

AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABLE
CONSUMPTION BEHAVIORS AMONG GENERATION Z IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z in Kazakhstan toward sustainable consumption and considers implications for marketers seeking to engage this environmentally conscious demographic. Drawing on a survey of 329 university students, the research examines factors influencing Gen Z's sustainable behaviors, including environmental concern, social influence, and perceptions of sustainable product pricing. The results reveal a significant positive correlation between environmental concern and engagement in sustainable practices, indicating that Gen Z shows a preference for eco-friendly products and brands committed to sustainability. Given the higher prices of eco-friendly options, pricing remains an important consideration in Gen Z's sustainable purchasing decisions. Findings emphasize the importance of transparent communication and authentic sustainability practices in building trust and loyalty with this demographic. Marketers should align their strategies with Gen Z's values by adopting pricing approaches that support eco-friendly choices and leveraging social media to foster communities of conscious consumers.

Keywords: Gen Z, Sustainable consumer behavior, Kazakhstan, Youth consumer trends, Generational analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (Gen Z), typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2009, although some definitions extend the period to 2012 (Ameen et al., 2023; Potluri et al., 2024), represents a demographic with distinct traits shaped by their upbringing in the digital age. As the largest living generation, accounting for roughly one-third of the global population (Ameen et al., 2023; Kotler et al., 2021), Gen Z wields significant influence on culture and the economy. As the first true digital natives, Generation Z has been immersed in technology and social media from a young age, which has profoundly influenced their values, preferences, and social interactions. These characteristics have far-reaching implications across various domains, including education, employment, marketing, and consumer behavior.

A defining aspect of Gen Z is their approach to consumption, particularly their inclination toward sustainability. Compared to previous generations, Gen Z exhibits heightened awareness of environmental and social issues, which significantly influences their purchasing decisions and lifestyle choices (Casalegno et al., 2022). Members of this generation are often described as ethically conscious consumers who prioritize sustainability, transparency, and corporate social responsibility (Ameen et al., 2023). However, despite this stated concern for the environment, a notable discrepancy exists between Gen Z's positive intentions and their actual sustainable behaviors, a phenomenon referred to as the intention-behavior gap.

The sustainable consumption behavior of Gen Z is driven by several key factors. Social responsibility, material and social incentives, environmental concerns, perceived green quality, educational settings, media influence, and perceived consumer effectiveness all play significant roles in shaping their sustainable actions. Understanding these drivers is crucial for developing effective strategies to engage this generation in sustainability efforts and promote eco-friendly behaviors.

Gen Z's awareness of climate change and readiness to take action are widely acknowledged (Robichaud & Yu, 2022). As a generational cohort – a group of individuals who share similar social characteristics and historical experiences due to being born within the same timeframe – Gen Z displays values and behaviors distinct from previous generations (Ivanova et al., 2019; Rindfleisch, 1994). However, these attitudes and behaviors vary across regions, as they are influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors specific to each area (Egri & Ralston, 2004). For instance, unlike their counterparts in Western countries, young people in Kazakhstan show lower levels of engagement in volunteer activities (Sharipova & Beimenbetov, 2021). While sustainable consumption has gained global importance in addressing social, environmental, and economic challenges, cultural beliefs, values, and practices strongly influence how Gen Z approaches sustainability, leading to varied sustainable behaviors across different regions (Sharma & Jha, 2017).

This research focuses on Kazakhstani youth, specifically Gen Z, as they represent a crucial segment of the population likely to shape the country's sustainable future. With those between the ages of 14 and 28 comprising approximately 20% of Kazakhstan's population (Bureau of National Statistics, 2024), their

attitudes and behaviors are vital in addressing the nation's urgent environmental challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, and ecosystem degradation (Peng et al., 2019; Zou et al., 2023). Understanding the unique drivers behind Gen Z's sustainable consumption and purchase behaviors is essential to fostering long-term environmental resilience. Generation Z has surpassed Generation Y in global numbers and was expected to constitute the majority of the workforce by 2025, making it a significant market for products and services. This generation is not just the future; they are already shaping the present (Fromm & Read, 2018).

By examining this generation's approach to both sustainability and purchasing, this study aims to provide insights that can guide policymakers, organizations, and marketing companies in developing targeted strategies to promote sustainable behaviors and effectively reach this generation. This focus on Kazakhstani Gen Z offers implications not only for Kazakhstan but also for Central Asia, where similar environmental and socio-economic challenges underscore the importance of fostering a sustainable consumer culture among young people.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Gen Z is recognized for its strong commitment to social and environmental responsibility. This generation has grown up in a world where global issues such as climate change, social justice, and economic inequality are at the forefront of public discourse, and they actively prioritize these concerns in their lives (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). This value-driven mindset significantly shapes their consumption behaviors, leading them to favor brands and companies that demonstrate ethical practices and sustainability. Compared to previous generations, Gen Z places greater emphasis on the impact of their choices, seeing their consumer decisions as a way to drive positive change.

Pragmatic in their approach, Gen Z is confident in their ability to drive change through everyday decisions. They prefer brands that actively work on solving social and environmental issues, and they view their consumption choices as a way to pressure companies into improving sustainability practices (Narayanan, 2022). This generation is also passionate about making a difference through direct involvement, such as volunteering, and they expect employers to offer platforms that enable them to contribute to social causes. This expectation demonstrates their strong belief in collective action and the role businesses play in fostering positive societal changes (Kotler et al., 2021).

An interesting generational contrast exists between Gen Z and the younger Millennials, born in the 1990s. While Millennials tend to prioritize experiences over ownership, preferring to use services like Uber rather than owning a car, Gen Z balances this desire for convenience with a stronger focus on sustainability. Both generations favor subscription-based services, such as streaming platforms, over buying physical products (Kotler et al., 2021), but Gen Z's pragmatism means they are more likely to factor in the environmental impact and sustainability of the services they use (Bulut et al., 2017).

As Kotler et al. (2021) have noted, many in this generation have witnessed financial instability experienced by their parents or older siblings, making them financially cautious. They prioritize savings and economic stability while also balancing their desire to make responsible, ethical consumption choices. This pragmatism extends to their purchasing habits, where they tend to support

businesses aligned with their environmental and social values, and they expect brands to address sustainability issues transparently. Gen Z's social consciousness also encompasses diversity and inclusivity, with strong advocacy for equality in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and cultural representation (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). These concerns deeply influence their interactions with brands and their expectations of corporate responsibility.

Sustainability is a key principle for this generation, but Gen Z is often skeptical of corporate sustainability claims. Many in this cohort distrust green marketing strategies, especially when they sense a disconnect between a company's environmental messaging and its actual practices. These misleading sustainability claims, commonly associated with "greenwashing," can undermine Gen Z's confidence in brands (Szabo & Webster, 2021). As a result, they are more likely to research a company's sustainability policies before purchasing and favor authentic brands that back their environmental claims with tangible actions (Narayanan, 2022). Gen Z consumers are active participants in shaping the market by pushing for more transparency and accountability in corporate environmental policies.

Gen Z's environmental concerns are partly shaped by growing up amid various global and ideological crises, particularly climate change, which has heightened their environmental awareness (Brand et al., 2022). This heightened awareness has contributed to psychological phenomena like "climate anxiety," defined as a "chronic fear of environmental doom" (Clayton et al., 2017: 68), reinforcing their sense of responsibility toward environmental protection (Reyes et al., 2023).

Research by Manley et al. (2023), based on a survey of 682 consumers, indicates that Gen Z places significant emphasis on the importance, need, and value of sustainable clothing, which influences their motivation to purchase sustainable products. This cohort's strong environmental concerns, optimism about a greener future, and perceptions of sustainable product quality contribute to their willingness to pay a premium for eco-friendly products (Gomes et al., 2023). Environmental concerns thus emerge as a major driver of sustainable behaviors within Gen Z, with anxieties about environmental degradation and future ecological challenges prompting them to prioritize sustainability in their consumption choices. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: A higher level of environmental concern among Gen Z is positively correlated with an increased likelihood of engaging in sustainable behaviors.

As has been stated in previous studies, compared to older generations (Generation X and Baby Boomers), Generations Y and Z are more concerned about climate change and environmental degradation, showing a stronger sense of responsibility toward sustainability. They are often willing to pay a premium for products with sustainability attributes (Brand et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the relatively high prices of sustainable products remain an important barrier to purchasing, particularly among young consumers with limited financial resources. Price affordability and promotional incentives therefore play a significant role in shaping sustainable purchasing behavior. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Greater affordability of sustainable products is positively associated with sustainable consumer behavior among Gen Z consumers in Kazakhstan.

Access to technology has also significantly shaped Gen Z's behavior, fostering individualism in learning, interaction, and communication (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). Technology has enabled them to pursue self-directed learning through videos, social media, and search engines (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Studies indicate that Gen Z often prefers solitary activities over group settings due to concerns over unequal contributions in collaborative efforts (Schlee et al., 2020). This generation also spends more time alone (Pichler et al., 2021), seeking social validation through curated online personas. In Kazakhstan, however, members of Gen Z have quite conformist goals, adhere closely to parental values, and maintain strong familial trust (Laruelle, 2019). This demonstrates how social surroundings influence decision-making, leading us to hypothesize:

H3: Gen Z individuals who are surrounded by environmentally conscious people are more likely to adopt sustainable consumption practices.

Familiarity with sustainability concepts strongly influences Generation Z's adoption of environmentally friendly practices, including sorting and recycling materials like plastic, metal, glass, and paper. However, variations exist within the generation, as individual levels of environmental awareness affect the likelihood of adopting sustainable behaviors (Brand et al., 2022). Educational settings are especially influential; a study by Kara and Min (2024) found that university environments significantly shape sustainable habits in young adults. Exposure to sustainability-related coursework, initiatives, and discussions deepens their understanding and commitment to sustainable practices, fostering an informed and proactive approach to environmental issues. Access to accurate information about environmental challenges and sustainable solutions further empowers Generation Z to make informed, eco-friendly choices.

Research from Central Asia also highlights the importance of environmental education and sustainability awareness. Although studies report increasing recognition of the environmental and economic drawbacks of the linear economy, evidence focusing specifically on Generation Z remains limited (Karaca et al., 2019; Skiert-Andrzejuk, 2025). Previous research further suggests that insufficient environmental education and limited awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals may hinder the adoption of sustainable behaviors among young people in the region (D'Agata, 2023). At the same time, young people are widely recognized as key drivers of the transition toward a circular economy and climate action, emphasizing the need to strengthen sustainability education and awareness initiatives (Skiert-Andrzejuk, 2025).

In a similar vein, Gurova's (2024) practice theory analysis of sustainable clothing consumption among Generation Z highlights the integrative challenge of adopting sustainable fashion habits. The studies by Laitala (2014) and Laitala and Klepp (2020) underscore the barriers young consumers face in transitioning to sustainable clothing choices, providing critical insights into Generation Z's consumption patterns.

Moreover, Generation Z's views on a fulfilling life increasingly prioritize environmental and social responsibility. Grénman et al. (2024) suggest that

Gen Z's commitment to reducing their ecological impact is anticipated to drive broader social shifts toward sustainability. Gomes et al. (2023) further reinforce that perceived environmental knowledge, a sense of environmental responsibility, and perceived consumer effectiveness significantly influence green consumption intentions. Especially in developing countries, building environmental knowledge and fostering a sense of responsibility are essential in motivating sustainable behaviors within Gen Z. Perceived consumer effectiveness is the belief that individual choices have a tangible impact, which is particularly influential because it fosters a sense of agency and commitment to sustainable practices. Hence, we propose:

H4: Greater familiarity with sustainable consumption practices is positively correlated with Gen Z's likelihood of sorting and recycling materials such as plastic, metal, glass, and paper.

Gen Z is highly engaged with social media, although their platform preferences differ from older generations. They predominantly use Instagram and TikTok, aligning with Millennials' habits, but also maintain a presence on Facebook to stay connected with older family members and mentors (Rue, 2018). This hyper-connected lifestyle often leads to what sociologists term an "absent presence," where they are physically present but mentally absorbed in their screens. Social media, particularly its interactive content, serves as a major motivator for sustainable consumption among Gen Z. According to Gurova (2024), platforms like Instagram and TikTok act as vital channels for spreading sustainability awareness and promoting eco-friendly products. Influencers and sustainability-focused communities play a significant role in guiding Gen Z's consumption behaviors, showcasing the benefits and importance of sustainable practices. Social media's visual and interactive qualities make it an especially effective medium for engaging Gen Z in sustainability discussions and encouraging eco-conscious actions. This characteristic informs our fifth hypothesis:

H5: Gen Z receives information on sustainable consumption from social media at levels comparable to those from traditional media (TV, radio, print media) and podcasts.

GENERATION Z IN KAZAKHSTAN

In the context of Kazakhstan, Gen Z is often referred to as the "Nazarbayev generation" (Laruelle, 2019: 5), as they grew up during the rule of former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, from 1991 to 2019. They are also referred to as the "Q-generation," where Q stands for Qazaqstan, the Latinization of Kazakhstan (Laruelle, 2019: 14). This cohort has been shaped by distinct social, political, and economic dynamics. Growing up amid political stability and relative economic prosperity, Kazakhstani Gen Z has developed a strong consumerist culture, influenced by both national values and global trends (Laruelle, 2019). However, the current geopolitical climate and global conflicts have significantly impacted their worldview. Research by Sharipova and Beimenbetov (2021) indicates that Kazakhstani youth primarily express concern over regional and global conflicts (51.8%) and rising societal poverty (51.1%), with environmental issues such as pollution and climate change (50.8%), as well as corruption and social injustice (50.8%), also ranking high. Urban youth, particularly those in major cities, report more fears and anxieties than their rural

counterparts, particularly about job security, pollution, and social injustice. This heightened anxiety may relate to factors such as high competition and urban pollution. Security concerns are especially significant for young women, with 47.2% of women reporting experiences of physical violence compared to 22.4% of men, revealing a notable gender gap in safety issues.

In an analytical report by the “Youth” Scientific Research Centre (2024), which surveyed 2,000 young people, 31.1% reported perceiving a noticeable warming in the climate. However, 23.4% expressed skepticism regarding the reality of climate change, and 21.4% emphasized the importance of reducing plastic usage. Altruism and civic participation ranked lower on the list of priorities for youth, indicating that while environmental issues are somewhat recognized, broader civic engagement remains less emphasized (Laruelle, 2019).

Gen Z places high importance on diversity and inclusivity, having grown up in a more globally connected and multicultural environment. This generation is markedly open to differences in race, gender, sexuality, and cultural backgrounds, often advocating for equality across education, employment, media representation, and social policies (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). In Kazakhstan, however, moral conservatism remains influential, with a strong emphasis on traditional family roles and values such as women’s chastity, reflecting the society’s preference for certain cultural norms. Although global trends have introduced shifts in perspectives, many young ethnic Kazakhs still express traditional aspirations, such as the desire for large families (three to five children) while generally displaying no strong gender preference for offspring.

Interestingly, while Gen Z in Kazakhstan champions inclusivity, they are comparatively less concerned with social inequality, reflecting perhaps a distinct blend of progressive values within a culturally conservative framework (Laruelle, 2019).

Despite governmental restrictions on media and public expression, Gen Z in Kazakhstan is more individualistic and eager to defend its independence. These factors contribute to their identity formation and influence their consumption patterns, including their views on sustainability. Laruelle (2019) notes that Gen Z in Kazakhstan is not much different from the youth elsewhere in the world. Youth in Kazakhstan are increasingly environmentally aware, aligning themselves with global sustainability movements. They are described as thinking globally, blending diverse cultural influences, and embracing do-it-yourself (DIY) principles. This growing awareness indicates that they are likely to incorporate sustainability into their consumption habits. However, research specifically exploring sustainable behavior in Kazakhstan’s Gen Z is limited. Although studies have explored their cultural values, political perspectives, and gender attitudes, the generation’s views on sustainability and environmental issues have yet to be thoroughly examined.

CROSS-COUNTRY RESEARCH: GEN Z AND SUSTAINABLE VALUES

Sustainable consumption behaviors are shaped by various factors, including values, norms, and identity. According to Onel (2024), high levels of biospheric values, ecological worldviews, personal norms, behavioral intentions, awareness of consequences, ascription of responsibility, and low egoistic values significantly influence consumers when making eco-friendly product purchases.

This framework underscores the importance of moral and environmental consciousness in shaping sustainable purchasing behaviors.

Examining this theme within a cultural context, Zhao et al. (2024) analyzed the impact of cultural values and pro-environmental self-identity on sustainable consumption behaviors among urban Chinese consumers. Their findings indicate that, although the harmonious values derived from Taoism and Confucianism have limited direct effects, pro-environmental self-identity strongly mediates the relationship between these values and sustainable consumption behaviors throughout consumption stages, from acquisition to disposal. These culturally ingrained values encourage Chinese consumers to recognize the importance of the human-nature relationship within their society and thus influence their environmental decision-making.

Many scholars have emphasized the role of digital technologies in reaching Gen Z, often referred to as “digital natives” (Ameen et al., 2023). Wan et al. (2024) examined the effectiveness of virtual influencers in promoting pro-environmental behaviors. Their research found that anthropomorphic (human-like) and racially homophilous (local-like) virtual influencers were particularly effective in encouraging sustainable behaviors among Gen Z in China. Specifically, human-like, foreign influencers – those low in racial homophily – elicited the highest levels of trust from audiences, especially when promoting high-cost pro-environmental behaviors. This suggests that designing anthropomorphic characteristics in virtual influencers is crucial for enhancing trust and motivating pro-environmental actions among Gen Z, particularly in a digital environment where these young consumers are highly engaged.

In terms of generational differences, Casalegno et al. (2022) examined purchase behavior across different age groups in Italy. Their research revealed a positive and significant relationship between age and green purchase behavior, indicating that older consumers are more likely to buy eco-friendly products. This may be attributed to the higher costs of sustainable goods, making them less accessible to younger generations despite their environmental consciousness. However, Confetto et al. (2023) challenged this view, arguing that Gen Z in Italy holds great potential not only as consumers but also as advocates for sustainability. Their engagement with environmental causes positions them as important influencers in promoting sustainable brands and practices, even if their purchasing power is currently limited.

Marketing strategies targeting Gen Z should emphasize sustainability principles, transitioning from traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) to a more robust form of brand activism, especially within social media campaigns. Leading global brands aimed at youth, such as Dove, LEGO, and Barbie, have begun to adopt these more engaged approaches. Gen Z is increasingly inclined to support brands that resonate with their values, actively seeking out companies that prioritize sustainability and ethical practices.

In the retail sector, Gen Z consumers exhibit a strong demand for sustainable products, making purchasing decisions based on a range of personal, social, and environmental principles. They are particularly conscientious about the environmental impact and carbon footprint of products before making a purchase (Bulut et al., 2017). In the realm of food consumption, research by

Orea-Giner and Fusté-Forné (2023) indicates that Gen Z's eating habits tend to be more sustainable when they are at home compared to when they are traveling, underscoring their value-driven approach.

This commitment to sustainability highlights Gen Z's desire to make a positive impact on the world. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H6: Gen Z prioritizes eco-friendly shops, sustainable products, and companies that demonstrate pro-environmental and pro-social commitments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research methodology, utilizing a survey approach to test the research hypotheses. The data collection was conducted through an online survey platform (Google Forms), ensuring accessibility and ease of distribution. To maintain reliability, all survey questions and variables were adapted from established literature sources, aligning with validated constructs.

The questionnaire was distributed via email and social media channels to university students across Kazakhstan. This approach facilitated a broad reach within the target demographic. Between March 2025 and September 2025, a total of 329 responses were received from respondents residing in Kazakhstan. The questionnaire was developed in Kazakh and Russian to accommodate respondents' linguistic preferences. Both versions were subsequently checked by a professional proofreader to ensure accuracy.

The survey instrument included multiple items adapted from Nekmahmud and Fekete-Farkas (2020), Nguyen et al. (2019), and Nassanbekova et al. (2024), measuring functional value, social value, emotional value, behavioral intention, epistemic value, actual behavior, green product price sensitivity, perceived consumer effectiveness, greenwashing skepticism, and environmental concern. The measurement items are detailed in Table 1. The questionnaire comprised two main sections. The first captured general demographic information (e.g., age, gender), while the second focused on environmental attitudes and behaviors. Respondents were asked about their concern for environmental issues, their engagement in sustainable practices (e.g., recycling plastic and metal, using eco-friendly products), and the social influences shaping their behaviors. Attitudinal responses were captured on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing for nuanced insights into the sustainable behavior and environmental attitudes of Kazakhstani Gen Z. This scale is considered more effective in reflecting the nuanced perspectives of participants and thus appeals to their cognitive reasoning (Wyatt & Meyers, 1987).

RStudio was employed as the primary statistical tool. Pearson correlation analysis was used to explore relationships among the study variables, providing insights into associations between environmental concerns, sustainable consumption attitudes, intentions, and behaviors among the respondents. Pearson correlation may be described as the degree of association between two variables (Asuero et al., 2006). Correlation analysis is used to assess the relationship between two or more quantitative variables (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017). Pearson correlation analysis was selected because the objective of this study was to examine the

linear associations among the composite scores of the study constructs rather than to estimate causal or predictive relationships.

Table 1

Measurement Items

Variable	Indicator	Adapted from
Functional Value	Sustainable products are no worse than regular ones.	Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2020
	It is difficult to find sustainable products while shopping.	
Social Value	People who are important to me believe I should buy sustainable products.	Nguyen et al., 2019; Nassanbekova et al., 2024.
	My friends and family encourage sustainable consumption.	
	Sustainable consumption is common in my social circle.	
	Seeing friends or family using sustainable products motivates me too.	
	The influence of bloggers/influencers increases my interest in sustainable brands.	
Emotional Value	I feel satisfied when I buy eco-friendly products.	Nguyen et al., 2019; Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2020.
Behavioral Intention	I intend to buy eco-friendly products in the future.	Nguyen et al., 2019; Nassanbekova et al., 2024.
Epistemic Value	I have enough knowledge to choose sustainable products.	Nassanbekova et al., 2024
	I don't have enough information to make a sustainable choice.	
	I get information from an educational institution.	
	I get information about sustainable consumption from social media. I get information about sustainable consumption from traditional media.	
Actual Behavior	How often do you buy eco-friendly products?	Nguyen et al., 2019
	How often do you sort waste (plastic, paper, metal)?	

Green products price sensitivity	I can regularly afford to buy sustainable products. Sustainable products are too expensive Discounts and promotions encourage me to buy sustainable products.	Nguyen et al., 2019; Nassanbekova et al., 2024; Nekmahmud & Fekete-Farkas, 2020
Perceived consumer effectiveness	I don't believe that my efforts will really affect the environment. I am not sure about the honesty of companies' statements about sustainability (greenwashing).	Nguyen et al., 2019
Environmental Concern	I am concerned about environmental problems such as pollution and climate change.	Dunlap et al., 2000

Source: Compiled by the authors

Ethical considerations. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the research before completing the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were treated anonymously and confidentially. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University.

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, a total of 329 respondents participated, with 62.6% (n = 206) identifying as female and 37.4% (n = 123) as male (see Table 2). The majority of participants were aged 18 (n = 131) and 19 (n = 113), followed by those aged 20 (n = 67). Fewer participants were aged 21 (n = 13), 22 (n = 3), and 23 (n = 2) (see Table 3). Additionally, respondents from large metropolitan areas, or cities with populations in the millions, comprised 93.31% (n = 307) of the sample.

Table 2
Gender distribution

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	206	62.6%
Male	123	37.4%

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 3
Age distribution

Age	Number	Percent
18	131	39.82%
19	113	34.35%
20	67	20.36%

Age	Number	Percent
21	13	3.95%
22	3	0.91%
23	2	0.61%

Source: Compiled by the authors

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses on the sustainable values and behaviors of Gen Z in Kazakhstan. Pearson correlation was used to examine relationships among the relevant study variables, while information sources on sustainability were analyzed descriptively.

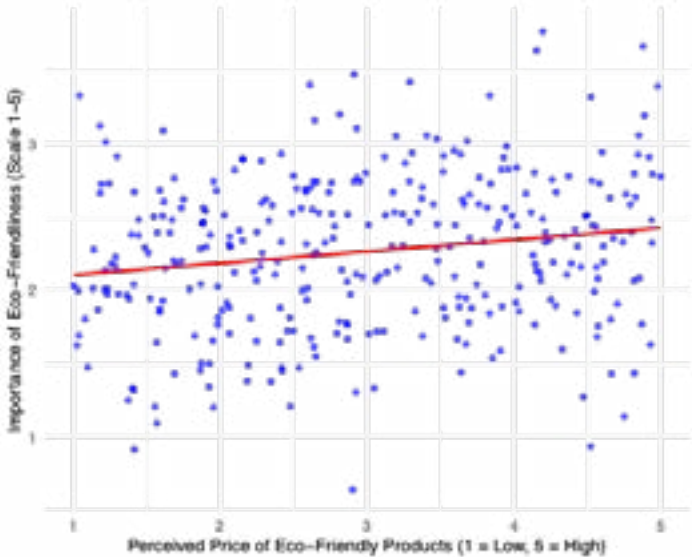
H1: A higher level of environmental concern among Gen Z is positively correlated with an increased likelihood of engaging in sustainable behaviors

The results of the Pearson correlation indicated a significant medium positive relationship between the level of environmental concern among Gen Z and the likelihood of engaging in sustainable behaviors, $r(329) = .331, p < .001$. This suggests that as environmental concern increases, Gen Z individuals are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors, such as eco-friendly consumption or recycling. This positive correlation supports the hypothesis that a high level of environmental concern correlates with a greater likelihood of sustainable behavior. This outcome is consistent with Maichum et al. (2016), who identified a positive association between environmental concern and the green purchasing behaviors of young consumers in Thailand. Similarly, Lee et al. (2014) found that environmental concern positively influenced green product purchasing intentions, further strengthened by other pro-environmental behaviors.

H2: Among Gen Z in Kazakhstan, there is a positive correlation between sustainable product pricing and the likelihood of engaging in sustainable consumer behavior.

The Pearson correlation results showed a significant small positive relationship between the perception of eco-friendly products being high-priced and the importance Gen Z places on products being eco-friendly, $r(329) = .165, p = .003$ (see Figure 1). This suggests that among Gen Z in Kazakhstan, those who view eco-friendly products as high-priced are slightly more inclined to prioritize eco-friendliness in their purchasing decisions. This relationship supports the hypothesis that perceptions of high eco-friendly product prices correlate with an increased emphasis on sustainability in purchasing. This finding is consistent with Potluri et al. (2024), who reported that Gen Z consumers respond positively to discounts and promotional offers, suggesting that reducing financial barriers can encourage the purchase of sustainable products.

Figure 1
Importance of Eco-Friendliness



Source: Compiled by the authors

H3: Gen Z individuals who are surrounded by environmentally conscious people are more likely to adopt sustainable consumption practices.

The Pearson correlation results indicated a significant medium positive relationship between environmentally friendly surroundings and sustainable behavior among Gen Z, $r(329) = .428$, $p < .001$. This result suggests that greater exposure to environmentally friendly environments, such as green spaces or eco-conscious communities, is associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in sustainable practices. Therefore, we confirm a statistically significant positive relationship between exposure to eco-friendly surroundings and sustainable behavior.

H4: Greater familiarity with sustainable consumption practices is positively correlated with Gen Z's likelihood of sorting and recycling materials such as plastic, metal, glass, and paper.

The analysis found a non-significant, very small positive relationship between familiarity with sustainable consumption practices and Gen Z's likelihood of sorting and recycling materials, $r(329) = .0601$, $p = .276$. This indicates that familiarity with sustainable practices does not strongly correlate with recycling behaviors among Kazakhstani Gen Z, as the evidence does not support a meaningful relationship between these variables. Consequently, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting no significant correlation between familiarity with sustainable consumption and recycling behavior. Table 4 summarizes the H1, H3, and H4 correlation results.

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing Summary

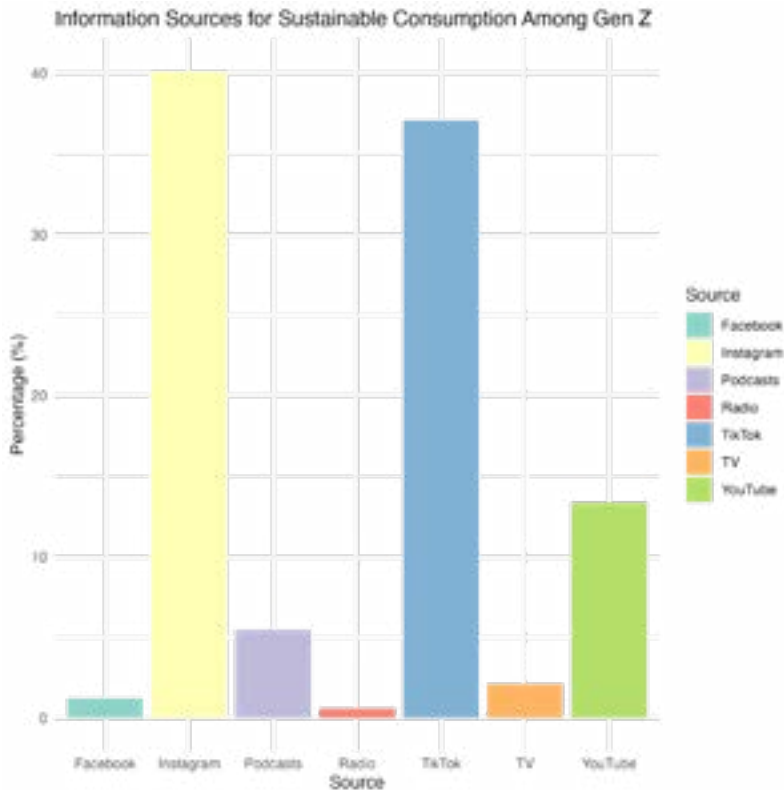
Hypothesis	Pearson Correlation Statistic	Interpretation	Hypothesis Supported
H1: Gen Z individuals with high environmental concern are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors.	$r(329) = .331,$ $p < .001$	Significant medium positive correlation; higher environmental concern is associated with greater likelihood of sustainable behavior.	Yes
H3: Gen Z individuals who are surrounded by environmentally conscious people are more likely to adopt sustainable consumption practices.	$r(329) = .428,$ $p < .001$	Significant medium positive correlation; environmentally friendly surroundings are associated with a greater likelihood of sustainable behavior.	Yes
H4: Greater familiarity with sustainable consumption practices is positively correlated with Gen Z's likelihood of sorting and recycling materials.	$r(329) = .0601,$ $p = .276$	Non-significant, very small positive correlation; no meaningful relationship between familiarity with sustainable practices and recycling behaviors.	No

Source: Compiled by the authors

H5: Gen Z receives information on sustainable consumption from social media at levels comparable to those from traditional media and podcasts

Gen Z in Kazakhstan primarily receives information on sustainable consumption from social media platforms, specifically Instagram (n = 132, 40.12%) and TikTok (n = 122, 37.08%). Following these are YouTube (n = 44, 13.37%) and podcasts (n = 18, 5.47%), with very few respondents citing traditional media sources such as TV (n = 7, 2.13%) or radio (n = 2, 0.61%). Facebook was similarly infrequent as a source, with only four (1.22%) respondents (see Figure 2). This distribution highlights the importance of social media over traditional media in shaping Gen Z's awareness and attitudes toward sustainable practices.

Figure 2
Information Sources on Sustainable Consumption among Generation Z in Kazakhstan



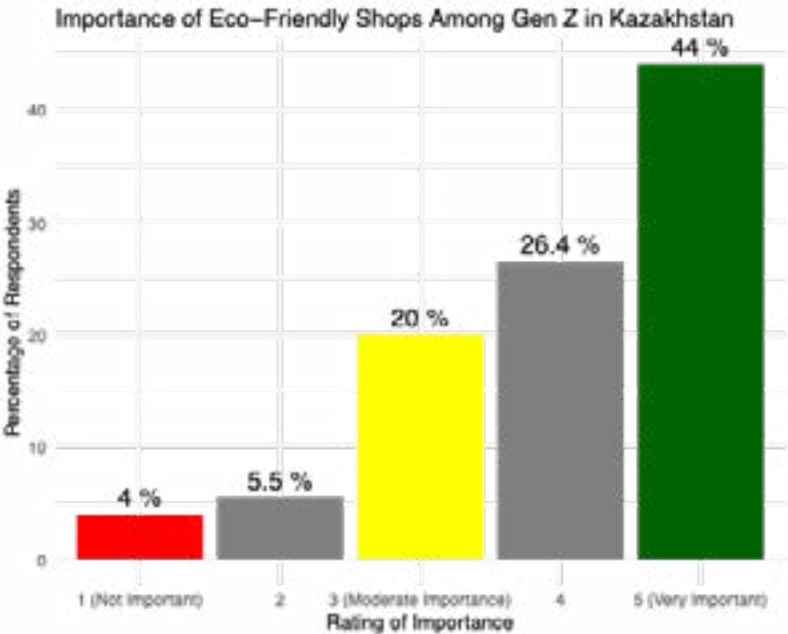
Source: Compiled by the authors

H6: Gen Z prioritizes eco-friendly shops, sustainable products, and companies that demonstrate pro-environmental and pro-social commitments.

The data collected support the hypothesis that Gen Z in Kazakhstan places significant importance on eco-friendly shops, sustainable products, and brands with pro-environmental and pro-social commitments. When asked to rate the importance of eco-friendly shops on a Likert scale, 44% of respondents rated this as “5” (very important). This was followed by 26.4% rating it as “4,” indicating high importance, while 20% selected “3,” suggesting a moderate level of importance. Only 5.5% and 4% rated this as “2” and “1” (not important), respectively (see Figure 3).

These findings indicate that the majority of respondents prioritize eco-friendly shops and sustainable companies, with nearly three-quarters of participants selecting ratings of 4 or 5. This strong inclination reflects Gen Z’s preference for brands that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility, underscoring their value-driven approach to consumption. This finding is consistent with the study by Zhidebekkyzy et al. (2025), which concluded that companies integrating environmental strategies and resource optimization into their core operations are more likely to generate both economic and societal benefits in emerging economies.

Figure 3
Perceived Importance of Eco-Friendly Shops among Generation Z in Kazakhstan



Source: Compiled by the authors

The quality of the environment is significantly shaped by human behavior, indicating that effectively addressing widespread ecological issues necessitates substantial changes in attitudes and responsible actions from individuals (Gifford & Sussman, 2012; Vlek & Steg, 2007). For example, energy consumption – particularly electricity and heating – accounts for approximately 35% of global greenhouse gas emissions (United Nations, n.d.). In this study, many respondents indicated that the transition to sustainable consumption is primarily driven by conscious consumer behavior (n = 181, 55%), followed by the role of companies (n = 82, 25%), while fewer participants believe that government action (n = 65, 20%) is the key factor (see Table 5).

Reflecting a global trend among their peers, most Gen Z individuals in Kazakhstan express a strong belief in their ability to effect change, recognizing that the responsibility for making environmentally conscious choices rests with consumers. This perspective highlights the need for sustainable pricing strategies that empower young consumers to make informed decisions in support of environmental sustainability.

Table 5
Perceived Key Drivers of Sustainable Consumption

Factor	Count	Percentage
Conscious Consumer Behavior	182	55.18%
Role of Companies	82	25%
Government Action	65	19.82%

Source: Compiled by the authors

The findings reveal that a majority of Gen Z respondents in Kazakhstan hold an optimistic outlook regarding the future of sustainable consumption. Specifically, 54.7% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the majority of people will eventually shift toward conscious consumption. This positive stance suggests that many young people foresee a significant societal transformation favoring sustainability as both feasible and likely.

Meanwhile, 33.7% of respondents adopted a neutral perspective, indicating a more reserved or cautious approach. This group’s stance might imply that while they are open to the potential of widespread conscious consumption, they may need to observe more concrete evidence or broader societal shifts to fully believe in this change. Their responses suggest that tangible demonstrations of sustainable practices on a large scale could help solidify their outlook on the future of sustainable consumption.

A smaller portion, 11.6%, disagreed with the statement, reflecting a sense of skepticism or doubt among some respondents. This group’s responses suggest concerns over whether the commitment to sustainable consumption will be robust enough among the broader population to become a mainstream norm. This skepticism might stem from perceived barriers or challenges that could hinder the adoption of sustainable practices on a wide scale.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the sustainable consumption attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z in Kazakhstan, offering critical guidance for marketers targeting this influential demographic. Known for their conscientious approach to spending and their emphasis on value for money (Gomes et al., 2023), Gen Z consumers are drawn to brands that align with their commitment to environmental responsibility. Therefore, it is essential to align marketing strategies with this generation’s sustainable preferences.

The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between environmental concern and sustainable behavior, suggesting that marketing efforts emphasizing environmental awareness are likely to resonate with Gen Z consumers. In Kazakhstan, Gen Z shows a preference for eco-friendly products and brands with demonstrated commitments to sustainability and social responsibility. This demand for authentic pro-environmental actions highlights the necessity for brands to adopt transparent and meaningful sustainability practices. Marketers can leverage this insight by communicating their sustainability initiatives clearly, aligning brand values with those of Gen Z, and emphasizing the tangible impact of their products.

Moreover, creating shared value with this new generation forms a foundation for coherent marketing strategies that position Gen Z not just as consumers but as advocates for both sustainability and the brand. Understanding Gen Z's motivations in sustainable consumption is essential for developing strategies that foster environmental responsibility and ethical consumerism.

While high prices for eco-friendly products pose a challenge, the study suggests that pricing remains an important consideration in Gen Z's sustainable purchasing decisions. Brands can address this challenge by implementing competitive pricing strategies and educating consumers about the environmental impact and lasting benefits of sustainable products. Campaigns that promote these benefits can increase Gen Z's perception of value, making sustainable products more appealing.

Additionally, Gen Z's emphasis on conscious consumer behavior as a driving force for sustainability presents an opportunity for brands to position themselves as advocates for change. Through targeted social media campaigns and collaborations with influencers who share Gen Z's values, brands can cultivate a community of environmentally conscious consumers and inspire sustainable purchasing behaviors.

For marketers, aligning strategies with Gen Z's values in the eco-conscious marketplace is crucial. By understanding and acting on these motivations, brands can not only enhance their appeal but also foster a culture of sustainability that resonates with Gen Z. In today's consumer-controlled digital economy, these insights offer a comprehensive framework for developing targeted marketing strategies that promote sustainability and pave the way for a more environmentally responsible future.

LIMITATIONS

This study has two main limitations. First, the research employed a cross-sectional survey design, which allows for the identification of associations among variables but does not permit causal inferences. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs and complement quantitative findings with qualitative methods, such as interviews, to gain deeper insights into the factors influencing sustainable consumption behavior among Generation Z.

Second, although the sample size of 329 respondents was sufficient for the statistical analyses conducted, the study was limited to Generation Z consumers in Kazakhstan. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other age groups or cultural contexts. Future studies could include larger and more diverse samples from different regions and countries to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Ethical Commission Approval

Conducted at Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, the study examined sustainable consumption behaviors among Generation Z in Kazakhstan, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and compliance with ethical research standards (Protocol No. 23, October 3, 2025).

Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no conflict of interest with any institutions or person within the scope of this study.

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