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# Sustainable Consumption Promotion: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

Amid growing concerns about environmental pollution and resource depletion, studies on sustainable consumption and its encouragement have gained considerable research attention. However, research on promoting sustainable consumption remains underdeveloped and requires further exploration and systematization. The present study aims to provide a comprehensive perspective on the topic of sustainable consumption and its promotion. This research systematically reviews the relevant literature on this topic and synthesizes existing knowledge by recognizing seven main strategies used in sustainable consumption promotion. Our findings offer a structured framework that integrates fragmented research, advances the understanding of psychological barriers and decision-making processes in sustainability, and challenges the perception of sustainability as a trade-off by highlighting both personal and societal benefits. A key implication of our study is that a positive approach leveraging favorable affective states—such as pride, inspiration, and wellbeing—emerges as a critical driver of lasting motivation that can sustain pro-environmental behaviors over time. These findings provide valuable insights for both academics and industry professionals. Finally, we outline an agenda for future research to stimulate further advances in the field.

## 1 | Introduction

Sustainable development, a pressing concern for governments, marketers, and policymakers worldwide, is viewed as a pathway to ensure a viable future for our planet by focusing on individual wellbeing and environmental conservation (Foroudi et al. 2023; White et al. 2019). Sustainable consumption is considered a key driver of this development, emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 (Abdulrazak and Quoquab 2018; UN 2016). It refers to consumption that meets basic human needs while avoiding excess and prioritizing environmental welfare and future generations' needs (Quoquab and Mohammad 2020).

Interest in sustainable consumption is rising among both consumers, who are becoming more aware of their actions'

consequences, and companies, which are committed to adopting more sustainable practices (e.g., Carter et al. 2021; Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Iyer and Soberman 2016; van der Wal et al. 2018). Consumers are increasingly confronted with the negative impacts of unsustainable behavior, such as pollution and resource depletion, and as they become aware of the fragile state of the environment, they are more likely to appreciate environmentally sustainable practices (Gleim et al. 2013; van der Wal et al. 2018). This growing interest is also reflected in the expanding body of academic research on pro-environmental consumer behavior, which examines the traits of green consumers, explores predictors and influencing factors, identifies barriers to sustainable choices, develops theoretical consumption models, and evaluates strategies for effective promotion (e.g., Dixon and Mikolon 2021; Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014; Haws et al. 2014; Huang

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and Rust 2011; Lee and Winterich 2022; Strizhakova and Coulter 2013). Research in leading journals covers various aspects of sustainable consumption, including influencing drivers (e.g., Caprioli et al. 2023; Taylor and Noseworthy 2020), various types of sustainable behavior (e.g., Godfrey et al. 2022; Kingston 2021), actors involved (e.g., Roggeveen et al. 2021; Vadakkepatt et al. 2021), and consumer perspectives on company and peer behaviors (e.g., Gillani et al. 2023; Olson et al. 2021). Additionally, studies examine the relationships between sustainable consumption and factors like wealth and social status (Bellezza 2023; Olson et al. 2016; Yan et al. 2021). However, research on promoting sustainable consumption is less frequent and often yields contradictory results.

This last type of investigation will be the subject of the present literature review. Although marketplace polls attest that there are more and more consumers interested in consuming sustainably, inducing consumers to actually purchase sustainable products/services remains a difficult challenge (Edinger-Schons et al. 2018; Gleim et al. 2013; OECD 2008; Zane et al. 2016). Policymakers and scientists stress the need for action to change consumption patterns (Cakanlar et al. 2023), with marketing playing a crucial role (Achrol and Kotler 2012). Marketers call for more research to understand how to increase green consumption practices by enhancing consumer interest and knowledge (Gleim et al. 2013; White and Simpson 2013).

Thus, how to effectively promote sustainable consumption remains an open question. This review aims to analyze and systematize studies on sustainable consumption promotion to provide a comprehensive perspective, organize existing findings, and identify gaps and future research directions. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: What is the current knowledge on sustainable consumption promotion? What strategies have been investigated? What are the key findings, and what gaps still exist? By conducting a systematic literature review of top marketing and ethics journals, we aim to clarify these questions. The present study contributes to the literature on sustainable consumption in five key ways. First, it systematizes research on sustainable consumption promotion, offering a structured framework that clarifies existing knowledge and identifies gaps for future research. Second, it connects sustainability marketing strategies with consumer psychology, highlighting cognitive and perceptual biases that hinder sustainable choices. Third, it reframes sustainability as a “win-win” decision, integrating both self-interest and prosocial benefits. Fourth, it underscores the shift toward positive approaches, emphasizing emotional engagement and motivation. Finally, it explores non-explicit strategies, such as nudging, priming, and branding, to shape long-term sustainable behaviors. Furthermore, this study outlines a future research agenda for scholars and offers actionable guidance for practitioners seeking to enhance sustainable consumption.

## 2 | Review Strategy

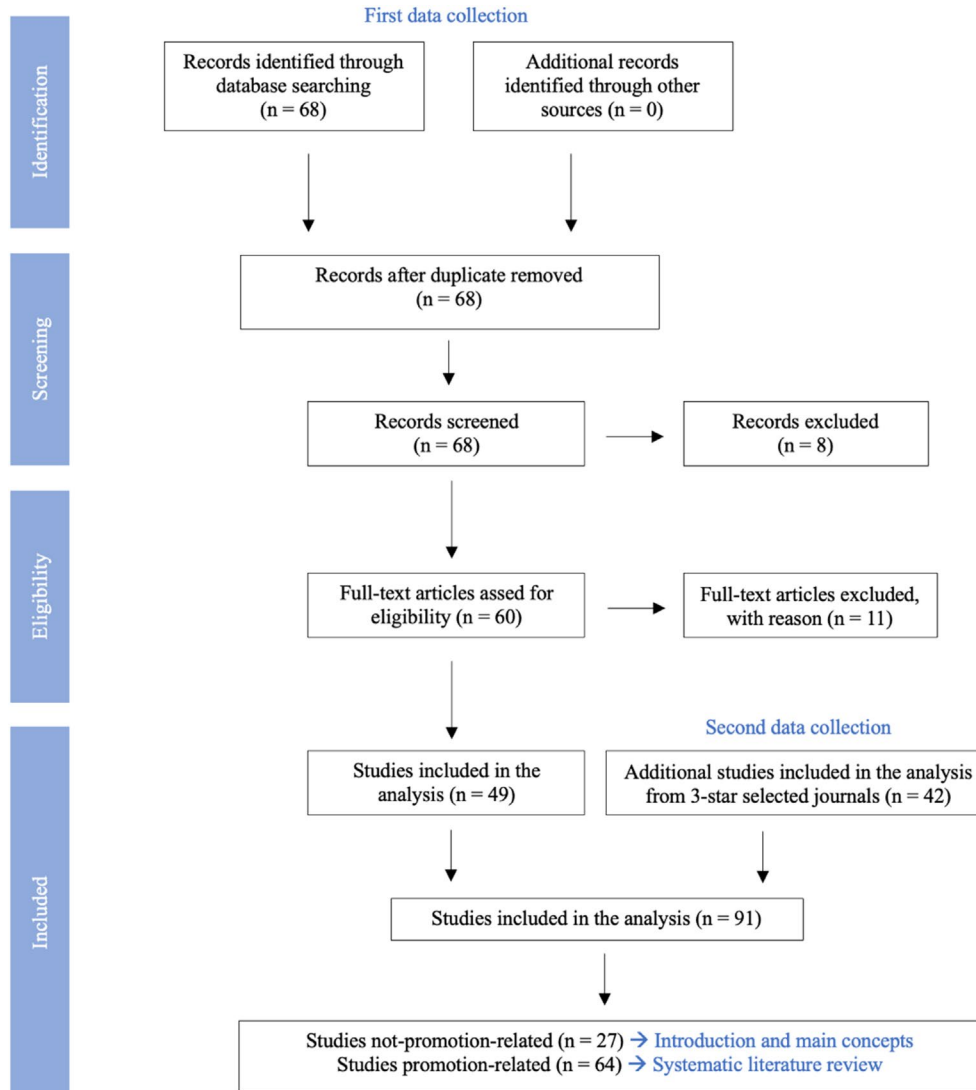
Literature evaluations can take various forms to uniquely contribute to theory (Fan et al. 2022; Yadav and Bansal 2021). To address the research questions, we employed a systematic

literature review by identifying, gathering, and analyzing relevant literature (Wright et al. 2007). This rigorous approach provides an overview of a research field and its results (Fischer et al. 2017). Systematic reviews are defined as “a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners” (Fink 2009, 3). Importantly, a systematic literature review is not just an introductory component but “itself a research study, addressing research questions and using the literature as data to be coded, analyzed and synthesized to reach overall conclusions” (Ridley 2012, 190). It also satisfies the need for orientation amidst the rapidly growing body of publications (Ridley 2012). Our goal in conducting this review is to contribute to a broader research agenda by exploring existing studies and identifying directions for future investigations.

Various methods can be used to conduct a systematic literature review (e.g., Bubphapant and Brandão 2024). This study follows a theme-based structured review approach, examining and synthesizing research focused on specific themes (e.g., Hao et al. 2021; Paul et al. 2017; Rana and Paul 2017; Rosado-Serrano et al. 2018). The theme this research focused on is the fostering of sustainable consumption behavior that, as addressed in this research, refers to a distinct form of prosocial action focused on reducing harm to the environment. It embodies a balance between self-interest and a sense of responsibility toward the well-being of others, including future generations, other species, and the planet's ecosystems as a whole (Bamberg and Möser 2007; Yan et al. 2021). We define sustainable consumption promotion as the strategic efforts and initiatives aimed at encouraging consumers to adopt behaviors, purchasing choices, and lifestyle changes that minimize environmental impact, conserve resources, and support social equity. This includes not only promoting the purchase of sustainable products but also fostering behaviors such as recycling, energy conservation, waste reduction, and mindful consumption. Through a range of strategies, sustainable consumption promotion seeks to build awareness, motivation, and long-term habit changes that contribute to sustainable development. Our review strategy involves collecting data on this topic and then summarizing the main directions and key findings from the literature to chart a path for future research (e.g., Hao et al. 2021; Mishra et al. 2021; Paul and Feliciano-Cestero 2021).

### 2.1 | Data Collection and Analysis

Consistent with prior reviews (e.g., Rosado-Serrano et al. 2018), our analysis commenced by selecting all journals ranked 4\* or 4 in the *Marketing and General Management, Ethics, Gender, and Social Responsibility* categories of the Association of Business Schools (ABS) (see Appendix S1 for details). After identifying the journals for the analysis, the study proceeded through the following steps: (i) determining the data source (database); (ii) identifying articles; and (iii) defining inclusion/exclusion criteria. Data were collected from Scopus, a widely used database among social science researchers (e.g., Fischer et al. 2017; Nangia et al. 2023). The literature search criteria included: (i) articles had to be published no earlier than 2008 to still be considered relevant; (ii) articles had to mention specific keywords



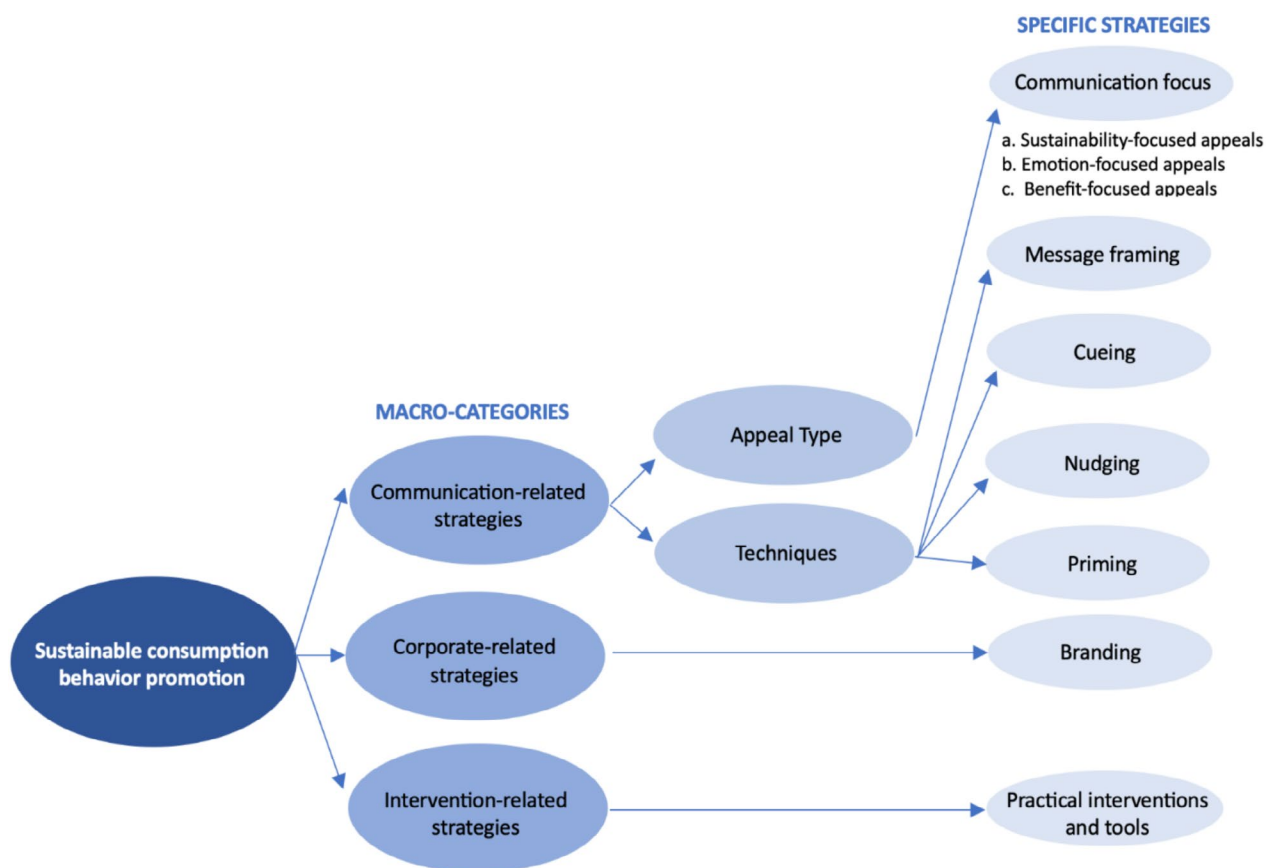
**FIGURE 1** | Data collection and screening steps of the review (PRISMA Flow Diagram, Moher et al. 2009).

in the title, abstract, or keywords (e.g., Rana and Paul 2017; Rosado-Serrano et al. 2018). In this first collection phase, we used broad, general keywords related to sustainable consumption. This choice was informed by previous studies (e.g., Nangia et al. 2023; Wang et al. 2019; White et al. 2019) and aimed to capture a wide-ranging corpus of articles to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the broader landscape of sustainable consumption literature. The keywords included: *sustainable consumption, sustainable consumer behavior, green consumption, ethical consumption, environmentally conscious consumption, eco-friendly consumption, sustainable purchasing, sustainable products, circular economy and consumption, responsible consumption*.

We identified 68 publications between 2008 and 2024. Using the PRISMA protocol (Moher et al. 2009; see Figure 1), we conducted a double-step screening, removing a total of 19 false positives that did not directly concern sustainable consumption behavior. Based on previous research (Mishra et al. 2021), a comprehensive thematic analysis was conducted on the remaining 49 papers. We divided the papers into those specifically dealing with the promotion of sustainable consumption

(= 22) and those discussing other aspects of sustainable consumption (= 27), such as sustainability issues from a consumer perspective, theoretical advances in sustainability and consumption, and analysis of specific types of sustainable consumption (see Appendix S2 for details). Based on existing reviews (White et al. 2019), the articles non-promotion-related were used to frame the introduction and outline the main concepts.

The classification process of the thematic analysis allowed us to further divide the promotion-related papers into seven categories, based on the specific types of strategies examined within each study (communication focus; message framing; cueing; nudging; priming; branding; and practical interventions and tools). This process involved systematically coding and grouping the strategies investigated in each study into distinct thematic clusters. To preserve analytical clarity, each study was assigned to a single category based on the primary strategy emphasized or manipulated in its design, ensuring a mutually exclusive categorization. After defining the seven main categories, we grouped them into three macro categories through thematic analysis (communication-related



**FIGURE 2** | Strategies investigated in sustainable consumption promotion literature.

strategies; corporate-related strategies; and intervention-related strategies).<sup>1</sup>

Once the seven categories were identified, a second, more focused round of data collection was conducted to expand the scope of the review and increase its comprehensiveness. Based on previous work (White et al. 2019), we expanded the study by adding specific keywords related to the seven categories and the concept of promotion: *promotion, promote, communication, appeal, framing, frame, cueing, cue, nudging, nudge, priming, prime, branding, and intervention, tool* (see Appendix S2 for details). The goal of this second phase was to delve deeper into specific areas that emerged from the first phase and to enrich our findings further. We refined our search to include three ABS-ranked journals in marketing, psychology, and economics, and then selected the journals with the highest number of publications relevant to the topic: *European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Business Ethics, and Journal of Business Research, Psychology and Marketing*. This allowed us to identify 42 additional articles. Our final review includes 91 articles. All articles were reviewed to find their most prominent contributions and theoretical and practical viewpoints (Bansal et al. 2022).

### 3 | Strategies for Sustainable Consumption Promotion

Our literature review analyzes 64 promotion-related papers (22 retained from the first data collection and 42 retained from the

second data collection) and categorizes them into three macro-categories (see Figure 2). Communication-related strategies focus on shaping consumer perceptions through persuasive messaging. They include sub-categories such as message framing, cueing, nudging, and priming, all of which modify how sustainability-related information is presented to enhance effectiveness. Corporate-related strategies primarily involve branding, which helps businesses establish a long-term association between sustainability and their brand identity. Unlike communication techniques that operate at the message level, branding functions at a broader, systemic level, influencing consumer attitudes over time. Intervention-related strategies consist of practical interventions and tools designed to directly alter consumer behavior.

These three macro-categories encompass seven specific sub-categories, grouped according to their conceptual alignment. Communication-related strategies are further divided into different types of appeals (sustainability-focused, benefit-focused, and emotion-focused) and communication techniques applicable to these appeals (message framing, cueing, nudging, and priming). Corporate-related strategies consist of branding, while intervention-related strategies incorporate practical intervention and tools that encourage sustainable consumption.

This categorization helps clarify the mechanisms through which these strategies operate, offering a framework for both researchers and practitioners to evaluate their effectiveness in influencing consumer behavior. Table 1 provides a summary of the articles for each category (refer to Appendix S3 for details).

**TABLE 1** | Overview of the main strategies investigated within the final sample of studies on sustainable consumption promotion.

Macro-categories		Strategies investigated in sustainable consumption promotion		No. of paper	Description	Examples	References
Sub-categories	Appeal type	Communication focus		N=29	<i>Sustainability-focused appeals</i> (n = 13): focus on product attributes that highlights its alignment with eco-friendly principles and/or ethical practices	“One of the most environmentally friendly products in the industry”; “90% of our ingredients are grown on organic farms” (Chernev and Blair 2021; Herédia-Colaço and Blair 2021; Chernev and Blair 2017; Mannem et al. 2023; Royo et al. 2018; Van Doorn et al. 2021; Winterich et al. 2019)	Acuti et al. 2023; Amatulli et al. 2021; Bodur et al. 2015; Chen et al. 2019; Chen and Liu 2023; Chernev and Blair 2021; Herédia-Colaço and Coelho do Vale 2018; Kidwell et al. 2013; Luchs and Kumar 2017; Mannem et al. 2023; Royo et al. 2018; Van Doorn et al. 2021; Winterich et al. 2019
					<i>Benefit-focused appeals</i> (n = 11): emphasize the beneficiary of support. Self-benefit appeals highlight personal gains, other-benefit appeals highlight benefits to others	“Buying FairTrade jeans benefits you”; “Buying FairTrade jeans benefits workers” (self-benefit vs. other-benefit appeal; Royo et al. 2020)	Chen and Wei 2023; Edinger-Schons et al. 2018; Kapoor et al. 2023; Moes et al. 2022; Peattie and Peattie 2009; Pichierri and Peluso 2023; Royo et al. 2020; Shang and Pelozo 2016; Tully and Winer 2014; White and Simpson 2013; Yang et al. 2015
					<i>Emotion-focused appeals</i> (n = 5): focus primarily on eliciting specific emotions, such as guilt, pride, awe or inspiration, to motivate sustainable behavior	“Please savor the moments that make you feel grateful”; “For every moment you are proud of” (Liang and Guo 2021; Septianto et al. 2021)	Chen and Moosmayer 2020; Liang and Guo 2021; Septianto et al. 2021; Yan et al. 2024; Yan and Murray 2023
	Techniques	Message framing		N=11	Technique involving the use of different frames to present the same information can influence consumers' perception and sustainable behavioral response. The studies that investigate this technique generally compare two types of opposing frames	“By joining this program we will save over 60,000 tons of paper”; “By not joining this program we will waste over 60,000 tons of paper” (positive vs. negative framing; Do et al. 2021)	Amatulli et al. 2019; Do et al. 2021; Grappi et al. 2024; Gupta and Sen 2013; Kamal et al. 2022; Moon et al. 2016; Olsen et al. 2014; Tangari et al. 2015; Tran and Papatoidamis 2021; van der Wal et al. 2018; Zhang et al. 2023
		Cueing		N=12	Technique employing different types of explicit cues or signals, both verbal and nonverbal, to guide people's attention and sustainable behavior	Sad faces (anthropomorphic cues); sustainable labels (environmental cues); songs promoting ethicality (auditory cues) (Ketron and Naletelich 2019; Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Naletelich 2019; Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020; Yoganathan et al. 2019)	Bezençon et al. 2020; Cornelissen et al. 2008; Cozzio et al. 2020; Dermody et al. 2018; Ketron and Naletelich 2019; Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020; Luchs et al. 2010; Pancer et al. 2017; Pinto et al. 2020; Sekhon and Armstrong Soule 2020; Spielmann 2021; Yoganathan et al. 2019

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Macro-categories	Sub-categories	Strategies investigated in sustainable consumption promotion	No. of paper	Description	Examples	References
	Nudging		N = 2	Strategy that uses indirect suggestions to influence people's behavior toward sustainability without imposing restrictions or significant changes in available options	"Have you always used the energy-saving programs on your appliances in the last 3 months?" (hypocrisy nudge; Gamma et al. 2020)	Gamma et al. 2020; Sun et al. 2021
	Priming		N = 3	Technique that requires the exposure to a stimulus (words, images, concepts) to influence a person's sustainable consumption behavior in an unconscious way	"Remember the last time you were creative? Imagine the multitude of ways this metal can may still be useful" (creativity priming; Tarabashkina et al. 2022)	Brečić et al. 2021; Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020; Tarabashkina et al. 2022
Corporate-related strategies	Branding		N = 3	Process involving long-term strategic decisions about how a company or product line is positioned in relation to sustainability. It requires cross-functional efforts, influencing everything from product design to customer service and marketing communications	"bp Beyond Petrolum" (ethical branding; Smith et al. 2010).	Allard and McFerran 2022; Brough et al. 2016; Smith et al. 2010
Intervention-related strategies	Practical interventions and tools		N = 4	Tangible, action-oriented strategies and tools designed to directly facilitate sustainable behavior and used to positively influence people's behavior toward greater sustainability.	Socio-digital platform that facilitate consumer responsibility in food consumption (Parth et al. 2021)	Gonzalez-Arcos et al. 2021; Mulcahy et al. 2021; Parth et al. 2021; White et al. 2019
Total = 64						

### 3.1 | Communication Focus

Communication is a key tool for promoting sustainable consumption, serving as a vehicle for education, information, and relationship building (Peattie and Peattie 2009). Scholars have examined the effectiveness of various communication appeals based on different message focuses (sustainability-focused; benefit-focused; and emotion-focused), and the effectiveness of different communication techniques applied to these appeals (framing; cueing; nudging; and priming). Below we describe the types of appeals identified according to the main focus of communication (see Appendix S3 for details of the articles related to each category).

#### 3.1.1 | Sustainability-Focused Communication Appeals

Sustainability appeals intend to communicate mainly product attributes that highlight their alignment with eco-friendly principles and/or ethical practices, such as being environmentally sustainable or produced under fair trade standards (Van Doorn et al. 2021). The effectiveness of these appeals depends on various factors, including product type. Contrary to expectations, sustainability appeals do not always positively affect consumer behavior due to the sustainability-liability effect, where consumers perceive green products as less effective than regular ones (Chernev and Blair 2021). For example, sustainability appeals negatively impact new product introductions because sustainable attributes are perceived as signals of lower quality, increasing consumer uncertainty about new product functionality (Van Doorn et al. 2021). Consumers are more likely to choose sustainable products when trading off hedonic value rather than utilitarian value (Luchs and Kumar 2017). The sustainability-liability effect can be mitigated by high brand CSR perception and high product innovativeness (Van Doorn et al. 2021). Another technique to increase the effectiveness of sustainability appeals is emphasizing product transformation, that is, emphasizing the process of transforming materials that would otherwise be thrown away as trash into useful new products, which inspires consumers and motivates sustainable behavior (Winterich et al. 2019). An additional effective strategy is to combine ethical information with a power message, which emphasizes individuals' choices impact on mitigating environmental damage and enhances their purchase intentions (Mannem et al. 2023). Research also shows that ethical statements improve the evaluation of simple products but harm the evaluation of sophisticated products due to decreased enjoyment perception when both sophistication and sustainability levels increase (Herédia-Colaço and Coelho do Vale 2018). However, sustainability-focused communication is more effective for luxury products, as it enhances perceived uniqueness and willingness to buy (Amatulli et al. 2021). This suggests that luxury products' inherent high-quality perception mitigates concerns about sustainability-related underperformance.

To address perceived underperformance, scholars have found that company-focused sustainability appeals are more effective than product-focused ones, as they create a "halo effect," enhancing the company's image and the company's products perceived performance (Chernev and Blair 2021). Furthermore, sustainability-focused appeals effectiveness can be enhanced by self-prophecy-based communications requesting an individual to predict their future behavior regarding a target domain.

Prediction requests lead individuals to overstate the likelihood that they will engage in a socially desirable behavior and result in significant behavior change consistent with the prediction (Bodur et al. 2015; Sherman 1980). One more successful strategy involves using metaphor-based communication to convey information. Information presented using metaphors (as opposed to numbers) helps consumers better understand and process information, which has a greater impact on behavior. Metaphors also create visual representations in consumers' minds, making abstract sustainability information more concrete and understandable (Acuti et al. 2023). Studies also show that in general, sustainability appeals can have positive outcomes if supported by mass media coverage of climate change issues (Chen et al. 2019). Finally, research based on neural responses shows that the viewing order of green advertising affects consumers' emotional reactions: seeing a verbal appeal first and a visual appeal later triggers higher emotional values, both positive and negative (Royo et al. 2018), generating a greater impact on consumers.

However, sustainability appeals are not universally effective and must be tailored to the characteristics of the target audience, such as political ideology and socioeconomic status. For instance, studies indicate that minimalistic appeals, which encourage reduced consumption and waste (Wilson and Bellezza 2022), may resonate poorly with consumers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who often prioritize quantity over quality and perceive minimalism as incongruent with their preferences (Chen and Liu 2023). Moreover, sustainability appeals are most effective when they align with consumers' moral foundations; for example, political ideology significantly moderates the response to such messages, influencing genuine behavioral shifts (Kidwell et al. 2013). These findings underscore the need for nuanced and audience-specific strategies in designing effective sustainability communications.

#### 3.1.2 | Benefit-Focused Communication Appeals

Benefit-focused communication appeals emphasize the beneficiary of support. The literature distinguishes between self-benefit appeals, which highlight personal gains, and other-benefit appeals, which emphasize benefits to others (Royo et al. 2020; White and Peloza 2009). Generally, self-benefit appeals are more effective in encouraging sustainable choices, especially among consumers reluctant to adopt sustainable consumption. For example, materialistic consumers respond more positively to self-benefit appeals and are more motivated when personal benefits are highlighted (Royo et al. 2020). In the context of sustainable food, research shows that self-benefit appeals related to personal health effectively increase green behavior intentions (Peattie and Peattie 2009; Pichierri and Peluso 2023). Self-benefit appeals can also address the gender role orientation issue in ethical consumption, where ethical choices are often perceived as less masculine. Male consumers, for instance, respond positively to self-benefit appeals without inferring higher femininity (Shang and Peloza 2016).

To enhance the effectiveness of other-benefit appeals, abstract appeals can be used. Abstract appeals tend to be more effective than concrete ones when promoting sustainable products with

benefits to others (Yang et al. 2015). However, the literature notes that concrete appeals work better for utilitarian products, while abstract appeals are more persuasive for hedonic products (Kapoor et al. 2023). In the context of impulsive buying behavior, research shows that other-benefit appeals lead to more impulsive ethical consumption than self-benefit appeals, suggesting that consumers need an altruistic reason to impulsively purchase self-indulgent products (Moes et al. 2022). Additionally, research highlights a higher willingness to pay for sustainable products when the beneficiaries are people rather than the environment (Tully and Winer 2014).

From a similar perspective, research also explores intrinsic, extrinsic, and joint appeals in motivating sustainable consumption. Intrinsic appeals focus on consumers' internal motivations for consuming sustainable products, such as other-benefits; extrinsic appeals emphasize external motives, such as self-benefits; and joint appeals combine both intrinsic and extrinsic appeals to solicit more than one benefit (Edinger-Schons et al. 2018). Interestingly, findings demonstrate that consumers with lower involvement in sustainable consumption react more favorably to joint appeals, while highly involved consumers tend to favor intrinsic appeals (Edinger-Schons et al. 2018). Additionally, other studies show that self-benefit appeals are particularly effective when the individual level of self (i.e., the more bounded, separate, individualistic level) is activated, while injunctive appeals (i.e., highlighting what others think one should do) work well when the collective level of self is activated (i.e., the more interconnected, collectivistic level) (White and Simpson 2013). Descriptive appeals, highlighting what others are doing, are effective for both self and collective levels.

Finally, research on voluntary simplicity appeals (i.e., invites to a minimalistic lifestyle emphasizing conscious consumption) shows that benefit-focused appeals are sensitive to temporal landmarks. These appeals can be either biospheric (other-oriented) or egoistic (self-oriented) and their effectiveness varies with temporal landmarks. Biospheric consumers respond better when the message marks the start of a period (e.g., "Minimalistic style program: registration begins today"), while egoistic consumers prefer messages marking the end of a period (e.g., "Minimalistic style program: registration ends today") (Chen and Wei 2023). This is explained by the fact that a fresh start (i.e., the beginning of a time period) can induce participants to take a big-picture view of their lives, which is important in stimulating other-oriented consumers. Conversely, temporal landmarks signaling the end of a time period will induce individuals to focus on themselves, thus evoking greater interest from self-oriented consumers' engagement (Chen and Wei 2023; Kouchaki and Smith 2014).

### 3.1.3 | Emotion-Focused Communication Appeals

Unlike the previous types of appeals, emotion-focused appeals focus primarily on eliciting specific emotions, such as guilt, pride, awe, or inspiration, to motivate sustainable behavior. These appeals leverage the power of emotional engagement to create a deeper connection with the sustainability message. Many studies identify moral emotions as drivers of ethical behavior intentions (e.g., Chen and Moosmayer 2020; Grappi et al. 2024; Kim

and Johnson 2013). Moral emotions, defined as those linked to the welfare of society or others (Haidt 2003), are widely used in marketing and sustainable consumption contexts. Scholars have examined the effects of both positive and negative moral emotions on sustainable behavior, yielding mixed results.

Some research argues that negative emotions, such as guilt and shame, are more effective in promoting sustainable consumption. These emotions lead consumers to adopt remedial actions to alleviate negative feelings (e.g., Amatulli et al. 2019; Chen and Moosmayer 2020). Conversely, recent studies emphasize the importance of positive emotions, such as pride, gratitude, awe, and elevation, in encouraging sustainable behavior (e.g., Grappi et al. 2024; Liang and Guo 2021; Septianto et al. 2021; Yan et al. 2024). Positive emotions increase consumers' perceived self-efficacy (i.e., one's confidence and capability to execute the target task; Bandura 1986), enhancing their confidence in performing sustainable behaviors (Yan et al. 2024). Additionally, emotions like gratitude can reduce time discounting, making consumers more patient about long-term gains associated with sustainable choices (Liang and Guo 2021). Positive emotions can also be enhanced using arousing stimuli, which evoke energy and activation. Arousal can catalyze value-consistent sustainable behaviors and help inexperienced consumers form habits (Yan and Murray 2023). Moreover, stimulating positive emotions benefits consumer wellbeing by impacting their meaning in life and search for meaning (Yan et al. 2024).

## 3.2 | Message Framing

Regarding communication-related strategies, we have identified four communication techniques that can be applied to different types of appeal, or even used simultaneously: message framing, cueing, nudging, and priming.

Message framing is a highly investigated technique in sustainable consumption promotion. It is based on framing theory, which states that the way people react or feel about a certain message depends on the way it is presented (Kahneman 2011). Framing highlights specific aspects of a message, making them more salient (Amatulli et al. 2019). Research has shown that individuals respond differently to the same information depending on its framing (Tversky and Kahneman 1981). Unlike general communication appeals, message framing follows specific application rules derived from framing theory (Goffman 1974). It involves intentionally presenting information in a particular way to influence perceptions and responses, using different frames (Moon et al. 2016; Olsen et al. 2014; Tran and Paparoidamis 2021).

The most studied framing strategy uses valenced message frames, which emphasize either the positive or negative consequences of a behavior (Amatulli et al. 2019; Homer and Yoon 1992). Levin et al. (1998) define this strategy as goal framing, since it frames the consequences or implied goals of a behavior. Negatively framed messages highlight the negative consequences of not performing an action, while positively framed messages highlight the positive consequences of performing the action (Amatulli et al. 2019; Levin et al. 1998; Moon et al. 2016). Negative frames are also defined as loss-framed

messages, as they highlight disadvantages or potential losses, while positive framed messages are defined as gain-framed messages, as they highlight advantages or potential gains (Tran and Paparoidamis 2021).

Research on positive versus negative framing yields mixed results. Some studies claim negative framing is more effective in promoting sustainable behavior because consumers process these messages more accurately (White et al. 2011) and are more emotionally triggered by them (Amatulli et al. 2019; Kamal et al. 2022). Negative framing also leads to greater concern and detailed processing of environmental relevance. It is particularly effective for individuals with high environmental motivation and low environmental knowledge (Kamal et al. 2022). Moon et al. (2016) found that negative frames are most effective for a general consumer base, while hybrid frames (frames with both positive and negative information) work best for those with positive attitudes toward sustainable products. However, they caution that hybrid framing might cause information overload, leading to consumer doubts.

Conversely, other research indicates that positive framing is more effective in motivating sustainable consumption (e.g., Chang et al. 2015; Do et al. 2021; Grappi et al. 2024), especially for individuals with a high sense of self-accountability (i.e., discrepancies between the actual self-state and ideal self-states; Tran and Paparoidamis 2021). Positive frames that focus on potential gains encourage people to align their behavior with their self-standards and show greater personal involvement (Block and Keller 1995; Cox and Cox 2001). In sustainable fashion, positive framing prompts responsible behaviors by connecting them with higher-level outcomes (Fry 2010; Piacentini and Banister 2009), enhancing positive emotions, and inspiring self-improvement (Grappi et al. 2024). In the same context, negative framing's effectiveness depends on consumers' perceived ethicality of the messages, with low perceived ethicality leading to disregard for negative messages (Grappi et al. 2024).

Studies also examine the combination of goal framing (positive vs. negative) with normative framing (normative influence information), finding that normative gain is more effective than normative loss in promoting pro-environmental actions. This is due to the fact that potential gains are more influential than potential losses for low-risk behaviors like pro-environmental ones (e.g., towel reuse, paperless adoption, ugly food consumption) (Do et al. 2021; Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Shao et al. 2020). However, research underlines that the effectiveness of positive framing is context dependent, requiring a case-by-case approach (Do et al. 2021).

Temporal framing is another widely studied strategy. It presents outcomes as temporally closer or distant (Zhang et al. 2023). Construal level theory predicts that consumers construe a target more concretely when it feels temporally closer (Trope and Liberman 2003). Consumers who are lower in outcome-elaboration are more influenced by temporal framing, behaving more sustainably when exposed to a proximal message frame compared to a distal frame (Tangari et al. 2015). Present-oriented framing is particularly effective under uncertainty, emphasizing the immediate value of sustainable actions (van der Wal et al. 2018). Temporally close frames make the outcomes of

sustainable purchases less abstract, reducing the need for consumers to rely on perceived life control to evaluate their actions' effectiveness (Zhang et al. 2023). Temporal framing's effects also depend on consumers' beliefs about companies' resource allocation: when consumers believe that the resources devoted to a product's ethical attributes come at the expense of those devoted to functional attributes, they are likely to be more sensitive to temporal frames (Gupta and Sen 2013).

Finally, research highlights that message quantity influences framing efficacy. Too many framed messages can cause information overload, reducing the effectiveness of message framing on attitude change (Olsen et al. 2014). Using fewer framed messages reduces the risk of confusion and allows for better information processing given consumers' limited capacity (Bettman 1979; Olsen et al. 2014).

### 3.3 | Cueing

Cueing is a social marketing tool used to induce pro-environmental consumer behavior by providing clues or signals to guide behavior, often through visual or auditory means (Cornelissen et al. 2008). Economic studies suggest that cues can reduce the cost of information seeking or increase its marginal revenue, thus influencing consumers' intention to seek information and value perception (Li et al. 2021; Nelson 1974; Stigler 1961). In marketing, cues are crucial for drawing consumers' attention and providing reliable product information (Li et al. 2021). Cueing has been widely studied in sustainable consumption contexts, such as advertising, packaging, labels, and both physical and virtual environments (e.g., Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020; Li et al. 2021; Spielmann 2021; Yoganathan et al. 2019).

Studies show that environmental cues (e.g., sustainable and traceability labels) provide consumers with information that lowers perceived risks and compensates for negative product effectiveness, positively influencing product perception and purchase intention (Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020; Pancer et al. 2017). Ethical cues are particularly useful for low-rated products, helping consumers form evaluations based on ethical considerations (Bezençon et al. 2020). However, Pancer et al. (2017) found that using an environmental cue alone can reduce perceived product efficacy by causing consumers to categorize the product as either environmental or functional. Thus, the interplay between multiple cues is important in shaping consumer responses (Pancer et al. 2017). For example, explicit cues about product strength can mitigate the sustainability-liability effect (Luchs et al. 2010).

Environmental cues also serve as signaling strategies in anti-consumption promotions, restoring the symbolic status and benefits lost when consumption is abstained (Sekhon and Armstrong Soule 2020). Furthermore, research found that explicit virtue cues, which emphasize contributions to the greater good, appeal to consumers and increase the likelihood of purchasing sustainable products and engaging in virtuous behaviors, indicating a positive behavioral spillover effect (Spielmann 2021). Scholars' findings highlight that combining ethically congruent visual and auditory cues (i.e., visual and auditory stimuli associated

with an ethical product) enhances sustainable consumption through a multisensory effect (Yoganathan et al. 2019). Overall, combining visual, emotional, and participatory cues to design experiential appeals effectively stimulates sustainable consumption (Cozzio et al. 2020).

Anthropomorphic cues, a specific type of visual cues (e.g., sad faces), can activate a savior effect where the messenger is viewed as a victim, evoking sympathy and fostering sustainable behavior aimed at protecting the victim from harm. However, this effect diminishes if the behavior is perceived as too costly, reducing sympathy toward the messenger (Ketron and Naletelich 2019).

Positive cueing is another strategy tested to induce pro-environmental consumer behavior. It is based on the assumption that people may fail to view themselves as environmentally conscious because they do not consider the common ecological behaviors they display as relevant. Positive cues that highlight commonly performed ecological behaviors as environmental can increase individuals' perception of engaging in pro-environmental behavior in the past, enhancing future sustainable choices (Cornelissen et al. 2008). Situational cues about the current climate emergency can also activate pro-environmental self-identity, driving sustainable consumer behaviors (Dermody et al. 2018).

Finally, ingroup and outgroup identity cues also influence sustainable consumption. Ingroup cues refer to closely attached groups like family, friends, and colleagues, while outgroup cues refer to distant groups like individuals from other universities, companies, and countries (Turner et al. 1979). Construal level theory suggests that when consumers use concrete construal to process information, they focus on ingroup cues and act accordingly to ingroup biases, while under abstract construal, they act more consistently to their inner goals, with ingroups and outgroups having equal influence (Lieberman and Trope 1998; Trope et al. 2007). Thus, combining identity cues with construal levels can effectively promote sustainable consumption (Pinto et al. 2020).

### 3.4 | Nudging

Nudging employs indirect suggestions to influence behavior without imposing restrictions or significant changes in available options (Lehner et al. 2016). Thaler and Sunstein (2008) introduced the term “nudge” to describe aspects of decision-making environments that predictably alter people's behavior without forbidding choices or changing economic incentives (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). Nudging simplifies information or offers predefined choices to facilitate socially desirable decisions. Examples of nudging strategies include defaults, warnings of various kinds, layouts and features, reminders about people's choices, and recalls to social norms (Lehner et al. 2016). Research on nudging and choice architecture shows that carefully constructed messages and product positioning effectively prompt behavioral change (Klotz et al. 2018; Sun et al. 2021; Thaler and Sunstein 2008).

Ethical nudging promotes ethical and pro-environmental behavior by making specific elements salient to the consumer (Gamma

et al. 2020; Sun et al. 2021). A controversial nudging strategy involves highlighting hypocrisy, making individuals aware that their past behavior does not conform to their expressed norms (Gamma et al. 2020). While this can promote sustainable behaviors, it can also backfire, reducing the likelihood of desired actions. To avoid this double-edged sword effect, scholars recommend using induced hypocrisy only when consumers are in a high-level construal mindset (i.e., mindsets in which the implications of behavior appear to be abstract and future-related) and in public (vs. private) settings (Gamma et al. 2020). Another effective strategy involves directing consumers toward a sustainable mindset that favors fewer, higher-end products that last longer by nudging product durability. Research indicates that consumers often overlook product longevity, so making durability salient can push them to purchase more sustainably (Sun et al. 2021).

### 3.5 | Priming

Priming involves exposure to stimuli that influence responses or behaviors unconsciously, through the activation of mental constructs and through supraliminal or subliminal means (Brečić et al. 2021). Priming can occur through specific words, images, or concepts (Weingarten et al. 2016) and it's defined as “a gentle, yet effective way to suggest a behavioral change without reducing individual freedom of choice” (Lee, Choi, et al. 2020, 645). Priming, rather than direct intervention, may be more effective in achieving behavioral change. Research claims that message priming techniques can emphasize environmental consciousness, with environmental priming subtly suggesting green options being more effective than explicit promotion (Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020). Neuroimaging studies show that environmental message priming, like using a green logo, enhances sustainable purchase behavior in the fashion context (Lee, Bae, and Kim 2020; Lee, Choi, et al. 2020). Field studies indicate that textual and pictorial primes significantly increase the likelihood of purchasing sustainable products, with pictures having a stronger effect, especially when aligned with consumers' goals (Brečić et al. 2021).

Creativity priming is another technique recently tested, where consumers are encouraged to think creatively and engage in end-use ideation, imagining alternative product uses, which inspires sustainable behavior (e.g., “Imagine the multitude of ways this metal can may still be useful”) (Sassenberg et al. 2017; Tarabashkina et al. 2022). This technique helps consumers' better use cognitive resources to solve problems, promoting sustainable consumption through the activation of ideation and inspiration, particularly among less creative individuals (Tarabashkina et al. 2022).

### 3.6 | Branding

Branding involves creating and managing a distinctive identity for a company, product, or service to develop recognition among competitors and a connection with consumers (Kotler and Armstrong 2016). Unlike the communication-related strategies seen above, branding represents long-term strategic decisions about how the company or product line is positioned in

relation to sustainability, ethics, or other values. It creates a holistic identity that aligns the company's goals with consumer expectations, such as communicating a commitment to sustainability through the brand promise, and can use communication strategies to do so. Branding involves cross-functional efforts, influencing everything from product design to customer service and marketing communications. In sustainable consumption, branding can be used as a strategy to differentiate a brand from competitors through sustainability or environmental references (Manjunath 2014). Ethical branding, a strategy that entails highlighting the ethical characteristics of a brand to attract conscious consumers, has been proven to be effective. However, it also carries risks (Allard and McFerran 2022; Smith et al. 2010). If a brand or its representatives (e.g., influencers) act inappropriately, it may lead to adverse consumer reactions. Coherence is crucial, as contradictory company values and behaviors can provoke backlash due to a lack of credibility (Smith et al. 2010). This effect is influenced by political orientation; conservatives tend to judge ethical transgressions more harshly than liberals. Studies show that focusing on functionality rather than solely on ethicality may mitigate this politically motivated bias (Allard and McFerran 2022). Interestingly, scholars also pointed out that in the promotion of sustainable consumption, masculine branding can increase men's likelihood of adopting sustainable behaviors. Research shows that while women are generally more concerned about environmental issues, men's willingness to engage in green behaviors is affected by the stereotype linking green products with femininity. Masculine branding helps counteract this stereotype, making sustainable behaviors more acceptable to men (Brough et al. 2016).

### 3.7 | Practical Interventions and Tools

Practical interventions and tools are tangible, action-oriented strategies designed to directly facilitate sustainable behavior and are used to positively influence people's behavior toward greater sustainability. During the last few years, an increasing number of studies have been conducted on digital interventions and tools, particularly tied to the contemporary pervasive use of smartphones and apps (Hedin et al. 2019). Gamification, which uses game design elements to enhance motivation and influence consumer behavior, is a notable example. This tool helps encourage responsible behavior by introducing hedonic aspects such as enjoyment and fun to tasks and behaviors that are perceived as uninteresting or utilitarian (Hamari 2017; Koivisto and Hamari 2014; Wolf et al. 2020). Research shows that gamification improves consumers' knowledge, attitudes, intentions toward sustainability, and it helps consumers learn, care, and consume more responsibly (Mulcahy et al. 2021). Digital platforms are another tool for promoting sustainable consumption. Parth et al. (2021) explored a socio-digital platform that aimed to facilitate the process of consumer empowerment to encourage more sustainable food consumption by involving them in a simulated production process. This platform fostered a sense of shared responsibility and active engagement, and generated positive social impacts by promoting responsible consumption. However, Gonzalez-Arcos et al. (2021) highlight the need to move beyond individual responsibility to address the social systems influencing consumption. They defined consumption as a social practice where individual behaviors are embedded

in social dynamics and recognized the complexity of changing a ubiquitous social practice such as consumption. According to practice theory (Reckwitz 2002), they advocate for practice-based interventions that consider the interplay of people, activities, norms, and values. They argue that focusing solely on changing individual behaviors can overload consumers with responsibility, disrupt their practice-related emotionality, and lead to resistance. Effective interventions should identify and reconfigure practice elements, distribute responsibility among various stakeholders (consumers, retailers, manufacturers, government, etc.), and be continuously monitored to adapt to potential consumer resistance (Gonzalez-Arcos et al. 2021). Finally, White et al. (2019) also emphasize that successful sustainability interventions should leverage five psychological factors: social influence, habit formation, individual self-accounts, feelings and cognition, and tangibility.

## 4 | General Discussion

The findings from this review emphasize three key macro-categories of strategies for promoting sustainable consumption: communication-related strategies, corporate-related strategies, and intervention-related strategies, each playing a distinct role in influencing consumer behavior depending on the context and exerting a different degree of influence. Based on the existing literature, the effectiveness of these strategies can be categorized along a spectrum of influence, where emotional engagement, cognitive effort, and behavioral commitment vary across approaches (see Appendix S3, Table S2 for details).

Communication-related strategies, including sustainability-focused, benefit-focused, and emotion-focused messaging, are particularly effective when aiming to raise awareness or reinforce the personal and societal value of sustainable choices. These strategies tend to be most impactful when consumers are already open to sustainability concepts or when the goal is to strengthen their commitment to pro-environmental behavior. Techniques such as message framing, cueing, nudging, and priming are most effective when subtle, contextual cues are needed to guide consumer decision-making or reduce cognitive load, often in situations where individuals face numerous options or need encouragement to take action. Corporate-related strategies, centered around branding, are most effective when organizations seek to build long-term consumer trust and loyalty by aligning their brand with sustainability values. These strategies are particularly influential when consumers are seeking to make informed, responsible purchasing decisions or when they are loyal to brands that reflect their own values. Finally, intervention-related strategies, which involve practical tools, incentives, and policy changes, are most effective in contexts where barriers to sustainable behavior—such as cost, convenience, or accessibility—are significant. These strategies work best when immediate, tangible solutions are required to nudge consumers into taking action or when sustainability needs to be incorporated seamlessly into everyday decision-making.

Overall, consumer response to these strategies also depends on individual and psychological traits that may moderate their effectiveness (see Table S2, Appendix S3). For example, committed sustainable consumers, with a strong environmental

identity, respond best to sustainability-focused appeals and positive emotional messaging that reinforce their self-concept, particularly gain-framed messages emphasizing broader impacts like protecting ecosystems (Moon et al. 2016; Yan et al. 2024). Casual sustainable consumers, less engaged with sustainability, are more influenced by self-benefit appeals (e.g., cost savings) and nudging techniques that simplify decision-making (Royo et al. 2020; Sun et al. 2021), with loss-framed messages effective only when paired with clear, actionable solutions (Kamal et al. 2022). Psychological moderators, such as environmental concern, self-construal, and construal level, further shape these responses. High environmental concern increases receptivity to strategies emphasizing negative consequences, while low concern requires more personal incentives (Kamal et al. 2022; Royo et al. 2020). People with an interdependent self-construal favor collective, social responsibility appeals, while those with an independent self-construal prefer personal gains. Finally, concrete construal leads to better responses to specific, action-oriented techniques, while abstract construal is more influenced by visionary, value-driven strategies (e.g., Chen and Moosmayer 2020; Pinto et al. 2020; White and Simpson 2013).

## 5 | Conclusions

Sustainable consumption is crucial for sustainable development, underscored by the endorsement of SDG 12, which highlights its role in addressing the climate emergency. In this systematic review, we aimed to synthesize the scientific knowledge on promoting sustainable consumption and identify future research directions. We categorized the strategies reviewed into seven areas: (1) communication focus, (2) message framing, (3) cueing, (4) nudging, (5) priming, (6) branding, and (7) practical interventions and tools. These are grouped into three main categories: communication-related strategies, corporate-related strategies, and intervention-related strategies. Below, we outline the main theoretical and practical implications of the present review, as well as possible directions for future research.

### 5.1 | Theoretical Contributions

This systematization of literature offers several valuable contributions to the growing body of research concerning sustainable consumption promotion. First, a major contribution of this review is the integration and organization of disparate research findings into a coherent framework. Sustainable consumption strategies have been studied across various disciplines, often in isolation. By categorizing these strategies into communication-, corporate-, and intervention-related approaches, our study provides clarity in a fragmented research landscape. By systematizing the research, we offer a clearer, holistic view of the mechanisms influencing sustainable consumer behavior, which facilitates theory development.

Second, this study advances theoretical understanding by connecting sustainability marketing strategies with well-established theories in consumer behavior and psychology. In particular, it highlights the cognitive and perceptual biases—such as the sustainability-liability effect—that create barriers

to sustainable choices (Chernev and Blair 2021; Van Doorn et al. 2021). By applying insights from behavioral economics, decision-making heuristics, and social influence theories, we contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underpinning sustainable consumption (e.g., self-efficacy perception, availability heuristic, group identity, positive reinforcement, subconscious influences) (e.g., Pinto et al. 2020; Yan et al. 2024).

Third, we advance a reconceptualization of sustainability as a “win-win” decision. Traditional perspectives on sustainable consumption often frame it as a trade-off between personal and societal benefits. Our review challenges this notion by showcasing how sustainability promotion can be framed to highlight both self-interest and prosocial benefits. This shift in perspective has significant theoretical implications for research on consumer motivation, suggesting that consumers do not necessarily perceive sustainability as a sacrifice but can view it as a means to achieve personal goals (e.g., health, financial savings) while also benefiting society (e.g., Edinger-Schons et al. 2018; Pichierri and Peluso 2023).

Fourth, a key insight from this review is the growing trend toward positive approaches across multiple strategy categories (e.g., emotion-focused appeals, cueing, and framing). Traditional sustainability marketing has often relied on fear-based or guilt-inducing messaging, which can trigger resistance, psychological disengagement, or even backlash. In contrast, recent research suggests that promoting sustainability through positive reinforcement—enhancing consumer wellbeing, inspiration, and emotional engagement—can be more effective than coercion or negative reinforcement. Several psychological mechanisms help explain why this approach is more effective. Positive emotions, such as pride and inspiration, boost self-efficacy, making consumers feel more capable of adopting sustainable behaviors (e.g., Yan et al. 2024). Positive frames, which emphasize the benefits of sustainability rather than the consequences of inaction, better align with consumers' intrinsic motivation to improve themselves and uphold their self-standards (e.g., Grappi et al. 2024; Tran and Paparoidamis 2021). Likewise, positive cues reinforce past sustainable behaviors, strengthening consumers' pro-environmental self-identity (Cornelissen et al. 2008). In this sense, a positive approach is more effective than messages that license negative reactions because positive feelings would generate a more long-lasting behavioral motivation than that arising from hypocritical or guilt-driven actions (e.g., Grappi et al. 2024), which often rely on external pressure and may trigger defensive responses, such as conscious denial of the existence of a problem or defensive avoidance to reduce dissonance or discomfort (Cox and Cox 2001; Janis and Feshbach 1953). Collectively, these findings suggest that a positive approach not only encourages immediate pro-sustainability actions but also fosters a deeper and more enduring commitment to sustainable consumption, through emotional engagement that is more likely to support pro-environmental behaviors over time.

Fifth, another theoretical contribution lies in the identification of non-explicit strategies—such as nudging, priming, and branding—that influence sustainable consumption without relying on direct persuasion. These techniques tap into

automatic and subconscious decision-making processes, offering an alternative to traditional communication strategies (e.g., Brough et al. 2016; Gamma et al. 2020; Tarabashkina et al. 2022). By broadening the scope of sustainability marketing beyond explicit messaging, this review contributes to a deeper understanding of how subtle interventions can shape consumer behavior over time.

## 5.2 | Practical Implications

This research also has several important practical implications. First, to address the sustainability-liability effect, marketers can use a multi-cue approach (Pancer et al. 2017): instead of relying on singular environmental claims, marketers can use a combination of environmental cues (e.g., Patagonia effectively combines Fair Trade certification, Bluesign-approved materials, and detailed product lifecycle impact metrics) to strengthen the perceived credibility and appeal of sustainability attributes. Moreover, companies should emphasize products' functionality and performance in their communication to counter perceptions of inferior quality of sustainable alternatives. Real-life examples and testimonials demonstrating the efficacy of sustainable products in action can further bridge the gap between consumer skepticism and adoption.

Second, marketers should consider the complexity of contemporary consumers' and design "win-win" appeals that highlight both personal and collective benefits of sustainable choices. For example, communicating how a product not only contributes to environmental preservation but also saves money or improves health can reinforce the idea that sustainability is an added value rather than a trade-off (e.g., Vinted promotional claim "Second-hand is better than new for the climate, for your wardrobe, and for your wallet"). Reframing sustainability as integration rather than sacrifice can help shift the narrative from "choosing between" self-interest and altruism to "achieving both."

Third, following the emerging trend of the positive approach, brands should design campaigns designed to evoke positive emotions (e.g., highlight the pride of participating in prosocial behaviors) and leverage inspirational messages (e.g., present real-world success stories of sustainable actions), to create a sense of purpose and stimulate consumers' positive reactions. An example is Coca-Cola's "World Without Waste" campaign that use inspirational storytelling to evoke positive emotions. Positive emotions enhance message receptivity and long-term behavioral commitment, as consumers are more likely to embrace sustainability when it is framed as fulfilling and rewarding. In contrast, negative emotion-inducing messages should be used with caution—not only due to ethical concerns (Antonetti and Maklan 2014) but also because they are generally less

**TABLE 2** | Future research directions.

Macro-category	Strategy	Future research directions
Communication-related strategies	Sustainability-focused appeals	How can the sustainability-liability effect be effectively addressed to mitigate consumer skepticism?
	Emotion-focused appeals	How do positive emotion-based messages promoting sustainable consumption impact consumer wellbeing?
	Benefit-focused appeals	Is a win-win perspective, which emphasizes both personal and collective benefits, more effective in promoting sustainable consumption than a trade-off approach?
	Message framing	Which specific sustainability contexts (e.g., sustainable fashion, eco-friendly travel, green energy) benefit more from positive, negative or hybrid message framing?
	Cueing	What mechanisms influence the effectiveness of positive cueing (e.g., consumer inspiration), and can it generate positive spillover effects?
	Nudging	How do digital nudges (e.g., sustainability filters, default eco-friendly settings) influence sustainable choices in e-commerce and social media marketplaces?
Corporate-related	Priming	How effective is dynamic priming (e.g., interactive digital prompts, AR elements, real-time adaptive priming) in encouraging sustainable consumer behavior?
	Branding	How does the "halo effect" in branding strategies function, and is it more enduring than immediate promotional strategies?
Intervention-related	Practical Interventions and Tools	How can AI tools and AI-based interventions be leveraged to promote sustainable consumption?

effective in driving sustainable choices (Grappi et al. 2024). Marketers should refrain from using messaging that highlights consumer failures, as these can induce adverse reactions (Cox and Cox 2001; Hyland and Birrell 1979; Reinhart et al. 2007). Instead, they should employ affirmative language that celebrates even small contributions to sustainability to foster motivation through self-efficacy (e.g., Cornelissen et al. 2008).

Fourth, brands can overcome consumer skepticism by fostering intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement beyond direct messaging. They can use strategies such as gamification (e.g., sustainability-focused app challenges or loyalty rewards) to encourage active participation, and nudging techniques (e.g., placing sustainable products at eye level or using eco-friendly default options in digital checkouts) to subtly influence decisions without requiring conscious effort. These behavioral interventions make sustainable choices more intuitive and appealing, especially for consumers with low intrinsic motivation (e.g., Adidas Infinite Play program gamified sustainability by introducing a reward system to incentivize eco-friendly actions).

Finally, findings suggest that product category plays a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of sustainability strategies (see Appendix S3). Marketers should tailor their approaches accordingly: for high-involvement products like luxury goods, balancing quality perceptions with sustainability is key to overcoming skepticism (e.g., Patek Philippe reframed sustainability as timeless luxury by emphasizing durability and heirloom value). In contrast, everyday utilitarian products (e.g., household cleaners) benefit from trust-building strategies like branding (e.g., Seventh Generation builds consumer trust through transparent ingredient disclosure and long-term safety branding). Emotional and health-related appeals are particularly effective for food and beverages due to their connection with personal wellbeing (e.g., Beyond Meat's "health-first" positioning), while functional products such as technology and automotive require concrete, performance-driven messaging (e.g., Tesla's branding centers on cutting-edge performance and innovation, ensuring that sustainability is framed as an advantage rather than a compromise).

### 5.3 | Agenda for Future Research

This review provides a roadmap for future advancements in sustainable consumption promotion literature. By identifying gaps in the literature, our study encourages researchers to explore novel avenues. In the context of sustainability-focused appeals, future studies should examine innovative ways to address the sustainability-liability effect and mitigate consumer skepticism (e.g., Carrington et al. 2010; Cho and Taylor 2020). Specifically, researchers should explore the tension between consumers' interest in sustainability and their reluctance to prioritize sustainability attributes in purchasing decisions. Regarding emotion-focused appeals, further research could explore the relationship between positive emotion-based messages and consumer wellbeing, as studies suggest that positive emotions, such as pride and hope, can enhance intrinsic motivation for sustainable behaviors. Examining how such messages influence not only sustainable choices but also consumers' overall wellbeing could provide deeper insights into the psychological benefits

of positive-emotion-focused communication (e.g., Garcia-Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2014; Tezer and Bodur 2020; Yan et al. 2024). In the area of benefit-focused appeals, future research should consider recent findings on the complexity of consumer mindsets. It would be valuable to determine whether and when a win-win perspective—highlighting both personal and collective benefits—is more effective in promoting sustainable consumption than a trade-off perspective (e.g., Edinger-Schons et al. 2018).

In the domain of message framing techniques, recent studies suggest the growing effectiveness of positive framing over traditional negative framing. However, while positive framing appears more effective in certain contexts, further research should identify which sustainability domains (e.g., sustainable fashion, eco-friendly travel, green energy) benefit most from positive, negative, or hybrid framing strategies (e.g., Do et al. 2021). With respect to cueing research, studies highlight the potential of positive cueing (i.e., emphasizing commonly performed ecological behaviors as environmentally friendly) in promoting sustainable behavior (Cornelissen et al. 2008). Future research could first explore the underlying psychological mechanisms (e.g., the role of consumer inspiration) and then examine whether positive cueing leads to spillover effects, where recognizing one's sustainable behavior in one area (e.g., recycling) increases engagement in another (e.g., purchasing second-hand fashion). Regarding nudging techniques, most existing research has focused on physical in-store nudges. However, with the rise of online shopping, future studies should investigate digital nudging strategies, exploring how tools such as green product labeling, sustainability filters, and default eco-friendly options influence consumer choices in digital environments, such as e-commerce and social media marketplaces. Likewise, research on priming techniques has largely examined static priming (e.g., logos, text, or images) (e.g., Brečić et al. 2021). Future studies could explore dynamic and contextual priming, such as interactive digital prompts, augmented reality (AR) elements, or real-time adaptive priming that changes based on consumer behavior.

In the area of branding strategies, scholars have highlighted the halo effect, whereby a brand's image extends to influence perceptions of its products and their performance (Chernev and Blair 2021). Future research could investigate the mechanisms and longevity of this effect, determining whether it offers a more enduring impact compared to immediate promotional techniques. Finally, despite the increasing role of digital tools in daily life, this review found no studies examining the use of artificial intelligence (AI) driven tools to facilitate or incentivize sustainable consumption. Given AI's expanding influence, future research should explore its potential in fostering sustainable behaviors. Table 2 summarizes the proposed research directions for each strategy.

### 5.4 | Limitations

This study has a number of limitations that could be addressed by future studies. To further extend the knowledge obtained in this paper, future research should enhance search protocols, potentially using multiple databases and additional search keywords to improve the search accuracy. Expanding the ABS selection of

journals included in review with additional 3 and 2 ABS-ranked journals could also yield more comprehensive results.

Furthermore, while this research classifies strategies based on their primary focus for analytical clarity, we acknowledge that in practice, many studies employ multiple strategies simultaneously. As a result, the findings of past research are often shaped by the interplay of mixed strategies rather than the isolated effect of a single approach. To build upon the insights gained from this paper, future studies should move beyond categorization and systematically examine how different strategies interact, assessing the effectiveness of hybrid approaches in real-world applications. In addition, future reviews should also consider elements that might influence the effectiveness of promoting sustainable consumption, such as product type or individual traits, to gain a deeper understanding of the theoretical implications. To this end, future research should incorporate structural or experimental analyses to provide more objective findings, particularly by empirically testing the role of relevant moderators (e.g., environmental concern, self-construal, sustainable consumption frequency). At the same time, it may also be useful to employ qualitative research methods—such as focus groups or in-depth interviews—to explore consumers' personal thoughts, feelings, and motivations in their own words, offering insights that might be overlooked by purely quantitative methods.

In conclusion, this paper provides a novel attempt to aggregate the research on sustainable consumption promotion, identifying key approaches and tools investigated so far and suggesting future research paths. In the future, we expect to see more research outcomes on this crucial subject, particularly in the research areas presented as potential future directions.

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### Ethics Statement

The author has nothing to report.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Papers were initially examined for their primary focus, and recurring themes were grouped into broad clusters. Through an iterative process, these clusters were refined into three overarching macro-categories based on their shared conceptual focus. For example, studies focusing on different forms of persuasive communication, such as message framing and cueing, were grouped under the communication-related strategies category. Papers discussing branding as a long-term approach to influencing consumer identity were placed in the corporate-related strategies category. Meanwhile, studies investigating behavior-modification tools, such as gamification, were assigned

to intervention-related strategies due to their reliance on structural changes in decision-making environments.

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### Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Data S1.**