Retos
Revista de Ciencias de Administración y Economía

October 2025-March 2026
pp. 203-224
https://doi.org/10.17163/ret.n30.2025.01

Sustainable consumption habits and future generations' awareness in Latin American

Consumo sostenible y conciencia de las generaciones futuras en Latinoaméric

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Received on: 13/03/25 **Revised on:** 21/05/25 **Approved on:** 07/08/25 **Published on:** 01/10/25

Abstract: environmental challenges in Latin America demand a clearer understanding of what motivates consumers to behave sustainably. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine how future-generation awareness promotes sustainable consumption habits and drives eco-friendly purchasing among consumers in five developing countries—Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Argentina—and, specifically, to test the mediating role of such habits in the relationship between future-generation awareness and eco-friendly buying. A survey of 1,466 consumers was conducted across the target countries. Data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to explore the direct and indirect links between future-generation awareness, sustainable consumption habits, and eco-friendly product purchasing. The integrative model revealed that future-generation awareness strongly stimulates sustainable habits, which, in turn, account for a substantial proportion of eco-friendly purchasing behaviour, thereby confirming the proposed mediation. Multi-group analysis further uncovered country-specific nuances without undermining the global validity of the model. These findings suggest that campaigns grounded in intergenerational responsibility, combined with incentives that facilitate daily practice, can accelerate the widespread adoption of sustainable consumption behaviors in emerging economies, while also offering valuable guidance for public policy by supporting environmental regulation, fiscal incentives, and education as tools to promote sustainable consumption within institutional and governmental frameworks.

Keywords: awareness, consumption, sustainability, purchase, consumer, habits, generations, Latin America.

Resumen: los constantes problemas ambientales en Latinoamérica exigen comprender qué motiva a los consumidores a actuar de forma sostenible. Por tanto, el objetivo es analizar cómo la conciencia de las generaciones futuras puede promover los hábitos de consumo sostenibles e impulsar la compra de productos ecológicos en los consumidores de países en desarrollo: México, Colombia, Perú, Chile y Argentina; además, investigar el papel mediador de los hábitos de consumo sostenibles en la relación conciencia de las generaciones futuras y la compra de productos eco-amigables. Para tal fin, se llevó a cabo una encuesta a 1466 consumidores en los países mencionados. Los datos recopilados se analizaron utilizando el modelo de ecuaciones estructurales con mínimos cuadrados parciales (PLS-SEM) para explorar las relaciones directas e indirectas entre la conciencia sobre las generaciones futuras, los hábitos de consumo responsable y la compra de productos amigables con el medioambiente. El modelo integrador reveló que la conciencia hacia las generaciones futuras impulsa los hábitos sostenibles, y estos, a su vez, explican una parte sustancial de la decisión de compra ecológica, confirmando la mediación propuesta. Además, el análisis multigrupo mostró matices nacionales, sin comprometer la validez global del modelo. Estos hallazgos sugieren que las campañas basadas en responsabilidad intergeneracional, combinadas con incentivos que faciliten la práctica diaria, pueden acelerar la adopción masiva de comportamientos de consumo sostenible en economías emergentes, pudiendo también ofrecer valiosas orientaciones para las políticas públicas, respaldando la regulación medioambiental, los incentivos fiscales y la educación como herramientas para promover el consumo sostenible dentro de los marcos institucionales y gubernamentales.

Palabras clave: conciencia, consumo, sostenibilidad, compra, consumidor, hábitos, generaciones, Latinoamérica.

Suggested citation: Ortegón-Cortázar, L., Santucci, M., Iglesias-Pina, D., Acevedo Duque, Á. and Méndez-Lazarte, C. (2025). Sustainable consumption habits and future generations' awareness in Latin American. *Retos Revista de Ciencias de la Administración y Economía*, *15*(30), pp. 203-224. https://doi.org/10.17163/ret.n30.2025.01

Introduction

Understanding the factors that drive sustainable purchasing behavior has become a priority for both academic literature and public policy makers, particularly in the context of global challenges associated with climate change and environmental degradation. Sustainability, beyond being an emerging concern, has become a central axis in the decision-making processes of governments and corporations (Gillan *et al*., 2021; Ghaffar *et al*., 2023). Understanding consumer behavior within the context of sustainability offers valuable insights into how individuals incorporate eco-conscious practices into their routines and purchasing patterns (Lange, 2024; Lopes *et al*., 2024; Zeng *et al*., 2023).

Existing research has identified a range of determinants shaping sustainable consumption, emphasizing the influence of environmental awareness, pro-environmental attitudes, and concerns about future generations on responsible buying choices (Lavuri, 2022; Nguyen *et al*., 2024; Saari *et al*., 2021; Seyfang, 2013). In addition, collective values (Yang *et al*., 2024) and the formation of a pro-environmental identity (Zhao *et al*., 2024) are seen as reinforcing motivations to engage in sustainable consumption (Ahmad *et al*., 2022). Other contributing factors include materialistic values, consumer trust, and generational cohort membership (Dimitrova *et al*., 2022; Li *et al*., 2024), as well as environmental concern and knowledge, personal values, perceived consumer effectiveness, and social influence (Casalegno *et al*., 2022; Duque *et al*., 2024; Wei *et al*., 2017; Yusoff *et al*., 2023).

However, there is still a lack of literature exploring how concern for the well-being of future generations is linked to the actual purchase of environmentally friendly products, mediated by sustainable consumption habits. This gap is particularly relevant in developing contexts such as Latin America, where structural limitations—including inadequate infrastructure, low recycling rates, weak willingness to pay for sustainable products, and poor waste management systems—impede the transition toward responsible consumption patterns (de Carvalho *et al*., 2016; Barros *et al*., 2021; Maldovan, 2018; Miles and Munilla, 2004; Quispe-Palomino and Quispe-Huisa, 2021; Sánchez *et al*., 2020). Consequently, a global and integrative analysis is required to explain how to effectively foster sustainable consumption behaviors.

Although significant differences exist among Latin American countries in terms of income inequality, consumption patterns, and specific cultural values (Gorga *et al*., 2024; Ayala, 2018;

Print ISSN: 1390-6291; Electronic ISSN: 1390-8618

Villa-Castaño *et al*., 2024), as well as mismatches between limited access to sustainable products and ineffective consumption policies (Sylvester, 2024), this research adopts a holistic and explanatory approach. As a first approximation to the proposed relationships, our aim is to understand the common dynamics that emerge across Latin American contexts, rather than emphasizing their cultural or structural divergences. We prioritize an integrative perspective to verify the existence and explanatory relationships between the key variables under study.

While the literature has suggested that motivations for sustainable consumption in Latin America are shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors (Alzamora-Ruiz *et al*., 2020; Santucci *et al*., 2023), empirical evidence on this phenomenon remains limited. For instance, although it has been noted that values such as family, religion, and nationalism may motivate responsible consumption behavior (Villa-Castaño *et al*., 2025), or that consumption may be influenced by social status (Gorga *et al*., 2024), few studies have explored the role of generational awareness as a driver of sustainable habits in the region. Moreover, although previous research has examined topics such as young people's purchase behavior regarding sustainable products (Cristancho-Triana *et al*., 2024) and the influence of eco-labeling and certifications (Arredondo *et al*., 2010; Feldman and Reficco, 2015), these findings have yet to be clearly linked to everyday behaviors such as sustainable consumption habits.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the role of sustainable consumption habits in the relationship between future generations awareness and the purchase of environmentally friendly products. Specifically, we seek to answer: What are the antecedents underlying the purchase of environmentally friendly products? This study seeks to examine how sustainable consumption habits mediate the relationship between awareness of future generations and the intention to purchase environmentally friendly products in the Latin American context. To investigate this, we conducted an empirical study with consumers from Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico. This approach enabled us to explore the presence and interplay of future generations' awareness, sustainable consumption behaviors, and green purchasing decisions across these five countries.

Literature Review

Awareness of future generations refers to an individual's concern for the well-being and legacy left to those who will inhabit the planet in the future. This concept has gained relevance in understanding sustainable consumption dynamics (McAdams and de St. Aubin, 1992), including its influence in contemporary business contexts (Barahona and Ortegón, 2024). Rooted in Erik Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development, this notion aligns with a developmental stage where individuals seek to contribute meaningfully to future societal outcomes.

Sustainable consumption habits encompass behaviors and attitudes aimed at reducing environmental harm, conserving natural resources, and advancing ecological responsibility (Gatersleben *et al*., 2014; Vargas-Merino *et al*., 2023; Burkert *et al*., 2023). A key expression of these habits is the preference for and purchase of environmentally friendly products—those perceived as less damaging to the planet (Ortegón *et al*., 2025; Thøgersen and Noblet, 2012).

To examine the interrelationships among these constructs, this study draws on Schwartz's (1977) Norm Activation Model. This framework outlines how awareness of consequences—such as the long-term effects of present-day actions on future generations—can trigger personal moral norms, leading to prosocial and sustainable behaviors. In this context, future generations' awareness functions as a specific form of consequence awareness, which in turn activates internalized norms that promote sustainable consumption and environmentally responsible choices.

Hypothesis Development

A growing body of literature suggests that future generations' awareness may encourage sustainable consumption habits by fostering a sense of intergenerational responsibility

(Ulusoy, 2016; Carrigan *et al*., 2023). Borg *et al*. (2024) emphasize that ethical decision-making requires individuals to account for the long-term impacts of their consumption, supporting behaviors that mitigate environmental harm (Dragolea *et al*., 2023). Environmental psychology also indicates that when people recognize the potential consequences of their actions on future generations, they become more likely to adopt sustainable consumption practices (Jain *et al*., 2023), particularly in relation to environmental and social concerns (Confetto *et al*., 2023).

Social awareness campaigns and educational efforts that underscore the importance of preserving the planet for future generations have proven instrumental in shaping pro-environmental behaviors (Webb *et al*., 2008; Galiano-Coronil and Ortega-Gil, 2019; Luciano *et al*., 2021; Palacios-Chavarro *et al*., 2021). Building on these insights, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_1: Future generations' awareness has a positive influence on sustainable consumption habits.

Existing literature highlights that habits aligned with sustainable consumption—such as reducing waste, reusing materials, and recycling—are often linked to the selection of eco-friendly products (Pinto *et al*., 2011; Triana *et al*., 2023; Ibañez-Gaona *et al*., 2022). These choices, however, are not made in isolation; they are shaped by the availability of sustainable alternatives in the market (Ramírez *et al*., 2024) and by public policies that promote sustainable practices (Paužuolienė *et al*., 2022). Consumer concerns about the environmental consequences of unsustainable production also influence these behaviors (Tunn *et al*., 2019). As noted by Borg *et al*. (2024), individuals who consistently engage in conscious consumption are more likely to recognize and choose products that align with environmental preservation and cultural responsibility (Mejía-Giraldo, 2020; Randall *et al*., 2024; Von Flüe *et al*., 2024). Empirical studies further support the idea that everyday sustainable behaviors, such as minimizing plastic use or participating in recycling programs, increase the likelihood of purchasing certified organic or fair-trade products (Gomes and Lopes, 2024; Triana and Hernandez, 2023). In this context, sustainable consumption habits can be reinforced by previous experiences and knowledge (Müller-Pérez *et al*., 2023), including training programs and informative campaigns (Robinot *et al*., 2017). Consequently, it is expected that:

H_2: Sustainable consumption habits have a positive influence on the purchase of environmentally friendly products.

Beyond sustainable consumption habits, cognitive aspects such as future generations' awareness can determine eco-friendly purchasing behaviors (Quoquab and Mohammad, 2020; Fischer *et al*., 2017). That is, awareness of future generations can increase sensitivity to the environmental impact of consumption decisions (Rajak *et al*., 2022) and, in turn, act as a bridge between future awareness and the choice of eco-friendly products (Pacheco and Pastor, 2023). Additionally, the influence of future generations' awareness may not be direct but rather manifests through the development of habits (Kumar *et al*., 2021), driven by cognitive dissonance, which translates into internal pressure to adopt responsible habits, thereby reinforcing their predisposition to buy environmentally friendly products (Luna and Arce, 2022). Consequently, the relationship between future generations' awareness and eco-friendly purchases can also be mediated by responsible consumption habits, forming an indirect link between these two factors (Pacheco and Pastor, 2023). Therefore, previous literature suggests that:

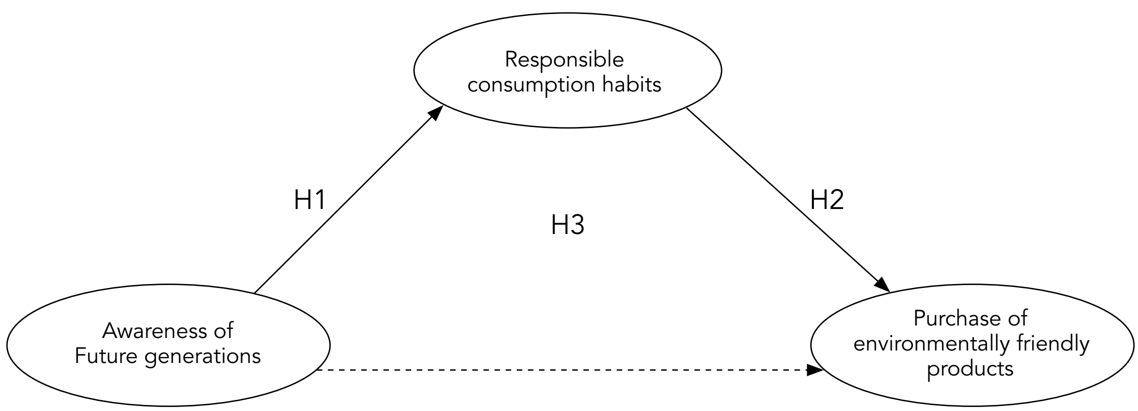
H_3: Future generations' awareness has a positive and indirect influence on the purchase of environmentally friendly products, mediated by responsible consumption habits.

The conceptual model developed in this study investigates a previously underexplored relationship within the context of five Latin American developing countries. Specifically, it examines how awareness of future generations influences the purchase of environmen-

Print ISSN: 1390-6291; Electronic ISSN: 1390-8618

tally friendly products, with sustainable consumption habits acting as a mediating factor. Grounded in Schwartz's (1977) Norm Activation Theory, the model posits that future generations' awareness serves as a motivational trigger for the development of sustainable habits, which in turn enhance the likelihood of engaging in eco-conscious purchasing behavior (see Figure 1).This approach integrates perspectives specific to developing countries, making it an innovative conceptual framework that not only contributes to the understanding of responsible consumption, but also to a better future in relation to sustainability in developing nations.

Figure 1
Conceptual Research Model



Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

To carry out our research, we began with the need to analyze responsible consumption habits, future generations' awareness, and the purchase of environmentally friendly products. In response to this need, data were collected from a group of five Latin American countries (Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, and Argentina) through an online questionnaire, obtaining 1,466 responses from consumers over 18 years old. On one hand, variables related to the sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents (population, age, gender, and educational level) were incorporated. On the other hand, the question "Are you aware of sustainable consumption?" was included as a sample inclusion criterion.

The questionnaire provided clear information about the study's purpose and participation conditions, in addition to obtaining informed consent for the academic use of the data. The data collection period spanned from March to June 2024. Table 1 shows information regarding the sample profiles collected in the first part of the questionnaire. It is important to clarify that in this study the objective was to analyze the relationships between the aforementioned variables by using the data in a consolidated fashion and therefore no comparative studies among the countries were included.

Table 1

Sample Profile

Variable	Argentina	Chile	Peru	Colombia	México
Sex					
Female (%)	351 (63.5)	113 (50.2)	112 (51.4)	136 (56.9)	152 (65.8)
Male (%)	196 (35.4)	111 (49.3)	104 (47.7)	103 (43.1)	78 (33.8)
Prefer not to say (%)	6 (1.1)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.4)
Total Gender	553 (100)	225 (100)	218 (100)	239 (100)	231 (100)
Age Range					
18 a 29 Years (%)	342 (61.8)	96 (42.7)	122 (56.0)	159 (66.5)	185 (80.1)
30 a 39 Years (%)	84 (15.2)	104 (46.2)	85 (39.0)	29 (12.1)	20 (8.7)
40 a 49 Years (%)	62 (11.2)	12 (5.3)	6 (2.8)	26 (10.9)	16 (6.9)
50 a 59 Years (%)	44 (8.0)	11 (4.9)	4 (1.8)	19 (7.9)	6 (2.6)
Más de 60 Years (%)	21 (3.8)	2 (0.9)	1 (0.5)	6 (2.5)	4 (1.7)
Total Age	553 (100)	225 (100)	218 (100)	239 (100)	231 (100)
Educational Level					
Secondary/High School (%)	266 (48.1)	53 (23.5)	29 (13.3)	93 (38.9)	55 (23.8)
Technical/Technology (%)	35 (6.3)	26 (11.6)	48 (22.0)	45 (18.8)	64 (27.7)
Professional/Degree (%)	163 (29.5)	61 (27.1)	130 (59.6)	62 (25.9)	74 (32.0)
Postgraduate (%)	89 (16.1)	85 (37.8)	11 (5.0)	39 (16.3)	38 (16.5)
Total Educational Level	553 (100)	225 (100)	218 (100)	239 (100)	231 (100)
Purchase of sustainable products					
Yes (%)	520 (94.0)	211 (93.8)	211 (96.8)	233 (97.5)	217 (93.9)
No (%)	33 (6.0)	14 (6.2)	7 (3.2)	6 (2.5)	14 (6.1)
Total	**553 (100)**	**225 (100)**	**218 (100)**	**239 (100)**	**231 (100)**

Source. Prepared by the authors.

Measurement of Variables

The second section of the survey measured respondents' perceptions using items adapted from previously validated instruments. Specifically, scales developed by Quoquab *et al*. (2019) and Fischer *et al*. (2017) were employed to assess sustainable consumption behaviors. The construct Responsible Consumption Habits captured consumers' conscious and consistent actions aimed at minimizing resource waste, optimizing the use of products and services, and adopting digital tools and pro-environmental practices to lessen their ecological footprint.

The construct Awareness of Future Generations referred to individuals' ongoing concern for the welfare and quality of life of future generations (Davies, 2016). This awareness encourages more moderate consumption patterns and responsible decision-making to safeguard key environmental resources. Meanwhile, Eco-friendly Purchasing Behavior reflected consumption choices aligned with environmental care, including a willingness to pay more for products perceived as sustainable and less harmful to the planet (Dionela *et al*., 2022). The final measurement instrument included 15 items, which were translated and culturally adapted into Spanish through an expert validation process involving five specialists in sustainable consumption. This process ensured item clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness. For example, the original item "I reuse paper to write on the other side" was adapted to "I use applications and digital tools to minimize the need for paper and thus reduce my environmental impact," reflecting current digital practices. Similarly, "I recycle my old stuff in every possible way (e.g., distribute old clothes among needy people)" was reworded as "I recycle unused or unusable items in every possible way (for example, I distribute old clothes among those in need)," enhancing clarity by replacing "old stuff" with more precise terminology. All items were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This measurement structure allowed for robust collection of participants' perceptions regarding responsible consumption and their attitudes toward future generations and the purchase of eco-friendly products. Following expert validation, a pretest of the questionnaire was conducted with a pilot sample, yielding a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .91. This result indicates a high level of internal consistency among the items.

To control bias in the common method variance, the single-factor Harman test (Podsakoff *et al*., 2003) was applied, revealing the absence of bias, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to assess the normality of the data in each country, confirming that all samples present a normal distribution. This allows for a more precise analysis of the heterogeneity between countries in sustainable consumption behavior. Furthermore, multicollinearity was mitigated by inspecting the correlation matrix, conducting an exploratory factor analysis with principal-axis factoring and Varimax rotation, and removing items exhibiting high cross-loadings. Residual multicollinearity was then assessed through the Variance Inflation Factor; all indicators yielded VIF values below 4.0, confirming the absence of multicollinearity and thus supporting the discriminant validity of the latent constructs.

Table 2
Items

Variable	Item	Description	Source
Awareness of future generations	AFG1	I always remember that my excessive consumption can make it difficult for future generations to meet their basic needs.	Quoquab *et al*. (2019) ; Fischer *et al*. (2017).
	AFG2	I care about meeting the needs of the next generation.	
	AFG3	I often think about the quality of life of future generations.	

Responsible consumption habits	RCH1	I always strive to reduce the misuse of goods and services (for example, I turn off the lights and fan when I'm not in the room).	Quoquab *et al.* (2019) ; Fischer *et al.* (2017).
	RCH2	I use applications and digital tools to minimize the need for paper and thus reduce my environmental impact.	
	RCH3	When I eat at a restaurant, I only order the amount I can eat to avoid wasting food.	
	RCH4	I don't like to waste food or drink.	
	RCH5	I recycle unused or unusable items in every possible way (for example, I distribute old clothes to those in need).	
	RCH6	I prefer to bring my own reusable bag when shopping to reduce the consumption of disposable plastic bags.	
Purchase of environmentally friendly products	EFPB1	I use eco-friendly products and services.	
	EFPB2	I buy and use environmentally friendly and non-aggressive products.	
	EFPB3	I often pay extra money to buy eco-friendly products (for example, organic food).	

Source. Prepared by the authors.

PLS-SEM Statistical Analysis

To analyze data and test hypotheses, the PLS-SEM method was applied using SmartPLS4 (v.4.0.8). PLS-SEM is suitable for exploratory research focused on prediction, offering advantages over CB-SEM methods like AMOS (Henseler *et al*., 2016). The analysis followed a two-step approach: first, assessing reliability and validity of the measurement model (Chin, 1998); second, evaluating the structural model to test hypotheses on the mediating effect of responsible consumption habits between awareness of future generations and eco-friendly product purchase.To achieve this, the following analyses were conducted: a) collinearity assessment (VIF); b) coefficient of determination (R^2); c) effect size (f^2); d) predictive relevance (Q^2); e) effect size (q^2); f) predictive power analysis using PLSpredict; and g) path coefficients of the structural model to evaluate direct, indirect, and total effects among constructs (Hair *et al*., 2019; Sarstedt *et al*., 2022).

Results and discussion

Measurement Model Assessment, Reliability, and Validity

The evaluation of the measurement model of the estimated constructs involves analyzing the individual reliability of their indicators examined through their loadings, the construct reliability through Cronbach's Alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and the Dijkstra-Henseler statistic (rho_A). Convergent validity (AVE) and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) were assessed to evaluate the measurement model (Hair *et al*., 2019).

Indicator loadings and Cronbach's alpha should exceed 0.7 (Hair *et al*., 2019). Composite reliability (CR) requires values above 0.6 or 0.7 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), while rho_A should exceed 0.6 (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015). AVE values must be above 0.5 (Chin, 2009). Table 3 confirms acceptable reliability and validity.

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Table 3
Reliability and Validity

Construcción	Item	Loadings	CA	CR	rho_A	AVE
Responsible consumption habits	RCH1	0.896	0.86	0.896	0.861	0.589
	RCH2	0.882				
	RCH3	0.872				
	RCH4	0.836				
	RCH5	0.886				
	RCH6	0.826				
Awareness of future generations	AFG1	0.802	0.934	0.948	0.934	0.751
	AFG2	0.817				
	AFG3	0.786				
	AFG4	0.774				
	AFG5	0.727				
	AFG6	0.693				
Purchase of environmentally friendly products	EFPB1	0.841	0.885	0.929	0.897	0.814
	EFPB2	0.938				
	EFPB3	0.924				

Source. Prepared by the author with SMART-PLS data.

Table 4 presents discriminant validity data using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, revealing that there are no problems between variables that could have the same meaning (Henseler and Sarstedt, 2013; Hair *et al*., 2019). In addition, following the recommendations of Henseler *et al*. (2015), the heterotrait-monotrait relationship analysis test (HTMT) was applied, whose values were below the criterion of 0.85, more effectively demonstrating the existence of discriminant validity. This leads to the conclusion that there are no issues with variables potentially having the same meaning (Henseler and Sarstedt, 2013; Hair *et al*., 2019). Thus, the first part of the analysis concludes that the study has high validity and reliability.

Table 4
Discriminant Validity

	Fornell and Lacker criterion			HTMT criterion	
Construct	RCH	AFG	EFPB	RCH	AFG
Responsible consumption habits RCH	0.768				
Awareness of future generations AFG	0.71	0.867		0.792	
Purchase of environmentally friendly products EFPB	0.65	0.669	0.902	0.738	0.734

Source. Created by the author using SMART-PLS data.

Evaluation of the Structural Model

This section outlines the hypothesis testing is to evaluate the structural model. For this, it is necessary to analyze the collinearity of the structural model through the variance inflation factor (VIF) and the statistical significance of the path coefficients (Hair *et al*., 2019). The analysis revealed that most of the items had VIF values below 3.701, indicating acceptable levels of collinearity, with values ranging from 1.459 to 3.806. Although some items, such as "I worry about meeting the needs of the next generation" (VIF = 3.806) and "I buy and use environmentally friendly products" (VIF = 3.701), show moderate collinearity, they remain within permissible limits (Hair *et al*., 2019). No significant collinearity issues were observed that would affect the reliable estimation of the path coefficients of the model.

The next step was to analyze the data based on R^2, where a value of $R^2 = 0.504$ was identified for the endogenous variable Responsible consumption habits and a value of $R^2 = 0.509$ for the variable Eco-friendly purchasing behavior. Subsequently, the effect size was analyzed through predictive relevance, which showed that the relationship between Awareness of future generations and Responsible consumption habits has a large effect size ($f^2 = 1.017$), indicating substantial influence. The relationship between Awareness of future generations and Eco-friendly purchasing behavior presents a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.177$), while the relationship between Responsible consumption habits and Eco-friendly purchasing behavior shows a small effect size ($f^2 = 0.125$), suggesting a lesser, yet significant, influence in both relationships. These results highlight the practical significance of the relationships between the exogenous construct and its associated endogenous variables (Hair *et al*. 2021).

Predictive Ability Test with Cross-Validation (CVPAT)

After analyzing the R^2 values, a predictive ability test with cross-validation (Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test) (CVPAT) was conducted. CVPAT evaluates the predictive ability of a research model through a global inferential statistical test (Liengaard *et al*., 2021). We conducted the analysis using PLS-Predict and determined that predictive accuracy was analyzed across all endogenous constructs in the research model simultaneously (Sharma *et al*., 2022). The results from the PLSPredict analysis show that the model has good predictive ability, with predictive Q^2 values of 0.503 for Responsible consumption habits and 0.446 for Eco-friendly purchasing behavior, indicating predictive relevance. The prediction errors (RMSE and MAE) are acceptable for both endogenous variables. Furthermore, loss comparisons between the PLS-SEM model and the indicator mean (IA) show that the PLS model has lower prediction loss ($p < 0.001$), confirming superior performance. Although the comparison with the linear model (LM) also reveals a slight advantage for PLS-SEM for Responsible consumption habits ($t = 4.027$, $p < 0.001$), the difference in Eco-friendly purchasing behavior is not significant ($p = 0.094$), suggesting comparable performance in this variable. In other words, both models, PLS-SEM and LM, exhibit similar predictive performance for Eco-friendly purchasing behavior (Shmueli *et al*., 2019).

Print ISSN: 1390-6291; Electronic ISSN: 1390-8618

Table 5

Cross-Validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT)

Construct	Q^2 predict	RMSE	MAE	Loss PLS	Loss IA	Mean Difference (PLS - IA)	p value (PLS vs IA)	Loss LM	Mean Difference (PLS - LM)	p value (PLS vs LM)
Responsible consumption habits	0.503	0.706	0.546	0.867	1.226	-0.359	0.0	0.845	0.022	0
Purchase of environmentally friendly products	0.446	0.745	0.595	0.866	1.346	-0.481	0.0	0.854	0.011	0.094

Source. Created by the author using SMART-PLS data.

Analysis of Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects Among Constructs Using Path Coefficients from the Structural Model

For the analysis of direct, indirect, and total effects among latent variables, a statistical significance analysis of the path coefficients was conducted. According to Hair *et al*. (2019) and Kline (2023), a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples was performed to generate t statistics and confidence intervals (Table 6), organizing the complex relationships of the structural model and identifying both direct influences and mediating effects.

The analysis of the path coefficients reveals that Awareness of future generations has a significant effect on Responsible consumption habits (H1: $\beta = 0.710$, $t = 42.246$, $p < 0.001$), with a confidence interval of 0.676 to 0.743. Similarly, Responsible consumption habits also significantly influence Eco-friendly purchasing behavior (H2: $\beta = 0.352$, $t = 12.485$, $p < 0.001$), with a confidence interval between 0.298 and 0.410. Furthermore, Awareness of future generations has a positive and significant impact on Eco-friendly purchasing behavior (H3: $\beta = 0.419$, $t = 14.048$, $p < 0.001$), with a confidence interval between 0.358 and 0.475.

Regarding the indirect effects, the impact of Awareness of future generations on Eco-friendly purchasing behavior, mediated by Responsible consumption habits, is also significant ($\beta = 0.250$, $t = 12.104$, $p < 0.001$), with a confidence interval from 0.211 to 0.292. This confirms the mediating role of Responsible consumption habits in this relationship.

When evaluating the total effects, the cumulative impact of Awareness of future generations on Eco-friendly purchasing behavior is considerable ($\beta = 0.669$, $t = 40.495$, $p < 0.001$), with a confidence interval between 0.635 and 0.700. This result underscores the relevance of concerns for future generations, both directly and mediated through responsible consumption habits.

Table 6

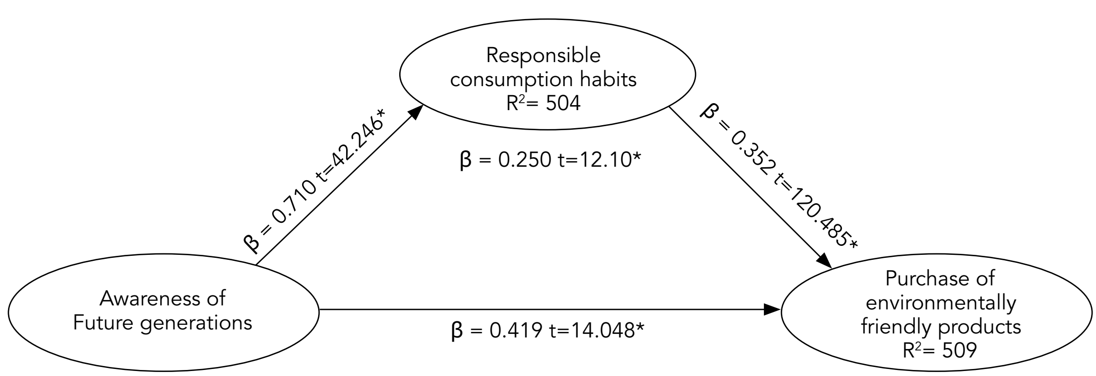
Direct, indirect, and total effects among constructs

Relationship	Original Coefficient (O)	t-Value	p-Value	Confidence Interval (5%-95%)
Direct Effects				
Awareness of future generations → Responsible consumption habits	0.710	42.246	0.001	0.676 - 0.743
Awareness of future generations → Purchase of environmentally friendly products	0.419	14.048	0.001	0.358 - 0.475

Responsible consumption habits → Purchase of environmentally friendly products	0.352	12.485	0.001	0.298 - 0.410
Specific Indirect Effects				
Awareness of future generations → Responsible consumption habits → Purchase of environmentally friendly products	0.250	12.104	0	0.211 - 0.292
Total Effects				
Awareness of future generations → Responsible consumption habits	0.710	42.246	0.001	0.676 - 0.743
Awareness of future generations → Purchase of environmentally friendly products	0.669	40.495	0.001	0.635 - 0.700
Responsible consumption habits → Purchase of environmentally friendly products	0.352	12.485	0.001	0.298 - 0.410

The results from Table 6 indicate that Awareness of future generations not only has a significant direct impact on eco-friendly purchasing behavior ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$) but also exerts a significant influence through the mediation of Responsible consumption habits (β indirect = 0.250, $p < 0.001$). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), and supported by Preacher and Hayes (2008), this indicates a partial mediation, as both the direct and indirect effects are significant (Hair *et al.*, 2019). These findings reinforce the importance of responsible consumption habits in adopting sustainable behaviors (See figure 2).

Figure 2
Research model results



Effect of demographic variables and multi-group analysis on eco-friendly purchasing behavior

Additionally, two control variables were incorporated into the model: age and gender, with the purpose of exploring their effect on eco-friendly purchasing behavior. The results showed that men (value 0) are more likely to engage in eco-friendly purchasing behavior compared to women (value 1), with a P-value of less than 0.05 (0.002). On the other hand, age has a direct impact on individuals' propensity

Print ISSN: 1390-6291; Electronic ISSN: 1390-8618

to purchase eco-friendly products, with a P-value of 0.009, indicating that as the participants' age increases, so does their eco-friendly purchasing behavior (see Table 7).

Table 7

Comparison of effects with control variables

Relation	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Awareness of future generations → Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	0.406	0.406	0.033	12.144	0
Awareness of future generations → Responsible consumption habits	0.726	0.726	0.018	39.568	0
Responsible consumption habits → Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	0.381	0.381	0.032	11.969	0
Age Range → Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	0.050	0.051	0.019	2.597	0.009
Sex → Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	-0.125	-0.125	0.040	3.152	0

Furthermore, a multi-group analysis (MGA) was conducted to identify differences between the countries. As shown in Table 8, Argentina presents a significant difference in the relationship between awareness of future generations and responsible consumption habits with all countries. In the case of Mexico, a difference is added in the relationship between habits and purchasing behavior. Chile shows differences with Colombia, Mexico, and Peru in the relationship between sociodemographic variables and eco-friendly purchasing behavior. Additionally, in the case of Colombia, a difference is observed between awareness of future generations and responsible consumption habits, while Colombia and Mexico show differences in the relationship between awareness of future generations and eco-friendly purchasing behavior. Finally, Peru does not show significant differences with Colombia and Mexico. According to Sarstedt *et al*. (2011), MGA is a robust technique in SEM-PLS to detect statistically significant differences between groups when examining complex behavioral relationships.

Table 8

Cross-Country comparison of effects

		Argentina vs Chile	Argentina vs Colombia	Argentina vs Mexico	Argentina vs Peru	Chile vs Colombia	Chile vs Mexico	Chile vs Peru	Colombia vs Mexico	Colombia vs Peru	Mexico vs Peru
Awareness of future generations → Eco-friendly purchasing	Coefficient	0.031	-0.077	0.163	0.065	-0.108	0.132	0.034	0.240	0.143	-0.098
	2-tailed (Group_1 vs Group_2) p value	0.754	0.400	0.118	0.566	0.347	0.294	0.799	0.041*	0.259	0.472
Awareness of future generations → Responsible consumption habits	Coefficient	-0.227	-0.122	-0.208	-0.204	0.105	0.019	0.023	-0.086	-0,082	0.005
	2-tailed (Group_1 vs Group_2) p value	0.000**	0	0.000**	0.000**	0.029*	0.657	0.571	0.092	0,103	0.911

		Argentina vs Chile	Argentina vs Colombia	Argentina vs México	Argentina vs Peru	Chile vs Colombia	Chile vs México	Chile vs Peru	Colombia vs México	Colombia vs Peru	México vs Peru
Responsible consumption habits → Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	Coefficient	-0.089	0.010	-0.187	-0.113	0.099	-0.097	-0.024	-0.197	-0.123	0.073
	2-tailed (Group_1 vs Group_2) p value	0.358	0.908	0.045	0.277	0.375	0.410	0.844	0.070	0.295	0.556
Age →Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	Coefficient	-0.072	0	0.072	0.114	0.103	0.144	0.186	0.041	0.083	0.042
	2-tailed (Group_1 vs Group_2) p value	0.187	0.575	0.180	0.095	0.068	0.009*	0.007*	0.467	0.238	0.541
Sex → Eco-friendly purchasing behavior	Coefficient	0.122	-0.115	-0.006	0.033	-0.238	-0.128	-0.089	0.110	0.149	0.039
	2-tailed (Group_1 vs Group_2) p value	0.278	0.336	0.971	0.785	0.038*	0.311	0.438	0.411	0.222	0.777

Note. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.001.

Considering that the results of the multi-group analysis show a negative value in the difference between path coefficients, it is possible to interpret that the comparison group (i.e., Group 2) has a higher coefficient than the reference group (Group 1). Therefore, Argentina has a lower effect between awareness of future generations and responsible consumption habits compared to Chile (-0.227), Colombia (-0.122), Mexico (-0.208), and Peru (-0.204). On the other hand, the effect of age has a greater impact in Chile compared to Mexico (0.144) and Peru (0.186). Meanwhile, compared to Colombia, Chile has a stronger effect in the relationship between awareness of future generations and responsible consumption habits, as well as the effect of gender (0.105). Finally, Peru does not show significant differences with Colombia and Mexico, while Colombia has a greater effect of awareness of future generations on eco-friendly purchasing behavior compared to Mexico (0.240).

In Latin America, environmental problems are increasing, as evidenced by biodiversity loss, resource overconsumption, and the expansion of polluting solid waste. Therefore, it is necessary to design more responsible consumption strategies. In this regard, analyzing the role of awareness toward future generations, sustainable consumption habits, and eco-friendly purchasing becomes relevant, as these variables can modulate the transition from attitudinal motivation to actual purchasing and consumption behavior. Consequently, understanding how intergenerational responsibility motivations can facilitate daily routines, and how these routines translate into more sustainable purchasing decisions, allows the design of strategies that go beyond awareness campaigns. Moreover, exploring their relationships in contexts of inequality and informality from an integrative and multinational perspective helps identify management opportunities where public policies can maximize their impact on consumer behavior.

This research was conducted among consumers in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, confirming that awareness toward future generations drives sustainable consumption habits and, through them, can promote eco-friendly purchases. These explanatory relationships complement previous studies,

Print ISSN: 1390-6291; Electronic ISSN: 1390-8618

expanding the domain of knowledge and environmental concerns as drivers of sustainable consumption behavior (Lavuri, 2022; Saari *et al*., 2021). The application of the study across five Latin American countries provides empirical and comparative richness that strengthens its external validity. Although these countries share certain structural challenges related to development, inequality, and environmental crisis, they also present specific social, political, and economic characteristics, making it crucial to observe variations and common patterns in sustainable behavior (Acevedo-Duque *et al*., 2023). The diversity of context allowed capturing cultural nuances that influence how consumers internalize environmental responsibility, reinforcing the need to design differentiated, culturally sensitive, and territorially specific policies and campaigns.

While earlier literature described moderate or inconsistent effects of awareness toward future generations on eco-friendly purchases (Seyfang, 2013; Wei *et al*., 2017), the present research offers a different reading: when habits are placed at the center of the model, the influence of awareness toward future generations is strengthened. In line with Norm Activation Theory (Schwartz, 1977), attitudinal (moral) motivation activates personal norms, but these norms must be translated into practices (habits of reducing, reusing, recycling) before becoming purchases. Without this intermediate layer (Seyfang, 2013), the intention to purchase decreases. In contrast, the chain from awareness toward future generations sustainable consumption habits eco-friendly purchases operates consistently, despite highly dissimilar socioeconomic contexts.

This result challenges studies that identify income as the main driver of green purchasing (Wei *et al*., 2017). Our analysis suggests that in Latin America, collective moral pressure based on intergenerational awareness can counteract the lack of purchasing power or limited supply of certified products. However, the presence of structural barriers (informality, precarious infrastructure, and lack of uniform sustainability standards) can threaten the promotion of sustainable habits and, in turn, eco-friendly purchasing (Barros *et al*., 2021; Sylvester, 2024; Shree *et al*., 2024). Therefore, although awareness toward future generations partially neutralizes the status logic (Gorga *et al*., 2024), it does not eliminate it. Hence, we argue that economic incentives and upward social mobility policies are still needed to strengthen the link between attitudes and behavior.

On the other hand, the findings related to the gender variable suggest greater complexity. Unlike patterns found in Northern economies, the data show a slight male advantage in eco-friendly purchasing. This result aligns with the role of provider in patriarchal societies, that is, the tendency of men to protect the future well-being of the family. Similarly, the results suggest that the influence of age on sustainable consumption practices intensifies when people attribute more importance to awareness toward future generations. In other words, older consumers tend to adopt sustainable behaviors more than younger ones, and this effect becomes even more pronounced when intergenerational motivation is particularly strong.

Among other contributions of the study and considering that the main objective was to integrate and explain the variables of interest, the multigroup analysis (Sarstedt *et al*., 2011) reveals nationally relevant nuances. Argentina shows a weaker link between awareness of future generations and sustainable consumption habits, perhaps because its formal eco-friendly market is still emerging; Chile highlights age and gender effects, consistent with a more developed sustainable market; Colombia exhibits the strongest relationship between awareness of future generations and eco-friendly purchases, possibly due to the growing visibility and media attention on sustainability (Alzamora-Ruiz *et al*., 2020). Far from contradicting the global logic, these differences illustrate how the same intergenerational awareness and concern can influence consumption habits and eco-friendly purchases with varying intensities, depending on local barriers informality in Peru, inequality in Mexico, relative costs in Argentina, and inequality in Chile.

This study presents three main limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prevents determining the temporal sequence between variables, limiting causal conclusions. Second, the use of online surveys excludes people with limited digital access, reducing the representativeness of the sample. Third, structural variables such as the level of informality or the price of sustainable products were not included, limiting the understanding of the economic context. Future research should consider longitudinal studies and complementary methods such as interviews, purchase records, or field experiments. It is also recommended to include macroeconomic variables to analyze how the environment affects sustainable behavior.

Finally, future lines of research could focus on longitudinal studies that analyze the evolution of sustainable behavior over time, as well as explore the role of digital technologies and social media as mediators of intergenerational awareness. It would also be relevant to deepen sectoral or local studies that consider variables such as gender, educational level, or ethnic background, to design more targeted interventions. It is recommended to extend the analysis to other Latin American countries and compare the results with regions of similar socioeconomic complexity in Africa or Asia, as well as with countries such as Brazil or those in North America. This broader scope would allow for the development of more robust and transferable comparative models, capable of capturing both regional specificities and global patterns in sustainable consumption behavior. Additionally, future studies could explore the influence of unsustainable industries (such as large-scale industrial agriculture or fast fashion) as potential barriers or moderating factors in the adoption of eco-friendly consumer habits.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that awareness of future generations plays a pivotal role in shaping sustainable consumption habits and purchasing behavior across five Latin American countries. Notably, this relationship holds even in settings marked by structural inequality and economic informality, underscoring the transformative potential of intergenerational ethics. By integrating Norm Activation Theory with the sociocultural characteristics of the region, and applying Multigroup Analysis (MGA) to examine cross-national variations, the research contributes meaningful insights to the literature on sustainability in emerging economies.

From a practical standpoint, the findings highlight the importance of developing both public and private campaigns that foster intergenerational awareness. These initiatives should not only appeal to shared long-term values but also be supported by concrete incentives—such as subsidies, accessible sustainability certifications, and inclusive marketing strategies. Such measures can enhance ecological consciousness, reinforce responsible consumption habits, and encourage purchasing behaviors aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In particular, the confirmation of all three proposed hypotheses *"(1) that future generations' awareness positively influences sustainable consumption habits, (2) that such habits positively influence eco-friendly purchasing decisions, and (3) that awareness indirectly influences green purchasing through responsible consumption"* provides a strong empirical basis to inform public administration and policy design. These findings support the goals outlined in SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production and suggest the need for comprehensive policy frameworks. Governments and institutions are urged to implement environmental regulations, tax incentives for sustainable practices, and widespread environmental education to raise social awareness. Additionally, sustained investment in scientific research and technological innovation is essential for advancing sustainable production systems. Taken together, these strategies can foster more efficient resource management, reduce environmental externalities, and promote behavioral shifts toward sustainable consumption on a scale.

Acknowledgments

This article is part of the academic activities of the Ibero-American Network for Education and Sustainable Business (RIDENS: https://

www.ridens.org), a collaborative initiative aimed at promoting research with academic rigor and social purpose throughout Ibero-America.

Support and funding

This project did not receive funding or financial support.

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Declaration of auhorship - CRediT Taxonomy

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Print ISSN: 1390-6291; Electronic ISSN: 1390-8618