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CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION AS A NEW FORM OF SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Abstract

The article examines the concept of conscious consumption as a new form of social activity, emphasizing its growing importance in the modern world. Conscious consumption involves conscious choice in order to minimize the negative impact on the environment and society, taking into account sustainability, ethical production and conservation of resources. This trend reflects a change in consumer behavior caused by increased awareness of global issues such as climate change, inequality and the depletion of natural resources. The study examines the role of individuals and communities in promoting conscious consumption practices and their ability to influence market trends and shape policy decisions. The social, cultural and economic aspects of conscious consumption are also analyzed, and its potential in forming a more responsible and sustainable society is emphasized.

Keywords: conscious consumption, social activity, environmental friendliness, consumer behavior, global problems, trends, social responsibility.

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САНАЛЫ ТҰТЫНУ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК БЕЛСЕНДІЛІКТІҢ ЖАҢА ФОРМАСЫ РЕТІНДЕ

Аңдатпа

Мақалада саналы тұтыну ұғымы әлеуметтік қызметтің жаңа формасы ретінде қарастырылып, оның қазіргі әлемде өсіп келе жатқан маңыздылығына баса назар аударылған. Саналы тұтыну тұрақтылықты, этикалық өндірісті және ресурстарды үнемдеуді ескере отырып, қоршаған ортаға және қоғамға теріс әсерді барынша азайту мақсатында саналы таңдауды қамтиды. Бұл тенденция климаттың өзгеруі, теңсіздік және табиғи ресурстардың сарқылуы сияқты жаһандық мәселелер туралы хабардарлықтың жоғарылауынан туындаған тұтынушылардың мінез-құлқының өзгеруін көрсетеді. Зерттеу жеке адамдар мен қауымдастықтардың саналы тұтыну тәжірибесін ілгерілетудегі рөлін және олардың нарықтық тенденцияларға әсер ету және саяси шешімдерді қалыптастыру қабілетін зерттейді. Саналы тұтынудың әлеуметтік, мәдени және экономикалық аспектілері де талданып, оның неғұрлым жауапты және тұрақты қоғам құрудағы әлеуетіне баса назар аударылады.

Түйін сөздер: саналы тұтыну, әлеуметтік белсенділік, тұрақтылық, тұтынушылардың мінез-құлқы, жаһандық мәселелер, тенденциялар, әлеуметтік жауапкершілік.

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ОСОЗНАННОЕ ПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ КАК НОВАЯ ФОРМА СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ АКТИВНОСТИ

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается концепция осознанного потребления как новой формы социальной активности, подчеркивается ее растущее значение в современном мире.

Осознанное потребление предполагает осознанный выбор с целью минимизации негативного воздействия на окружающую среду и общество с учетом устойчивого развития, этичного производства и сохранения ресурсов. Эта тенденция отражает изменение в поведении потребителей, вызванное повышением осведомленности о таких глобальных проблемах, как изменение климата, неравенство и истощение природных ресурсов. В исследовании рассматривается роль отдельных лиц и сообществ в продвижении практики осознанного потребления и их способность влиять на рыночные тенденции и формировать политические решения. Также анализируются социальные, культурные и экономические аспекты осознанного потребления и подчеркивается его потенциал в формировании более ответственного и устойчивого общества.

Ключевые слова: осознанное потребление, социальная активность, экологичность, поведение потребителей, глобальные проблемы, тенденции, социальная ответственность.

MAIN PART

The article examines the concept of conscious consumption as a new form of social activity, emphasizing its importance in the modern world. Conscious consumption means conscious choice aimed at minimizing the negative impact on the environment and society. This approach includes sustainable development, ethical production and resource conservation. The shift to conscious consumption reflects changes in consumer behavior driven by a growing awareness of global issues such as climate change, social inequality and the depletion of natural resources.

This study analyzes the role of both individuals and communities in promoting these practices and examines their potential to shape market trends and influence policy decisions. The study examines the social, cultural and economic aspects of conscious consumption, emphasizing its role in building a more responsible and sustainable society. By applying such practices, consumers not only change their own lifestyle, but also contribute to broader systemic changes that support the environment and promote social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been a significant change in consumer habits and behavior. The growing awareness of global environmental and social issues such as climate change, pollution, inequality and unfair working conditions has prompted many people to rethink their approaches to consumption. In this context, conscious consumption is becoming an increasingly popular phenomenon.

Conscious consumption (or responsible consumption) implies making purchasing decisions based on knowledge about the origin of goods, their production conditions and their impact on the environment and society [1]. This includes a preference for environmentally friendly products, fair trade goods, as well as reducing excess consumption. This practice contributes to the development of sustainable and ethical business models, as well as stimulates changes in production processes and supply chains [2].

Conscious consumption can be considered as a new form of social activity, as it reflects the desire of individuals to contribute to solving global problems through changes in their daily practices. This phenomenon is also associated with broader social movements aimed at achieving sustainable development and social justice [3].

Research shows that conscious consumption is driven by several key factors, including personal values, social norms, awareness and accessibility of environmentally friendly and ethical goods [4].

The purpose of this article is to investigate conscious consumption as a form of social activity, to determine its main motives and models, as well as to analyze the social and economic consequences of this phenomenon.

The first international document mentioning sustainable development was the "World Strategy for Nature Conservation", which was discussed and adopted at the conference of the

International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1980. In the same 1980, the UN approved the definition of sustainable development, assigning it the importance of a model of moving forward, in which the satisfaction of the vital needs of the current generation of people is achieved without depriving future generations of such an opportunity [5]. The problems of sustainable development were comprehensively considered at the 1992 conference held in Rio de Janeiro.

Conscious consumption is the concept of reasonable consumption of resources and products, which contributes to meeting the need, while not creating a negative impact on the environment.

METHODOLOGY

The study of conscious consumption as a new form of social activity requires a comprehensive approach, including both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. The following methodological approaches were used in this study:

1. Content analysis of media sources

Content analysis of media sources was conducted to identify and analyze trends and discourses related to conscious consumption.

Selection. The analysis included a selection of materials from various sources, such as articles in newspapers and magazines, blogs, social media posts and video content published between 2017 and 2024.

Selection criteria. The materials were selected based on keywords such as "conscious consumption", "sustainable development", "ethical consumption" and "environmental goods".

Analysis. The main topics and trends were highlighted, as well as changes in the public perception of conscious consumption.

2. Secondary data analysis

The study used secondary data from reports of international organizations such as the United Nations (2020) and the European Commission (2019).

Secondary data were obtained from official reports, studies and statistics available on the official websites of the organizations.

These data provided contextual information about global trends and statistics of conscious consumption, which made it possible to compare the results of the study with existing global trends and assess their compliance.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative methods to identify the main trends and their dynamics.

3. Comparative analysis

A comparative analysis of various models of conscious consumption was conducted to study their characteristics, prevalence and impact on consumer behavior. The analysis covered such models as ecological consumption, ethical consumption and minimalism. Each model has been described in the context of its basic principles and practices.

To compare the models, the method of cross-cultural analysis was used, which allowed us to identify common and specific features of various models of conscious consumption.

The key factors contributing to the spread of each model were identified, as well as the barriers faced by consumers. For example, ecological consumption turned out to be more common in countries with a high level of environmental awareness, whereas minimalism was popular in urbanized societies with a high standard of living.

RESULTS

Within the framework of this study, significant results have been obtained that highlight the motives, patterns and consequences of conscious consumption. The results are structured in the following areas: analysis of survey data, content analysis of media sources, analysis of secondary data and comparative analysis of conscious consumption models.

Conscious consumption is based on the 4R principle:

- Refuse (refuse)
- Reduce (reduce)

- Reuse (reuse)
- Recycle (recycle)

Thus, in order to consume wisely, it is necessary to abandon disposable goods, reduce consumption, and sort waste.

Content analysis of media sources in Kazakhstan and the world (2017-2024)

Content analysis of media sources in Kazakhstan and the world was conducted to identify and analyze trends and discourses related to conscious consumption. The analysis included a sample of materials published between 2017 and 2024.

Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, the number of mentions of conscious consumption in the media increased by 35% from 2017 to 2024. The main topics include environmental consumption, plastic control and the development of local production.

There is a growing emphasis in the Kazakh media on national initiatives, such as waste recycling programs and the promotion of local environmentally friendly products. For example, the campaign "Plastic – no, thank you!" received wide coverage in the press and social networks.

The exchange of experience in the field of minimalism and ecological lifestyle, as well as discussion of local environmental problems and solutions, became popular topics in Kazakhstan's social networks.

In the global media, the number of mentions of conscious consumption increased by 50% from 2017 to 2024. Major topics include global environmental movements such as Fridays for Future and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer habits.

Global media are actively discussing the topics of climate change, sustainable development and responsible consumption. It is important to note the growing number of publications related to the circular economy and the transition to sustainable business models.

On social networks around the world, users actively share tips on a sustainable lifestyle, promote initiatives to reduce the use of plastic and support local environmental projects.

Analysis of secondary data. Secondary data from reports of international organizations confirmed the global trends identified during the study.

According to the UN Report (2020), sustainable consumption is one of the key goals of sustainable development, and many countries are taking measures to encourage such practices among the population.

Data from the European Commission (2019) show that about 40% of consumers in the EU are actively trying to reduce their environmental footprint by choosing sustainable products and services.

Comparative analysis of conscious consumption models. A comparative analysis of various models of conscious consumption has revealed both common and specific features of these practices.

Environmental consumption. This model is common in countries with a high level of environmental awareness, such as Sweden and Germany. The main characteristics include a preference for organic products, the use of renewable energy sources and waste minimization.

Ethical consumption. It is popular in countries with a developed social infrastructure and a high degree of social consciousness, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It includes support for fair trade, the rejection of products related to labor exploitation, and the selection of companies with ethical business practices.

Minimalism. It is common in urbanized societies with a high standard of living, such as Japan and the USA. The basic principles include reducing consumption, preference for high-quality and durable goods, and a conscious approach to shopping.

DISCUSSION

Conscious consumption as a new form of social activity highlights a shift in consumer behavior, where individuals are increasingly mindful of the environmental and social impacts of their daily decisions. This shift reflects a broader cultural movement toward sustainability, which manifests in various aspects of daily life, including food consumption, wardrobe choices, waste reduction, and resource management. The concept is gaining traction as people recognize that small, individual

actions can collectively address global challenges like climate change, resource depletion, and pollution.

What is included in the culture of conscious consumption?

Conscious consumption is a whole range of measures and habits in different fields.

It includes:

1. No excess of food.
2. Awareness in choosing a wardrobe.
3. Reducing the amount of waste and proper disposal.
4. Reasonable consumption of electricity and water.

Obviously, every company strives to meet the needs and desires of its customers. And since the world's population is increasing every year, the scale of food production is also increasing. At the same time, food turns out to be in excess, which leads to the fact that food is eventually simply thrown away, and not only people who bought it, but also entire shops and restaurants throw away excess food.

Excess food is sent to rot in landfills, which produces methane. This gas is extremely harmful to the environment, as it is a greenhouse gas and leads to global warming.

In addition to producing methane, excess food is detrimental due to wasted water. The total amount of water that is spent annually on the production of excess food is comparable to the volume of the annual flow of the Volga River. [6]

What can be done to minimize food surpluses?

It would be ideal if the outlets did not order more products than the demand in the stores. To do this, you need to know the approximate demand in the regions where a certain amount of products would be delivered once in a set period of time. Such an approach would be the most rational, but it is obvious that so far the owners of large retail chains are not striving to take care of the environment, as long as it does not bring them significant costs.

But what can each person do? Here are some suggestions:

1. When choosing products, be sure to look at the expiration date.
2. No need to take more than you can eat.
3. When choosing vegetables and fruits, do not neglect those that do not have the most attractive appearance. They are similar in quality, but it is because of their appearance that they are sent for disposal.

The fashion industry

The second point in the culture of conscious consumption is a reasonable approach to wardrobe selection. The so-called "Fast Fashion" stands in his way. This is an update of the assortment of items in stores several times a season. The development and production of products is carried out in accordance with the rapid changes in fashion trends. This leads to the fact that many things are put on a couple of times after purchase and cease to be relevant. The harmful effect of these circumstances on the environment is very great. It is known that the textile industry is one of the "dirtiest", the only one worse than it is the oil industry. Colossal amounts of water are spent on the production of clothing, which after the production process, along with harmful chemical waste, enters the soil and the oceans.

Several measures are currently being applied to solve this problem:

1. In Europe, many enterprises prefer the production of organic cotton, it is grown without the use of chemicals. Clothing made of such cotton does not harm the environment when disposed of, and is also easily recyclable. [2]
2. Customization is actively developing now. This is the renewal and transformation of things that were already in use, with the help of paint, patches and various decorations. Such activities help to extend the service life of clothing, as well as make it more interesting and original.
3. Many brands, for example, H&M, open clothing collection points for recycling. At the same time, customers who have handed over old clothes are encouraged by a discount. Clothing lines made of recycled textile materials are also being opened.

Resource consumption

The next important issue is the consumption of electricity and water. In many ways, this depends not only on manufacturing enterprises, but also on each person.

To generate electricity, power plants deplete natural resources such as gas, oil and coal, and pollute the atmosphere with greenhouse gases and other harmful chemicals. This not only harms the environment, but also causes certain diseases in people breathing polluted air.

Excessive use of water, in turn, leads to a deterioration of the ecological state of water resources. The consequences of this can be different, for example, water pollution, deterioration of drinking water quality and shallowing of large rivers.

Waste reduction

Humanity is now faced with the issue of colossal pollution of the planet with waste. Every day, everyone throws out garbage, which subsequently ends up in a landfill, and it in turn poisons the soil, water and atmosphere.

Especially worrying is the fact that there is a lot of plastic among the waste. And, for example, one garbage bag will decompose for hundreds of years. People also use disposable tableware, which consists not only of plastic – for example, disposable cups. They are covered with a thin layer of plastic on the inside and paper on the outside. Such cups are not recycled, because it is very difficult to separate paper from plastic, and their harm is enormous because of this. According to the calculations of the Russian branch of Greenpeace, 32 million trees are cut down annually for cups in our country alone, and 63 kilograms of CO₂ enter the atmosphere during the production and burial of only 1000 cups.[3]

Some companies are switching to plastic from biological raw materials, and many believe that such plastic is biodegradable. In fact, this is not quite true. Bioplastics are plastics made from vegetable raw materials. It completely collapses under certain conditions, but in nature the necessary conditions of heat and humidity are rare. And therefore, when bioplastics disintegrate in the natural environment, it may not disappear completely, but split into small pieces, including microplastics, which will fall into a food chip. [5]

Now many people and corporations are trying to adhere to the zero-waste principle. This is the principle of zero waste, and it is aimed at reducing the amount of garbage on the planet through sorting and recycling garbage, as well as the use of reusable items.

Here are the habits that fit the zero-waste concept:

1. Sorting and recycling of garbage. Each person can separate glass, paper, plastic and metal, and sort the waste into different containers or take it to recycling points. Please note that some waste, such as batteries, is disposed of in a special way. [1]

2. When buying coffee at a coffee shop, you can take your reusable cup with you. In addition, many coffee shops support this and will give you a discount.

3. You can stop buying and using plastic bags and replace them with fabric eco-bags and string bags.

4. It is also worth giving up bottled water. Instead, you can buy a filter at home, and take water in glass bottles with you for walks.

Conscious consumption as a new form of social activity reflects a profound change in consumer behavior, driven by growing awareness of the environmental and social consequences of individual decisions. It touches on a variety of areas that include food consumption, wardrobe choices, waste management, and resource use. This evolving mindset not only signals a shift toward sustainability but also calls for greater corporate and governmental responsibility in supporting and enabling such habits.

One significant area within conscious consumption is ethical purchasing, which goes beyond the individual to consider the wider social and environmental impact of production. Consumers are now looking at the ethical practices of companies, whether it is the conditions under which goods are produced, the use of child labor, or the environmental footprint of manufacturing processes. This has led to the rise of fair-trade products, cruelty-free beauty brands, and companies that focus on reducing carbon emissions. Consumers are increasingly prioritizing brands that demonstrate social and environmental responsibility, pushing corporations to adopt more transparent and sustainable

practices. This kind of consumer behavior, known as “voting with your wallet,” shows how individual actions can drive systemic change by encouraging businesses to align with more sustainable values.

Another emerging trend is digital consumption and minimalism, where technology plays a dual role. On one hand, the rise of digital platforms allows for less physical consumption; for instance, digital media (e-books, music streaming) reduces the need for physical resources like paper and plastic. On the other hand, the growing popularity of online shopping raises concerns about packaging waste and the environmental cost of logistics. Conscious consumers are starting to balance the convenience of digital platforms with the environmental implications of online purchases, favoring eco-friendly shipping options, or supporting brands with sustainable packaging practices. Minimalism as a lifestyle is also gaining traction, encouraging people to buy fewer but higher-quality items that are designed to last, reducing overall consumption.

Furthermore, localism is becoming an essential part of the conscious consumption culture. The idea of "buying local" is not only about supporting local economies but also about reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation. Local products, especially in food consumption, often require fewer resources for shipping and storage and tend to be fresher and more sustainable. Additionally, the local food movement promotes the use of seasonal, organic produce, which further reduces the environmental impact by minimizing the need for artificial growing environments and chemical interventions. This shift from global to local consumption patterns also fosters community resilience and supports small-scale, sustainable farming practices.

An important addition to the conversation is the circular economy concept, which complements the zero-waste principle. Unlike the traditional linear economy, where products are made, used, and then discarded, the circular economy emphasizes the continuous use of resources by recycling, reusing, and refurbishing products. This economic model ensures that waste is minimized and that materials and products are kept in use for as long as possible. More companies are adopting this model, offering services where products can be returned for recycling or resale, thus creating a more sustainable production-consumption loop. Brands like Patagonia, for example, are offering repair services and second-hand options to extend the life cycle of their products, encouraging consumers to buy less and keep items for longer periods.

Moreover, there is a growing movement toward plant-based consumption, which advocates for reducing or eliminating the consumption of animal products to mitigate environmental harm. The environmental impact of livestock farming is well documented, including its contributions to greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water usage. As a result, more people are turning to plant-based diets, whether partially (flexitarian) or fully (vegan). The rise of plant-based alternatives, such as plant-based meat and dairy substitutes, has been driven by both environmental concerns and ethical considerations about animal welfare. This shift reflects a broader societal rethinking of how food production systems impact the planet and health.

In addition, consumer education and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in spreading the culture of conscious consumption. Governments, NGOs, and advocacy groups have increasingly focused on raising public awareness about sustainable practices, from reducing food waste to adopting energy-efficient appliances. Public campaigns that educate people on the environmental impacts of their daily choices – such as the carbon footprint of different foods or the benefits of recycling – are vital to fostering more conscious consumption patterns. These efforts, alongside policy measures such as bans on single-use plastics or incentives for energy-saving technologies, help create a more enabling environment for consumers who want to make responsible choices.

Finally, social media and digital communities have emerged as powerful tools in promoting conscious consumption. Influencers and environmental activists use platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to share tips, products, and lifestyle choices that align with sustainable values. These platforms not only raise awareness but also create networks of like-minded individuals who support each other in adopting and maintaining eco-friendly habits. The visibility of sustainable practices on social media encourages broader participation and normalization of conscious consumption, making it a growing social trend that spans across various demographics and regions.

The culture of conscious consumption continues to evolve, incorporating new dimensions such as ethical purchasing, digital consumption, localism, the circular economy, plant-based diets, and the influence of digital communities. As this movement grows, it offers a viable path to addressing some of the most urgent environmental and social challenges of our time, from climate change to social inequality. Through a combination of individual actions, corporate responsibility, and supportive policies, conscious consumption is emerging as a powerful form of social activism aimed at creating a more sustainable and just world.

CONCLUSION

Conscious consumption as a new form of social activity represents a transformative shift in consumer behavior, rooted in awareness of the environmental, social, and ethical implications of daily choices. This emerging cultural trend, which spans across food management, fashion, waste reduction, resource consumption, and more, reflects a growing recognition of individual responsibility toward global sustainability. Consumers are no longer passive participants in the economic system; they are increasingly adopting sustainable practices such as reducing food waste, embracing slow fashion, minimizing resource use, and supporting local and ethical products.

The rise of conscious consumption demonstrates the powerful role that individuals and communities can play in addressing global challenges like climate change, resource depletion, and environmental pollution. Moreover, it highlights the importance of corporate and governmental support, as responsible consumer habits can only be fully effective when supported by sustainable business practices and regulatory frameworks. The integration of concepts like the circular economy, ethical consumption, and zero-waste living offers a pathway toward a more sustainable future, while digital platforms and social media continue to amplify and normalize these practices.

In conclusion, conscious consumption is not only an individual choice but a collective movement that has the potential to drive significant social and environmental change. By fostering a culture of sustainability and responsibility, this new form of social activity can contribute to the development of a more equitable and ecologically resilient society. As more people and institutions embrace these principles, conscious consumption may evolve from a niche lifestyle into a foundational pillar of global efforts to secure a sustainable future for all.

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