



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
HERITAGE, ART AND MULTIMEDIA
(IJHAM)

www.ijham.com



A REVIEW ON THE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AMONG CHINA'S GENERATION Z

Gu Yan¹, Rosalam Che Me^{2*}, Feroz De Costa³, Ernesto Pujazon⁴

¹ Department of Industrial Design, Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia & Department of Art and Design, Weifang Institute of Technology, Shandong Province, China
Email: GS62072@student.upm.edu.my

² Department of Industrial Design, Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia & Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: rosalam@upm.edu.my

³ Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia
Email: mohdferoz@upm.edu.my

⁴ Department of Art and Design, Weifang Institute of Technology, Shandong Province, China
Email: hseccp@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 13.05.2024

Revised date: 31.05.2024

Accepted date: 25.06.2024

Published date: 30.06.2024

To cite this document:

Yan, G., Che Mea, R., De Costa, F., & Pujazon, E. (2024). A Review on the Influence of Advertising on Sustainable Consumption among China's Generation Z. *International Journal of Heritage, Art and Multimedia*, 7 (21), 34-51.

DOI: 10.35631/IJHAM.721003.

Abstract:

This paper critically examines the influence of advertising on unsustainable consumption and aims to identify advertising solutions with the potential to promote sustainable consumption among Chinese Generation Z. By conducting a literature review synthesis across four databases, 63 articles were analyzed to understand the dynamics of sustainable consumption, advertising design, strategy, and communication. The findings reveal a dearth of research on the key groups shaping sustainable consumption in China, particularly among Chinese Generation Z consumers. The study highlights the need for social organizations to integrate sociology and semiotics in sustainable consumption communications targeted at this group. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of exploring a wider range of Sustainable Consumption Advertising (SCA) strategies to align advertising practices with human interests and social progress across different consumer groups and contexts. This research contributes to the ongoing effort to promote sustainable consumption and encourages future studies to focus on diverse subcultural consumer groups to advance advertising practices aligned with sustainable values and social well-being.

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**Keywords:**

Advertising Design; Consumerism; Generation Z Consumers; Sustainable Consumption; Semiotics; Visual Communication

Introduction

Advertising has long been recognized as a potent tool for communicating with consumers, influencing their perceptions, and shaping consumer culture. It disseminates information, promotes consumption, reinforces market logic, and shapes the development of consumer culture (Y. Liu & Zhu, 2022). Consequently, it is considered to exploit its own discourse (Ibroscheva, 2013) and leveraging new media technologies to propagate unsustainable consumption patterns globally, while negatively impacting consumer well-being by fostering unrealistic desires (Stafford & Pounders, 2021).

Today's youth, particularly Generation Z, play a pivotal role in addressing unsustainable consumption patterns and shaping the future of consumption mechanisms (Dong, 2003; F. Ziesemer et al., 2021). This demographic benefits from higher growth dividends and possesses significant purchasing power (Ren, 2022). Nonetheless, curiosity-driven blind consumption, impulsive and irrational consumption, and symbolic consumption are prevalent among Generation Z (Qizhi & Qizhen, 2022). Moreover, the conflict between material and spiritual consumption further exacerbates the issue of unsustainable consumption (L. Wang, 2011)

In light of these challenges, it is imperative to harness the influential power of advertising to promote sustainable consumption practices among Generation Z. By aligning advertising strategies with sustainable values and leveraging the reach of new media technologies, it is possible to mitigate the adverse effects of unsustainable consumption and foster a culture of sustainability among young consumers. This approach not only addresses the immediate concerns of consumer well-being but also contributes to the long-term goal of sustainable development.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12 (UN-SDG12) emphasizes sustainable consumption as a vital strategy for the future. According to the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), advertising plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable consumption in the 21st century (Industry as a Partner for Sustainable Development, 2002). Advertising also holds the potential to mitigate the negative social and environmental impacts of consumption (Gilbert et al., 2021).

In an increasingly digitalized world, it is imperative to understand the role of advertising in shaping sustainable consumption behaviors. Research has demonstrated that social media significantly influences green consumer behavior among China's Generation Z, with perceptions of effectiveness playing a crucial role (Czarnecka et al., n.d.; Stafford & Pounders, 2021). Additionally, Generation Z consumers exhibit a stronger preference for sustainable practices and actively seek sustainability knowledge (Jingshan han et al., 2024). Consequently, in China, the world's largest consumer market, there is substantial potential to promote sustainable consumption through strategic advertising.

This literature review focuses on three main themes:

First: Characteristics of Chinese Generation Z Consumers: Understanding the unique characteristics and behaviors of this demographic;

Second: Current State of Sustainable Consumption in China's Generation Z: Assessing the level of adoption of sustainable consumption practices; and,

Third: Impact of Advertising on Sustainable Consumption in China's Generation Z: Evaluating the elements of advertising that may influence sustainable consumption among Generation Z. A discussion of the effectiveness of advertising interventions in consumer behavior is beyond the scope of this paper. However, this study aims to shed light on the positive role of advertising in promoting sustainable consumption among Generation Z in China. By providing detailed theoretical recommendations, this study aims to inform the design of efficient sustainable consumption advertisements. Moreover, this study also contributes to the development of advertising strategies that support further in-depth research, ultimately aiding in the creation of tailored advertising models that promote sustainable consumption with Chinese characteristics and enhance the well-being of Chinese consumers.

The findings of this study are expected to have significant implications for policymakers, marketers, and researchers. By understanding the influential power of advertising in the digital age, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to foster sustainable consumption habits among younger generations. This is particularly relevant in the context of China, where the consumer market is vast and rapidly evolving. The integration of sustainable practices into advertising not only addresses immediate environmental concerns but also contributes to long-term sustainable development goals.

In summary, this study underscores the critical role of advertising in promoting sustainable consumption among China's Generation Z, highlighting the need for strategic interventions that align with the cultural and behavioral characteristics of this demographic. Through comprehensive theoretical insights, this paper aims to pave the way for innovative advertising strategies that support sustainable development and enhance consumer well-being.

Materials and Methods

This paper follows the 'literature review synthesis process' (Ibrahim & Mustafa Kamal, 2018). A literature review was conducted on selected topics under the heading 'RQ CONSTRUCT' identified through Ibrahim's research question structure classification technique (RQ STRUCTURE) (Ibrahim, 2008, 2011). Three different RQ STRUCTURES are: WHO – elements used or influenced in the research, WHAT – information or body of knowledge needed to solve the research problem and HOW – elements of the research or information. The three RQ CONSTRUCTs selected for this thesis are 'Chinese Generation Z Consumers', 'Sustainable Consumption (SC)' and 'Advertising', with the aim of answering the following research questions: (1) What are the characteristics of Chinese Generation Z consumers? (2) What is the current state of sustainable consumption in China? (3) How does advertising influence Generation Z sustainable consumption in China? (Table 1, below)

Table 1: Research Question Construct

Research Question Construct	Research Question
RQ Construct A-WHO	China's Generation Z consumer What are the characteristics of Chinese Generation Z consumers?
RQ Construct B-WHAT	Sustainable Consumption (SC) What is current state of China's SC?
RQ Construct C-HOW	Advertising How does advertising influence the SC of Generation Z in China?

Source: (Ibrahim, 2008, 2011)

Full-text articles were identified using Web of Science (WOS), Google Scholar, Scopus, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) by searching the nine sub RQ CONSTRUCT keywords: Chinese Generation Z consumers, young Chinese consumers, Chinese new generation consumers, sustainable consumption, sustainable consumption awareness, sustainable consumption culture, advertising design, advertising communication, advertising strategy. The search period was limited from 1995 to 2023, and the separate searches yielded a total of 20,391 articles. The articles were screened by removing duplicate entries, reviewing titles and abstracts, and excluding literature that was not sufficiently relevant to the topic 'potential advertising solutions influencing the sustainable consumption of Chinese Generation Z'. This was followed by another full-text review based on relevance to the three sub-topics: the characteristics of Chinese Generation Z consumption, the current state of sustainable consumption of Chinese Generation Z, and the influence of advertising on sustainable consumption of Chinese Generation Z. After another full-text review, the authors finally selected the most promising 63 articles for analysis and assigned them to relevant topics in this paper (Figure 1, below).

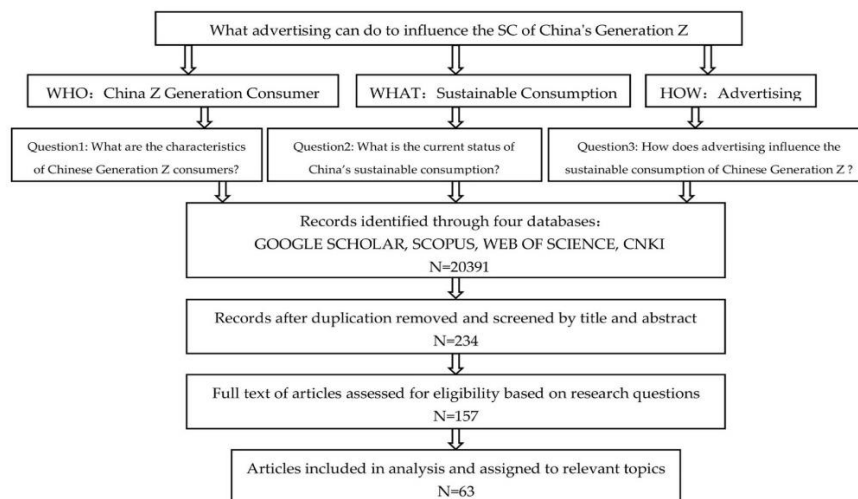


Figure 1: The Workflow of the Literature Review Synthesis Process Adapted with Permission

Source: (Ibrahim & Mustafa Kamal, 2018)

The abstracts were reviewed and distributed among the three relevant subthemes. Based on the key findings of previous scholars, their works can support future research and identify areas that need to be strengthened. A comprehensive summary for each subtheme emerges from the findings of this paper. The paper then discusses the cross-analysis, integration of opportunities

and prioritisation of the synthesis information to arrive at an advertising solution that is most likely to meet the sustainable consumption needs of Generation Z consumers in China. A key extract of the findings is presented in a 'POD (Point of Departure) tree diagram' from the 'Thinking Template' (Ibrahim & Mustafa Kamal, 2018). The paper posits the development of a Sustainable Consumption Advertising (SCA) Strategy for Generation Z in China, aiming to improve the unsustainable consumption situation in China and develop advertising that contributes to consumer well-being and societal progress. The synthesis process of this systematic literature review was documented using EAGLE Navigator.

Results

Characteristics of Generation Z Consumers in China

Globally, 'Generation Z' refers to young people born between 1995 and 2009, representing the largest generation in world history and a major force in shaping social development and international change (Xie & Wang, 2022). In China, they are known as "post-95ers" and "post-00ers" (Ren, 2022), comprising approximately 260 million people, which accounts for nearly one-fifth of the population, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics. With strong purchasing power and a growth rate that far exceeds other age groups, they are poised to become the most important consumer group in China's future (S. Yang & Chen, 2022). They are expected to lead the future consumption trends of society as a whole (Lai et al., 2022), which urges the need for comprehensive research to create designs that resonate with them (He, 2022).

Additionally, they face more complex historical and social circumstances (Shen, 2022). China has been connected to the Internet since 1994, and Generation Z has been influenced by information technology and electronic devices since birth. Consequently, they are often referred to as the 'internet generation', 'digital natives' or 'internet natives'. They continuously navigate between the virtual and real worlds (Niu & Wang, 2021; Xie & Wang, 2022) and actively participate in and create online subcultures, demonstrating stronger intergenerational commonalities (C. Li, 2022). They exhibit diverse and inclusive intergenerational worldviews and possess unique digital survival logics (Xie & Wang, 2022).

Compared to previous generations, Generation Z began engaging in online consumption at an earlier stage (Lai et al., 2022). Consumption has not only become a means for Generation Z to interact and socialise in the real world but has also shaped their material and spiritual culture of consumption (Zeng, 2021). They have a preference for self-indulgent consumption, emotional consumption (Lu, 2022), as well as experiential consumption and convenience consumption (S. Yang & Chen, 2022). Additionally, they embrace innovative consumption, national trend consumption, and circle consumption (X. Zhang, 2021) as well as value consumption, trend consumption and stimulating consumption (L. Li et al., 2022), among other preferences. Accordingly, they have their own distinct needs and attitudes concerning aesthetics, socialisation, emotions, and identity (S. Liu, 2022).

However, some scholars argue that Generation Z is susceptible to the influence of online communities and culture (L. Li et al., 2022). They contend that the consumer culture prevalent in cyberspace has significantly impacted their lifestyle, consumer logic, and emotional experiences (S. Zhao, 2022). These scholars refer Generation Z to as vulnerable customers who are constantly enticed to consume through strategies involving character building, symbolism,

and ideology within a consumer culture driven by capital (J. Wang, 2021). Furthermore, data also indicates that the average consumption of Generation Z in China is twice the national average, leading to unsustainable consumption-related issues such as overconsumption, debt consumption (X. Zhang, 2021), blind consumption (L. Wang, 2011), addictive consumption (S. Liu, 2022), and symbolic consumption (Ao, 2021).

There is a general consensus that young Generation Z is a highly educated intergenerational group (C. Li, 2022) and possesses more progressive attitudes towards issues such as climate change (Xie & Wang, 2022). Furthermore, Generation Z actively disseminates, influences, and drives consumption patterns within their families, colleagues, friends and online communities (L. Li et al., 2022). As a result, they represent an important target group for addressing unsustainable consumption patterns, as they play a key role in shaping the future consumption (F. Zieseimer et al., 2021) and serve as a leading force in shaping China's future consumption and culture (Zeng, 2021).

With the growing utilisation of Big Data and AI technologies, there is an increasing ability to predict consumer psychographics, state, and buying behaviours. This, in turn, allows for interventions that can adapt (Hermann, 2022), redesign, or change business models (Chandra & Verma, 2021), ultimately enabling the creation of novel consumer experiences. Additionally, considering the digital nature of Generation Z consumers, it becomes crucial to construct and refine databases, target and personalise advertising messages (S. Zhao, 2017), prioritise user-centric interaction and connection (C. Li, 2022), and ultimately generate digital advertising that holds socially shared value (Kwak, 2014).

In general, Generation Z exhibits stronger cross-generational characteristics. They are not only having emotional needs such as experiential, socialization and identity, but also having aesthetic, convenience and fashionable needs to please themselves. Their consumption attitudes are easily influenced by community culture, and they are also prone to drive community consumption. As the driving force behind China's future sustainable consumption patterns and cultures, Generation Z plays a pivotal role. Moreover, digital technology can effectively intervene and adapt communication messages to influence the online consumer base, making sustainable consumption online a significant area for future research.

Current State of Sustainable Consumption Among Generation Z in China

Sustainable consumption is highly adaptable and its practical application is influenced by the political culture and policy styles specific to each national contexts (Cohen, 2005). Therefore, research on sustainable consumption discourses and practises must consider the diverse local contexts and socio-cultural frameworks (C. Liu et al., 2019). However, globally, research on sustainable consumption in China is still in its early stages (China Chain Store Association, 2022), and there is a particular need for further development and new policies regarding the sustainable consumption of the new generation of consumers. (Yuan, 2012).

In terms of environmental aspects, China has surpassed other countries to become the world's largest emitter of Carbon dioxide (CO₂) and has one of the highest energy consumption (Shao, 2019). In order to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality by 2060, the Chinese government is relying on communication to change citizens' habits (Cheng, 2022). In 2013, the China Retail Sustainability Roundtable was launched (Yan Li et al., 2022), and since 2021, the Ministry of Commerce has actively promoted the Sustainable Consumption Summit. This initiative focuses

on communicating sustainability messages to consumers, promoting a sustainable consumption culture, and addressing the consumption needs of specific groups (S. Li & Hu, 2022). Undoubtedly, the media has played a significant role in this process.

Consumer culture has permeated the daily life of contemporary China, consciously influenced by the media, leading to cultural homogenisation (Shen, 2022). The expansion of consumer culture and the paradox of human existence are both outcomes of the transfer of cultural meaning from the context of cultural composition to consumer products through advertising and the transfer of cultural meaning from consumers to goods through consumption rituals (McCracken, 1986). This transformation has altered people's perspectives on consumption (Guo & Xiang, 2015), and further accelerated the unsustainable proliferation of consumption in China. But, it is crucial to re-evaluate people's consumption values (Yuan, 2012).

However, the concept of "sustainability" is broadly interpreted in Chinese (Cheng, 2022), leading to ambiguity regarding the scope and focus of research on sustainable consumption (X. Li & Li, 2017). Existing body of research often centres around interpersonal relationships (J. Zhao, 2013), with some scholars advocating for a narrower focus on subsistence consumption, while others proposed positioning sustainable as a means to enhance consumers' quality of life (Murtaza Haider et al., 2022). Consumers often demonstrate a lack of understanding (Cheng, 2022) of what "sustainable consumption" actually entails. This is most likely due to terms like "sustainable consumption," "green consumption," "eco-consumption," and "low-carbon consumption" are not well defined, unclear, or inconsistently used (L. Wang & Liu, 2013).

Despite the urgency to research sustainable consumption among Chinese consumers, there is still a void of local context variables as moderating variables (X. Li & Li, 2017) for sustainable consumption communication in China. Information on sustainable consumption among Chinese consumers remains extremely scarce. The United Nations has conducted surveys of young people's attitudes toward sustainable consumption in several countries worldwide and found that they lack a clear understanding of the social and environmental impacts of their personal consumption behaviours. In the Chinese context, there are international studies on communication (Xie & Wang, 2022) and marketing strategies (S. Yang & Chen, 2022) targeting Generation Z consumers, as well as case studies on sustainable consumption among university students (L. Wang, 2011) and youth (Dong, 2003) or young educated consumers (Lee, 2014). However, no studies have been found to target the sustainable consumption of the Generation Z consumer group.

It is suggested that action plans and strategies to be developed at the macro level to encourage sustainable consumption in China. This advancement is crucial for introducing evaluation indicator systems (X. Li et al., 2014) in the Chinese context and for providing goods and services with distinctive qualities and labelling (Luczka & Smoluk Sikorska, 2017). Utilising the trust that consumers have in consumer organisations (Jaca et al., 2018) encourages the participation of social forces and organisations to enhance consumer knowledge of sustainable consumption (China Chain Store Association, 2022).

At the individual level, some scholars have proposed predictive factors for sustainable consumption based on developmental and socialisation theory (Patti Valkenburg, 2000), in conjunction with social cognition theory and reciprocal determinism (Lee, 2014). It has also been argued that cultural value orientations are antecedents of sustainable consumption

(Rahman et al., 2021) and that psychological factors (White et al., 2019), identity and values (B. Wang & Udall, 2023) can be utilised to provide consumers with a green identity label (Schwartz et al., 2020) to promote sustainable consumption.

In a nutshell, research on sustainable consumption in China is still in its infancy and is relatively weak. There is a lack of communication on sustainable consumption that considers national conditions and includes moderating variables such as politics, social culture, and the environment. Furthermore, there is a dearth of information on sustainable consumption among Chinese consumers, and lack research has been conducted on sustainable consumption specifically among Generation Z consumers. It is important to encourage the involvement of Chinese social forces and organisations in developing tailored sustainable consumption promotion strategies based on sociology, psychology and semiotics. This should include effective communication of sustainable consumption messages and the cultivation of a sustainable consumption culture.

Impact of Advertising on Sustainable Consumption Among Chinese Generation Z Consumers

Advertising plays a crucial role in the overall consumer process (Han, 2012). On one hand, it provides information that actively assists individuals in making better choices, thus having the potential to shape culture, consciousness, and commerce (Gilbert et al., 2021). As it increasingly becomes an invisible cultural image and system of cultural control (Guo & Xiang, 2015), it is believed to have the capacity to inspire progressive behaviour across cultures. On the other hand, advertising subliminally influences consumer imitation through demonstration, constructs symbolic meanings for goods, triggers consumer desire and problematises the world (Zhou, 2018). It has been criticised as a tool of capitalism (Jones, 2020), contributing to the creation and promotion of unrealistic consumer desires, the proliferation of overconsumption (UNEP et al., 2017), and having negative effects on consumer well-being (Stafford & Pounders, 2021).

As a means of communication to promote social progress, advertising should assume the role of spokesperson for sustainable consumer values and take responsibility for shaping public opinion (Y. Zhang, 2010). In 1998, the United Nations Environment Programme suggested that advertising could utilise its influential capacity to shape consumer behaviour and focus on raising awareness to promote sustainable consumption patterns in the twenty-first century (Industry as a Partner for Sustainable Development, 2002). The launch of "Advertising and Sustainable Consumption" programme should be timed appropriately (Chen, 2000) to provide the necessary attitudes, knowledge, skills, and infrastructure to important target audiences for sustainable consumption (F. Ziesemer et al., 2021). Moreover, simultaneous application and development of consumer information tools can help young people engage in sustainable consumption through education, consumer information, advertising, and media communication (Clark, 2007).

It has been suggested that advertising should utilise effective and persuasive communication theories (Kolandai-Matchett, 2009) that enable consumers to access and contemplate reliable information about sustainable consumption at a low level (Jaeger & Weber, 2020; Kim & Cha, 2021). This approach will allow consumers to perceive and actively influence change (White et al., 2019) to promote sustainable consumption. Furthermore, research has shown messages employing positive emotional appeal can persuade consumers to reduce their unsustainable

consumption behaviour (Fu & Xu, 2022). However, it has also been pointed out that the use of information-based tools alone is insufficient to bridge the significant gap between consumers' perceptions and their actual behaviour (X. Li et al., 2014).

Advertising information should consider the audience's self-image and perception of identity while showcasing the benefits associated with the consumer product (D. Yang et al., 2015). This is particularly relevant because Generation Z in China exhibits more subcultural characteristics (L. Zhang & Yang, 2021), making social identity and value expression in their consumption style more significant (Y. Zhang, 2010). Advertising, as a cultural mediator of ideology, (M. Soar, 2002) can actively contribute to the formation of a shared value system among members of society (Pan, 2000). This is reflected in the increasing interest in social perspectives on sustainability (Sesini et al., 2020) and the ongoing use of qualitative methods to innovate communication about sustainable consumption from participants' perspective (F. Ziesemer et al., 2021; Gilbert et al., 2021).

Scholars have highlighted that the paradigm of pro-social advertising communication should be influenced by the non-profit sector and thinkers from academic fields such as sociology, cultural anthropology, and environmental studies (LaVoi & Haley, 2021). Consumers are more positive about sustainable products or services with symbolic attributes (White et al., 2019). In order for advertising to serve as a reference point for both consumers and advertisers, it must effectively utilise symbolic communication (Park & suji, 2004) and present sustainable products and services with distinct symbols and signs (Luczka & Smoluk Sikorska, 2017). Additionally, it should elaborate on the meaning of the goods or services, and incorporate universal social values (Si, 2008). This aligns with one of the main trends in advertising development, which involves the process of aestheticizing cultural symbols (Mamedova et al., 2019).

This process has resulted in the emergence of a new advertising model for sustainable consumption, offering an alternative to the prevalent radical consumerism and artificial ethical consumption (Neri, V., 2016). It seeks to establish a new form of dialogue with the audience that is more 'relational' (Su & Song, 2020). Efforts can be made to integrate information- and meaning-based models (McCracken, 1987) in order to develop a shared framework and terminology for sustainable consumption communication (Fischer et al., 2021). The design and implementation of promotional tactics should take into account the target audience's cultural values (Ji & Lin, 2022), while considering factors such as enjoyment, functionality, narrative, symbolism, interactivity, and innovation (Rahman et al., 2021). Consequently, in order for this process to have a meaningful impact on consumer behaviour and knowledge, it is important for the audience to be motivated to think ethically and creatively (Breninger & Kaltenbacher, 2020).

Advertising serves as a cultural mediator of ideologies and has a role to lead the communication that fosters social progress. In order to stimulate sustainable consumption, the non-profit sector needs to develop a new advertising model that serves as an alternative to contemporary radical consumerism and artificial moral consumption. This can be achieved by employing qualitative methods and incorporating disciplines such as sociology, cultural anthropology, and semiotics to innovate Sustainable Consumption Advertising (SCA) communication from the perspective of the participants.

Therefore, it is necessary to cater to the consistent subculture of Generation Z consumers in order to influence them to consume sustainably. By tapping into the consumer preferences of Generation Z and integrating information, symbol, and cultural models, we aim to create a sustainable symbolic consumption dialogue that resonates with the consumers. This effort will contribute to the promotion of sustainable consumption in the future.

Discussion

Advertising is just a transmission system; it is a tool depending on how you use it. People can advertise for a good cause or solely for monetary gain. It can be employed for both positive and negative purposes (Jones, 2020). When examining the discourse and practice of sustainable consumption, it is essential to consider specific national, political, environmental and sociocultural contexts (Cohen, 2005; C. Liu et al., 2019). Advertising serves as an important channel for transmitting cultural values, attitudes towards life and perceptions of consumption. The literature clearly demonstrates the possibility of creating sustainable consumption advertising that effectively influences Chinese Generation Z consumers by incorporating the characteristics of subcultural groups with diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

Marketing research related to sustainable consumption is unlikely to evolve into a pro-social discipline within a socialist country due to the capital and profit-driven nature of marketing. In countries such as China, which adopts a socialist ideology with a focus on the public economy and people-centric approach, advertising should differ from that of a Western capitalist tool. This is because consumer well-being should not be tied solely to monetary factors. In order to effectively communicate the concept of sustainable consumption within the framework of Chinese socialism, it is essential to encourage the involvement of the government, social forces and organisations in the development of sustainable consumption advertisements. This active participation can help convey the cultural values associated with sustainable consumption and foster progressive behaviours.

In light of its current state of development and ongoing progress, China's Generation Z is highly informed and mature in terms of sustainable consumption, thanks to their extensive education. This generation will have a significant impact on the future Chinese consumption and culture. They belong to a generation that has strong intergenerational links and uses intergenerational symbols (Yan Li et al., 2022). For them, consumption involves more than just meeting material needs; it also involves exchanging symbols to fulfil the search for values and self-affirmation. They want symbolic consumption, embrace new technology and trends, and seek uniqueness and self-identification (Y. Liu & Zhu, 2022; Qizhi & Qizhen, 2022; S. Wang & Zhou, 2022).

When developing advertisements for sustainable consumption targeting Chinese Generation Z consumers, it is important to consider information- and meaning-based models (McCracken, 1987) due to their shared preferences and consumer demand. Conveying attitudes, information, and skills to consumers along with symbolic values they can relate to, is crucial in providing sustainable consumption with a symbolic value (Lu, 2022).

It is essential to create experiential, interactive, shared, social, and symbolic advertising for sustainable consumption. Figure 2 shows a diagram of a 'POD tree', to meet the research needs, this study analysed and discussed these aspects in nine steps. The purpose is to comprehensively evaluate the key summaries generated by each subtopic, cross-analyse the pros and cons of combining viewpoints, integrate various possibilities, and prioritize them to

form a potential theoretical proposition, proposing the most appropriate direction for further research. The POD tree diagram, which provides a highly probable guidance for the future research and development of the SCA scheme that is specifically targeted towards China's Generation Z: a) examine the characteristics and preferences of Chinese Generation Z consumers; b) analyse the advertising elements that influence the sustainable consumption of Generation Z; and c) develop and propose a public advertising model for sustainable consumption that aligns with the shared consumer characteristics of the Generation Z consumer segment.

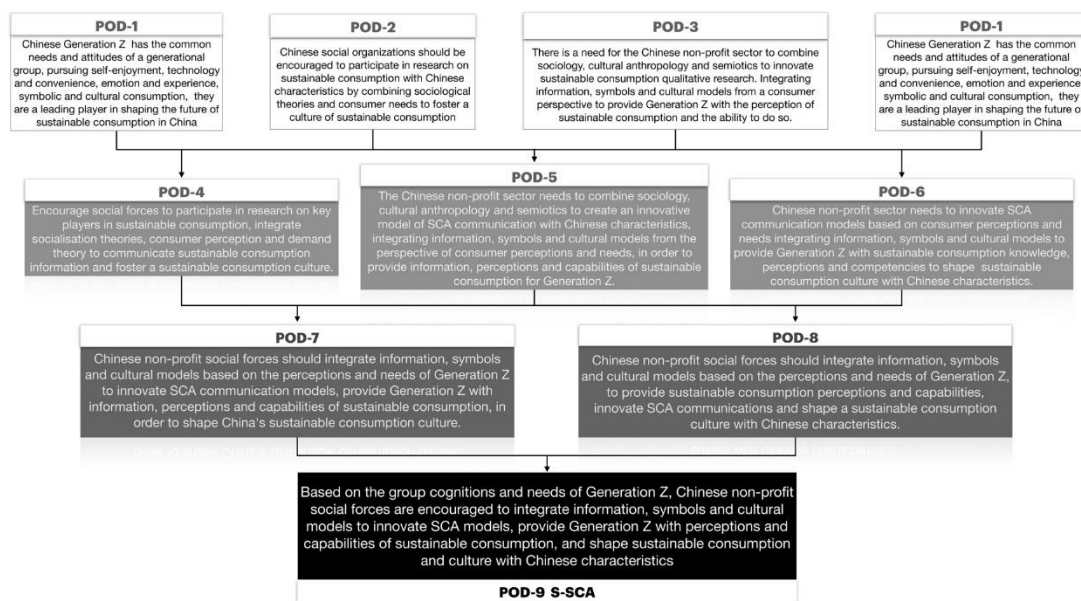


Figure 2: The POD Tree

Source: (Ibrahim & Mustafa Kamal, 2018)

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of Chinese Generation Z consumers, assess the current state of their sustainable consumption, and evaluate the potential advertising elements that influence their sustainable consumption behaviors. The primary objective was to develop a comprehensive theoretical proposal for a tailored Sustainable Consumption Advertising (SCA) model for Generation Z in China. These objectives have been successfully achieved, culminating in a robust theoretical framework with substantial potential to guide the development of sustainable advertising strategies in China.

This paper underscores that China's Generation Z is a key consumer group for the future. To reverse current unsustainable consumption patterns, reduce the country's carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and improve the quality of life of its citizens, it is imperative to promote sustainable consumption communication through new media. Advertising plays a crucial role in conveying cultural values, attitudes, and consumption habits, making it an essential tool for sustainable consumption communication. Advertising should aim to deliver sustainable consumption messages to key groups, create awareness of sustainability, encourage changes in unsustainable lifestyles, minimize environmental harm, and safeguard the well-being of future generations.

The study emphasizes two critical aspects:

- a) **Public Interest Integration:** The importance of incorporating public interest elements into sustainable consumption advertising in China; and,
- b) **Cultural and Symbolic Integration:** The necessity of integrating information, culture, and symbolic meanings that resonate with the subcultural similarities of Chinese Generation Z.

The proposed SCA model serves as a framework for sustainable advertising in China, aiming to equip Generation Z with sustainable consumption knowledge while fostering the development of a symbolic group identity. This model offers a novel approach to symbolic sustainable consumption advertising that aligns with intergenerational subcultural characteristics, establishing a common framework and terminology. Additionally, digital technologies should be leveraged in placing and disseminating advertisements to accurately target consumers and personalize advertising messages, thereby promoting awareness of sustainable consumption and the values of China's Generation Z.

This paper provides a potential foundation for developing an SCA model with Chinese characteristics and creating SCA strategies for various subcultural groups. It aids in shaping more sustainable consumption patterns among mainstream Chinese consumers, assisting Chinese society in establishing and maintaining a semantic field of sustainable consumption. Furthermore, it facilitates the realization of a sustainable value orientation within the modern communication space of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Despite making significant contributions to the literature, this study's major limitation is its reliance on previously published research, which introduces the risk of selection bias and limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should incorporate studies on sustainable consumption within various cultural contexts to provide additional recommendations on this topic. Additionally, integrating research on digital technologies such as Big Data, Virtual Reality (VR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the context of sustainable consumption is crucial.

Moreover, visual communication design plays a critical role in supporting sustainable consumption by effectively communicating information, raising awareness, and influencing consumer behavior. Future research should focus more on the role of visual communication design and examine design practices and research that contribute to societal interests and social progress across a broader range of consumer groups and diverse ideologies.

In summary, while this paper has addressed significant gaps and provided valuable insights, it also opens avenues for further exploration and development in the field of sustainable consumption advertising, particularly within the dynamic context of China's evolving consumer landscape. By understanding the influential power of advertising in the digital age, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to foster sustainable consumption habits among younger generations. This is particularly relevant in the context of China, where the consumer market is vast and rapidly evolving. The integration of sustainable practices into advertising not only addresses immediate environmental concerns but also contributes to long-term sustainable development goals.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who supported the completion and publication of my first English paper. My deepest thanks go to my supervisor for their invaluable guidance and encouragement. I also appreciate the faculty and staff at my university, particularly my department, for their resources and support. I am grateful to my colleagues and fellow PhD students for their constructive feedback and moral support. Special thanks to my family and friends for their unwavering encouragement. Lastly, I acknowledge the reviewers and editors of the journal for their meticulous review and valuable feedback. Thank you all for making this milestone possible.

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