly but are slightly less unanimous compared to Bangladesh, where average ratings typically range from 4 to 4.8. This still indicates a strong focus on these issues, but with a little more variation in responses.

Poland: Polish respondents generally show lower average ratings (around 3.5 to 3.75) on the issues surveyed, particularly regarding the health and safety of logistics workers and support for employee training programs. This may reflect different priorities or perceptions of these issues compared to respondents from Bangladesh and Nigeria.

Turkey: The ratings of respondents from Turkey are between those of respondents from Nigeria and Polish, and the average is usually around 3.9-4.4. This suggests a moderate level of interest in this issue, higher than in Poland, but not as unanimous as in Bangladesh.

The visible nationality-response relationships highlight how cultural, social, and perhaps economic factors specific to respondents' countries of origin can influence their outlook on sustainability, workplace ethics, and responsiveness to customer service. For example, the strong emphasis that Bangladeshi respondents placed on almost all issues may have reflected a cultural or societal tendency towards collective action and social responsibility. In contrast, more diverse responses from Nigeria and Turkey and a generally lower level of concern from Polish may indicate different national priorities or levels of awareness on these issues.

5.   CONCLUSION

A comprehensive analysis of responses to a survey of 140 consumers reveals insightful trends and priorities that include demographic characteristics, environmental awareness, ethical considerations, and challenges and expectations associated with modern consumption and business practices.

Demographics and consumer profile - demographic analysis indicates a young, educated cohort, mainly aged 21–25 years, with a balanced gender distribution and differentiated income levels. This profile suggests a demographic that is likely to be tech-savvy, value-oriented, and potentially more open to new ideas and changes, especially regarding sustainability and innovation. A high level of education among respondents indicates an audience capable of making informed decisions and thinking critically about complex issues.

Environmental awareness and sustainability - a strong environmental awareness is emerging as a central theme, with a significant focus on the Sustainable Development Goals, reducing the carbon footprint and complying with environmental regulations. Consumers clearly have a preference for sustainable practices, pointing to the widespread recognition of climate change and a serious commitment to mitigating environmental impacts. This environmental awareness extends to expectations of corporate responsibility, with a noticeable demand for companies to ensure ethical practices in their supply chains and to adopt transparent, sustainable sourcing methods.

Ethical considerations and social responsibility - the survey highlights a clear concern for ethical considerations, including fair working conditions, employee health and safety, and diversity and equality in the workplace. Consumers have a strong preference for companies that prioritize ethical integrity and social responsibility, suggesting that these factors significantly influence purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. This ethical stance highlights a broader societal shift toward more humane and equitable business practices, reflecting a consumer base that values morality and justice in corporate operations.

Challenges and expectations in consumption - consumers are expressing specific expectations and concerns about the challenges of modern consumption, including the responsiveness and flexibility of customer service, the importance of data privacy, and the complexity of global supply chains. The demand for transparency, both in terms of product provenance and company practices, highlights a critical consumer approach that values authenticity and verifiable sustainability efforts. In addition, the mixed reactions to the willingness to pay more for sustainable products and the cost implications of maintaining the technology reflect a diverse view that balances ethical priorities with financial realities.

Overall, the study paints a picture of a consumer base deeply invested in sustainability, ethical practices, and social responsibility. Not only are these consumers aware of the environmental and ethical implications of their purchasing decisions, but they are also actively looking for companies that align with their values. They demand transparency, accountability and honesty from companies, indicating a shift towards more conscious consumption. The findings of the survey highlight the importance of companies adapting to changing consumer expectations, highlighting the need for sustainable, ethical and transparent business practices to meet the demands of the modern, informed consumer.

This comprehensive analysis reveals a dynamic relationship between consumer values and market expectations, suggesting that companies that prioritize sustainability, ethical practices, and transparent communication are likely to be more connected to today's consumers.

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