THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on intergenerational differences in attitudes towards sustainable consumer behaviour. The research is based on the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) and analyses the attitudes of Generation Z, Millennials and Generation X. Opinions on this issue were obtained through a questionnaire survey of 703 respondents. The results show that younger generations are more positively disposed towards sustainability and more open to ecological innovations, but their decisions are often influenced by price and a lack of reliable information. Older generations take a more pragmatic approach to sustainable choices and prefer quality, price and brand trust when making purchases. The study confirms the presence of a value-action gap between intention and reality of consumption across all age groups and highlights the importance of transparency and credibility of environmental information. The findings underscore the need for differentiated marketing communication tailored to generational specifics. Institutions should respond with stricter regulation of environmental labelling and the creation of a uniform standard for the certification of sustainable products to improve transparency for consumers.

KEY WORDS

sustainability, consumer behaviour, consumption behaviour, generational differences, decision-making, marketing communication

JEL CODES

D12, M31, Q01

1 INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour in the context of sustainability is a complex process that encompasses environmental, social and economic issues throughout the entire life cycle of products, from purchase to disposal. According to Skene (2022) it is also important to take into account subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and demographic factors that influence indi-

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viduals decisions to consume more sustainably. Sustainability is characterised by an ideal economic system in which economic development is based on a balance between purely economic factors, environmental considerations and social justice. Sheoran and Kumar (2022) describe sustainable consumer behaviour as behaviour that takes into account environmental, social and economic aspects throughout the consumption cycle (purchase, use, disposal) and is influenced by variables such as subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and other demographic factors (Sheoran and Kumar, 2022, pp. 103–145). Sustainable consumption is largely driven by consumer habits, and it is not always easy to break consumer habits (Puntiroli et al., 2022). Consumer education is very important for sustainable consumption, which is why it is also necessary to motivate young people to think about consumption patterns and gradually adopt sustainability (Calafell et al., 2019; Puntiroli et al., 2022). As studies show (OECD, 2023; Eurostat, 2022), more and more consumers prefer products and services that minimise their negative impact on the environment. According to Thøgersen (2023) a key factor in the transition to sustainable consumer behaviour is social norms and the belief that individual decisions can have a collective impact. Ajzen (2020) states that a significant barrier affecting consumers across generations is the so-called value-action gap, i.e. a situation where individuals declare a positive attitude towards environmentally friendly behaviour, but their actual purchasing decisions often do not correspond to this. According to Gifford and Nilsson (2014), this gap is caused by a number of psychological barriers, including economic constraints, low confidence in environmental certifications, and the perceived complexity of changing consumption habits.

An important factor determining consumer behaviour is the period in which an individual was born. The origins of generational division in society can be traced back to Auguste Comte (1830–1842), who considered social evolution to be a key framework for the development of society. In his works, we find the idea that institutions and generations are the drivers of social development. Although he does not directly use the term "generational change," his emphasis on the social reproduction of ideas and institutions between generations is close to this interpretation. According to Mannheim (1952, p. 276), a generation is "people born in the same historical period who share a common position in the historical dimension of the social process and are exposed during their youth to the same formative events that shape their attitudes, culture and social identity." Generational differences in consumer behaviour are particularly evident in the way products are evaluated and in purchasing priorities. Generation Z is most often defined as those born between 1997 and 2012 (Schroth, 2019), although some authors cite a slightly different time frame, such as after 1995 (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014). This cohort is often referred to as "digital natives" because they grew up surrounded by digital technologies, the internet and smart devices from an early age (Priporas et al., 2017). According to Karim (2019), "Generation Z consumes media predominantly digitally and on mobile devices, while Generation X still relies on traditional media such as television and newspapers." This generation is characterised by a high level of environmental engagement. However, differences between generations show that each age segment of the population approaches the issue of sustainability differently (McKinsey & Company, 2020; Gentina et al., 2016). A significant shift in consumer behaviour has been observed, particularly in relation to the growing emphasis on sustainability, ethics and environmental responsibility. Generation Z and Generation Y (also known as Millennials) are often described in the professional literature as consumers with a higher degree of value orientation who actively seek out brands that represent social and environmental responsibility (Šálková et al., 2023; Trivedi and Pal, 2023). For example, a study by Rai et al. (2021) points out that younger generations are perceived as more willing to accept sustainable solutions if they are properly informed about their benefits. Generation X and Baby Boomers show lower levels of behavioural engagement in sustainability, even though they often declare

positive attitudes towards environmental values (Kamenidou et al., 2020). Their decisions tend to be more influenced by price, quality and personal habits, and they respond more to traditional forms of marketing with an emphasis on utility and rationality of communication.

However, as Gifford and Nilsson (2014) point out, many consumers face a value-action gap, where they declare support for sustainability but in reality prefer other factors such as price and availability. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant change in individual behaviour, particularly in relation to leisure and recreational activities. People sought safer environments to maintain their physical and mental health, which led to a significant increase in interest in outdoor activities. This shift was not only a direct response to health risks, but also reflected a broader societal trend towards nature and active lifestyles. Lecouteux and Moulin (2024) report that even after pandemic restrictions were lifted, interest in activities such as running, hiking and cycling persisted, confirming the potential for long-term changes in consumer preferences. Companies responded with an increased emphasis on natural motifs, green branding, and marketing focused on health and authenticity. Many factors influence consumer decision-making, and it is desirable to understand them in order to uncover the determinants of consumer behaviour that can be influenced in an effort to change behaviour. Responsible consumption is a goal defined by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The Sustainable Development Goals (Ferraz and Pyka, 2023). The question remains how to effectively influence consumers to change their behaviour towards sustainable responsible consumption. What determinants of consumer behaviour need to be addressed in order to achieve behavioural change in consumers towards sustainability? Consumer education and training play a key role in sustainable consumption. Thøgersen (2023) suggests that providing education and information about sustainable options can strengthen consumers' ability to make informed decisions. According to a study by Prayag et al. (2022), Generation Z not only exhibits the highest level of environmental values, but also a higher level of cognitive and behavioural consistency – i.e. it is able to translate these values into specific consumer behaviour (e.g. choosing eco-certified accommodation). Generation Y, also known as millennials, is most often defined as those born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). Howe and Strauss (2000) consider millennials to be a "new great generation" characterised by digital literacy, optimism, trust in authority, teamwork and a focus on meaningful work. They expect a balance between personal and professional life, and often support equality, diversity and social change in social issues. Dimock (2019) specifies that the millennial generation ends in 1996, as Generation Z has been entering the world of the internet and smartphones since birth. Millennials are often described as value-oriented consumers. The study by Prayag et al. (2022) classifies some millennials as so-called actively sustainable consumers who behave ecologically not only in terms of their attitudes but also their actions – especially in the area of travel. Generation X, born approximately between 1965 and 1980, is often described as pragmatic, responsible and function-oriented. According to Holloway (2025), although they perceive environmental aspects positively, their consumer behaviour is mainly motivated by price, quality and proven products. Generation X more often draws information from traditional media and prefers direct recommendations. Brand et al. (2022) found that Generation X requires a higher degree of transparency and product information and often reads detailed reviews. Compared to Generation Z, sustainability appeals to them more as an added value than as a key factor in purchasing decisions. Šálková et al. (2023) state that while Generation X perceives luxury as a status symbol, younger generations (Y and Z) associate it with individuality and experience. Baby Boomers (born around 1946–1964), the generation preceding Generation X, show even lower environmental engagement. Prayag et al. (2022) classify them as having mixed priorities – they declare an interest in ecology, but often remain conservative in their consumer behaviour. Research shows that different age

groups of consumers respond differently to various forms of marketing communication. Digital campaigns, influencers and interactive content are most effective with Generation Z and Millennials, while television commercials, print media and personal recommendations have a greater effect on Generation X and Baby Boomers. However, across generations, the credibility and transparency of environmental certifications remain a key factor (Stylos et al., 2024). The importance of marketing in the field of sustainability is also confirmed by research by Ornelas Herrera et al. (2025), which analysed the preference for sustainable food within circular agriculture in six European countries. The results of the study show that consumers respond positively above all to the transparency and credibility of brands, emphasising the benefits for the local community and the environment, and clear and verifiable information about the origin of the product.

Based on these findings, the authors set the following objectives for the study: to identify the attitudes of individual generations towards sustainable consumer behaviour and a healthy lifestyle; to identify the factors that influence individual generations and their sustainable consumer behaviour; to determine the extent to which perceptions of sustainability influence actual consumer behaviour. Part of the objective of this study is to recommend communication priorities for institutions focused on sustainable consumer behaviour across generations in favour of sustainability.

2 METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire survey was conducted to achieve the set objective. This survey was carried out among 703 respondents in the Czech Republic between 9 February and 21 February 2025. The questionnaire was compiled using theoretical knowledge and previous research in the field of consumer behaviour, sustainability and healthy lifestyles. The influence of individual generations on this behaviour is also a subject of interest. The data was collected via an online questionnaire created in Google Forms, which was distributed via social networks and email communication. The structure of the respondents is shown in Tab. 1. The questionnaire consists mainly of closed questions (dichotomous, selection, scale) and is structured into several thematic units: perceptions of sustainability, attitudes towards sustainability and healthy lifestyles, and factors influencing sustainable consumer behaviour. The final part of the questionnaire contains socio-demographic characteristics. An example question from the questionnaire from the introductory section on perceptions of sustainability was: "What do you understand by the term sustainability?" Respondents chose all valid options, e.g. environmental protection, circular economy, social justice, ethical production, etc. The importance of sustainable behaviour, their opinions and attitudes is expressed using a Likert scale (scale 1 = completely unimportant to 7 = very important), e.g. "How important do you think sustainable behaviour is in everyday life?", 1 means completely unimportant to 7 = very important. The section focused on healthy lifestyles included questions such as: To what extent do you agree with the statements: "I consciously try to eat healthily", "I pay attention to the composition of food", "Habit and convenience prevent me from leading a healthy lifestyle". In terms of consumer behaviour, questions included: "How important is sustainability (ecological materials, ethical production) to you?" and "What would motivate you to buy more sustainable products?" (e.g. lower price, greater choice, higher quality). A complete overview of all questions is provided in Tab. 2.

Note: The representation of individual generations in the sample is not uniform, with millennials accounting for almost two-thirds of respondents and Generation X and Generation Z each accounting for only one-fifth of respondents. Therefore, the results for individual generations may be distorted, and this imbalance in the sample is one of the limitations of the

Tab. 1: Structure of respondents to the questionnaire survey

		Questionnaire survey n = 703, [%]
Generation	Generation Z (18–25 years old)	17.2
	Generation Y – Millennials (26–41 years old)	64.6
	Generation X (42–57 years old)	18.2
Economic activity	Employees	65.6
	Private entrepreneurs	13.3
	Unemployed	0.9
	Students	7.4
	Maternity or parental leave	12.8
Salary	Less than CZK 20,000	13.2
	CZK 20,001–35,000	29.8
	CZK 35,001–50,000	32.4
	CZK 50,001–70,000	11.5
	More than CZK 70,000	8.5
	I don't want to say	4.6
Education	Primary education	1.8
	Full secondary education	35.3
	University degree	62.9
Size of municipality of residence	Less than 5,000 inhabitants	30.5
	5,000–50,000 inhabitants	27.3
	50,001–500,000 inhabitants	21.7
	More than 500,000 inhabitants	20.5

results of this study. Only one-tenth of the respondents are men, so the predominance of women may also distort the results. However, both genders are included in the sample for the sake of completeness of the consumer outputs (when evaluating the results of the female-only sample, the results did not differ significantly).

Descriptive statistics and graphs are used to obtain an overview of the opinions and attitudes expressed by respondents on content-related questions. The chi-square test of independence in a contingency table is used to test the differences in behaviour between individual generations. A prerequisite for its use: None of the expected cell frequencies should be less than one, no more than 20% of the expected cell frequencies should be less than 5 (Cochran, 1952). The chi-square test was used to examine differences in individual questionnaire items across generations (Tab. 2).

Factor analysis is used to identify the factors influencing the behaviour of respondents. Factor analysis is applied to summarise the variability in the data set and reduce the number of variables to a certain number of newly created factors. The calculation begins by determining the factor loadings based on the eigenvalues in the principal component analysis. The second stage is factor rotation, i.e. transformation to interpreted factors. The last step is the calculation of factor loadings and the identification of newly created factors (Hebák et al., 2013). When describing the factor loadings of variables, factor rotation is applied using the Varimax method.

To assess significant differences between generational groups, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied (the assumption of normality was not met, thus a non-parametric alternative to one-way ANOVA was selected). This test evaluates whether the distributions of the compared groups differ significantly by assessing differences in median ranks. The test is based on ranking all observations across groups and comparing the sum of ranks between groups. When the null hypothesis of equal

medians across groups is rejected, it is possible to conclude that at least one group differs significantly from the others. Following a significant Kruskal-Wallis test result, the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner (DSCF) post-hoc test was conducted to identify specific differences between pairs of generations. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29 software, with a significance level of 0.05.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Sustainable Consumer Behaviour from a Generational Perspective

Generation Z and Millennials accounted for more than 80% of all research participants, which corresponds to their higher engagement in sustainability issues. In contrast, Generation X was less represented, which may affect the generalisability of the results for these groups. Nevertheless, even among older generations, a certain degree of interest in environmental issues can be observed, but their purchasing decisions are more significantly influenced by economic factors and the availability of eco-friendly products. In terms of the perception of sustainability as a value, Generation Z considers sustainable behaviour to be an integral part of their lifestyle. As many as 87% of respondents from this group said that sustainability plays an important role in their everyday decisions. Among Millennials, this figure was slightly lower, but still significant (79%), while among Generation X it was 54%. This difference suggests that the perception of environmental responsibility is largely generation-dependent and is related not only to social discourse but also to specific values formed in the youth of each generation. A key finding is that there are almost no differences between generations in terms of attitudes towards sustainable consumer behaviour, but there are clear differences in actual behaviour. Only 62% of Generation Z and 58% of Millennials actually buy eco-friendly products on a regular basis, confirming the existence of the so-called value-action gap. This phenomenon is a key problem in the area of sustainable consumption, as it suggests that despite positive attitudes towards eco-friendly products, consumers often prioritise other factors, particularly price and availability.

The evaluation of 32 questions concerning sustainability was organised into individual areas: sustainable behaviour in general, factors influencing sustainable behaviour, healthy eating and perception of a healthy lifestyle, obstacles to a healthy lifestyle, preference for sustainable products, and trustworthiness. The first set of questions focused on assessing the importance of the factors listed, the second set on agreement with the obstacles listed, and the third on perceptions of the statements listed. The highest level of agreement was recorded for the importance of sustainable behaviour in everyday life. The survey showed that the perception of the importance of sustainable consumer behaviour is crucial, with this area receiving the highest ratings across all generations. The question about the credibility of companies' sustainability measures demonstrates the expected increased interest in sustainability, but the average response score is lower than for the perception of the importance of sustainable behaviour in everyday life. Another resonant area is healthy eating, with which respondents also strongly identify. The obstacles to a healthy lifestyle that were rated highest by respondents were high financial costs. Sustainable transport and mobility, responsible behaviour and ethical production are considered the least important. The evaluation of individual questions also varies between generations.

The results of the responses on a 7-point Likert scale by generation were processed in 32 contingency tables for 32 questions, each of which was tested for differences in responses by generation (Tab. 2). The chi-square test of independence in the contingency table was used for this purpose, but only on the condition that

Tab. 2: Results of testing differences in responses by generation chi-square test

	***p*-value**
How important do you think sustainable behaviour is in everyday life?	×
Environmental protection	0.626
Long-term balance between economy, society and ecology	0.060
Efficient use of natural resources without depleting them	0.169
Minimising waste and promoting a circular economy	0.197
Sustainable consumption and responsible purchasing	0.840
Social justice and equal opportunities	0.583
Energy self-sufficiency and use of renewable resources	0.331
Sustainable transport and mobility	0.529
Responsible business and ethical production	0.724
Do you prefer products from companies that promote sustainability?	0.325
Do you find companies' sustainability measures credible?	0.006
Lack of time	0.322
High financial costs	0.633
Low motivation	0.281
Lack of information	0.892
Lifestyle of my surroundings	0.252
Stress and mental discomfort	0.314
Health limitations	0.145
Lack of available options	0.613
Habit and convenience	0.823
Nothing prevents me, I follow a healthy lifestyle	0.088
I consciously try to eat healthily	0.300
I monitor the composition of food	0.532
I have a good relationship with food and enjoy eating	0.399
I eat emotionally – I use food to cope with stress or emotions	0.793
The price of food has the greatest influence on my eating habits.	0.345
Lack of time has the greatest influence on my eating habits.	0.017
The lack of available information has the greatest influence on my eating habits.	×
Marketing and advertising of food products have the greatest influence on my eating habits.	×
My eating habits are most influenced by the influence of family and friends.	0.539
I don't worry about whether my diet is healthy	×

Note: × = the condition for using the chi-square test is not met.

a maximum of 20% of the expected values were < 5, which was not met for 4 questions. Of the other questions tested, only 2 questions were statistically significant at the 5% significance level, which are shown below in the tables and graphs.

When asked whether companies' actions are trustworthy, Generation X respondents were more likely to agree. The differences in responses are statistically significant at the 5% level according to the chi-square test: $\chi^2(12; N = 697) = 27.943$, $p = 0.006$. However, Cramer's V value of 0.142 indicates only a weak factual significance of this dependence.

When asked whether lack of time most influences eating habits, Generation X respondents were more likely to disagree. The differences in responses are statistically significant at the 5% level according to the chi-square test: $\chi^2(12; N = 697) = 24.564$, $p = 0.017$. However, Cramer's V value of 0.133 indicates only a weak factual significance of this dependence.

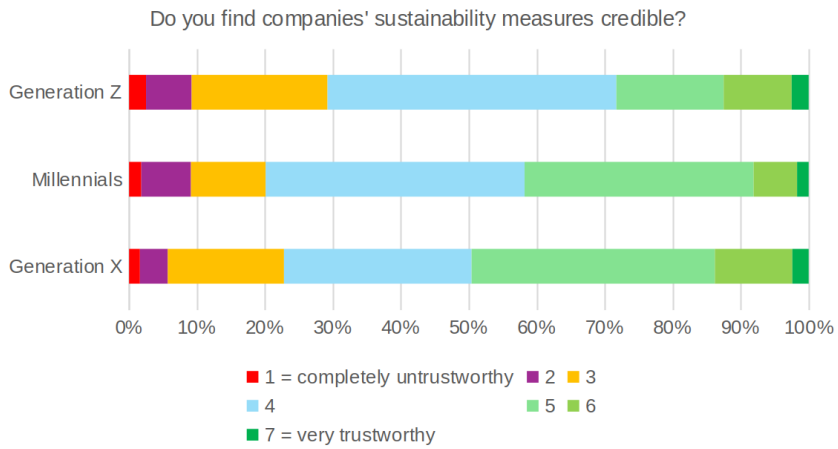

Fig. 1: Perception of corporate credibility in the area of sustainability

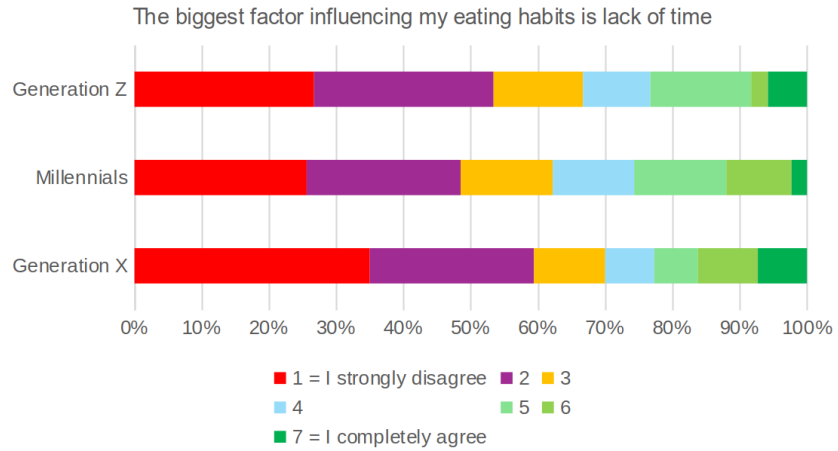

Fig. 2: Time as an obstacle to eating habits

3.2 The Influence of Individual Factors on Sustainable Consumer Behaviour

Factor analysis was used to verify the degree of influence of individual variables on sustainable behaviour, which was the subject of the questionnaire survey. This analysis was used to identify new factors of sustainable behaviour containing closely related variables (questions). These new factors will then be compared between generations and statistically significant differences will be tested. The result of the rotated component matrix (using the varimax rotation method) indicates the assignment of the original 32 variables to 6 newly created factors. This classification is based on factor loadings, i.e. correlations between the original variable and the new factor. The closest to each other are the questions from the sustainability assessment set (9 questions), which form the first factor, followed by questions from the set assessing barriers to sustainable behaviour (8 questions), which form the second factor, and then questions on adherence to a healthy lifestyle (4 questions), which form the third factor. Furthermore, factor 4 is represented by questions about the influence on eating habits (5 questions), factor 5 by questions about emotions (3 questions) and factor 6 by general questions about sustainability (3

Tab. 3: Classification of questions into six newly created factors

Factor 1 Sustainability assessment	Environmental protection
	Long-term balance between economy, society and ecology
	Effective use of natural resources without depleting them
	Minimisation of waste and promotion of the circular economy
	Sustainable consumption and responsible purchasing
	Social justice and equal opportunities
	Energy self-sufficiency and use of renewable resources
	Sustainable transport and mobility
	Responsible business and ethical production
Factor 2 Barriers to a healthy lifestyle	High financial costs
	Low motivation
	Lack of information
	The lifestyle of those around me
	Stress and mental discomfort
	Health limitations
	Lack of available options
	Habit and convenience
Factor 3 Eating habits	Nothing prevents me from following a healthy lifestyle
	I consciously try to eat healthily
	I pay attention to food ingredients
	I have a good relationship with food and enjoy eating
Factor 4 Barriers to eating habits	The price of food has the greatest influence on my eating habits
	The lack of available information has the greatest influence on my eating habits
	Marketing and advertising of food has the greatest influence on my eating habits
	My eating habits are most influenced by the influence of family and friends
	I do not consider whether my diet is healthy
Factor 5 Emotions	Perception of lack of time
	I eat emotionally – I use food to cope with stress or emotions
	I am most influenced by the recommendations of others
Factor 6 The importance of sustainability	How important do you think sustainable behaviour is in everyday life?
	Do you prefer products from companies that promote sustainability?
	Do you find companies' sustainability measures credible?

questions). These six newly created factors, each of which contains questions that carry similar information, can therefore be used for the entire area without losing any significant information.

Tab. 3 shows the arrangement of questions into the six newly created factors corresponding to the following names: sustainability assessment, barrier assessment, healthy lifestyle adherence, eating habits, emotions, and sustainability significance.

When testing the differences in the average values of the newly created factors between generations, only factor 6, consisting of questions on the overall importance of sustainable behaviour and preferences and credibility, was statistically significantly different based on the Kruskal-Wallis test: $\chi^2(2; N = 703) = 12.281$; $p = 0.002$. According to the DSCF post-hoc paired comparison test, a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.009$) was demonstrated between generations X and Z. The older generation (X) therefore has a higher degree of overall importance of sustainable behaviour. The differences in the average ratings of individual variables included in the newly created factors by generation are graphically represented in Fig. 3.

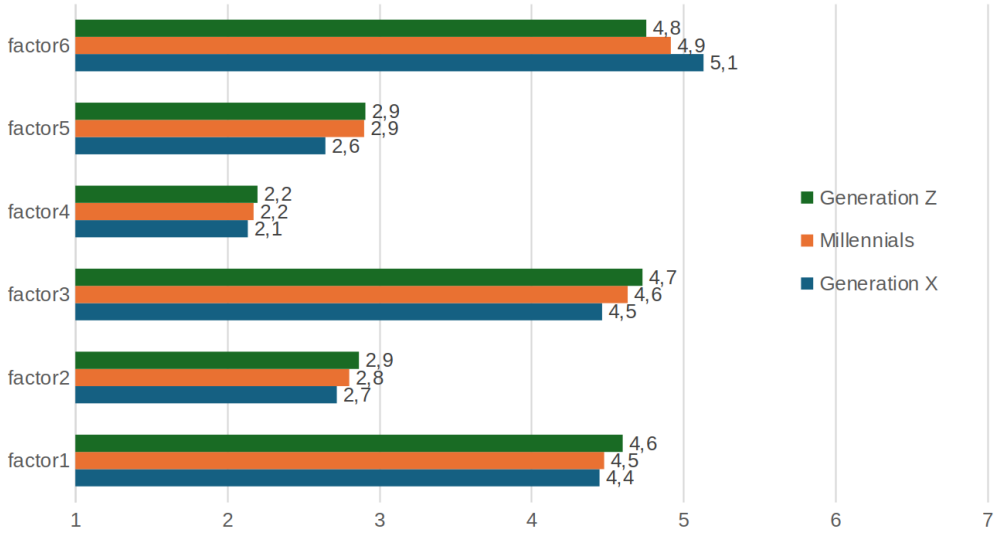

Fig. 3: Average values of questionnaire items by factor and generation

The average values of questionnaire items by factor and generation shown above represent the mean values of all questionnaire items included in each of the six factors. The highest level of agreement among consumers across all generations was recorded for Factor 6 (importance of sustainability for life). A very similar level of agreement was found for Factor 1 (general perception of sustainability) and Factor 3 (eating habits and healthy lifestyle). The lowest agreement rating was recorded for Factor 4 (barriers to eating habits). Factor 2 (barriers to a healthy lifestyle) and Factor 5 (emotions) were rated similarly at a low level of agreement.

4 DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed the highest level of agreement regarding the importance of sustainable behaviour in everyday life. We know that consumers' efforts to behave sustainably depend on their personal attitudes and perceptions of values (Tewari et al., 2022). The area of perception of the importance of sustainable consumer behaviour across all generations received the highest rating in this study. Prinzing et al. (2024) also emphasise the importance of sustainable behaviour and its impact on everyday life in this context, stating that people who perform more environmentally sustainable everyday actions also report higher subjective well-being, with active, more demanding and social forms of behaviour having a stronger positive effect. In drawing the following conclusions, we take into account the structure of the sample. The barriers to a healthy lifestyle that were rated highest by respondents in this study were high financial costs. These results are consistent with OECD data (2023), according to which 65% of consumers consider price to be the main barrier to purchasing eco-friendly products.

The study's findings also show that promoting sustainable consumption requires a comprehensive approach aimed at eliminating economic barriers, increasing the availability of eco-friendly products, and strengthening confidence in the labelling of sustainable products. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account generational differences in information and value preferences, which have a fundamental impact on consumers' willingness to adopt sustainable alternatives in their everyday

lives. Across generations, long-term changes in purchasing behaviour can be achieved and sustainability can be strengthened as a standard part of consumer decisions. Significant differences may arise in willingness to pay extra, frequency of purchase, and type of information sources used.

The study found that Generation X lacks a motivational link between attitude and action. Sustainable behaviour among consumers is low even with moderate awareness. Millennials achieve the highest scores in both attitudes and ecological behaviour, with a demonstrably high consistency between values and actions. This is confirmed by Prayag et al. (2022), who argue that Millennials are willing to prioritise sustainable solutions even at a higher price if they perceive them to be in line with their own values. Generation Z shows a strong attitude but a lower degree of transfer into real behaviour; this generation has the potential for environmental behaviour, but its implementation is lower. Generation X scores low on both variables; this generation lacks a motivational link between attitude and action, with trust, price and availability being the factors that influence this. Among Millennials, there is a positive relationship and a high degree of consistency between values and actions. While Generations Z and Y perceive sustainability as a fundamental value, for Generation X it represents an added rather than a determining value in consumer decision-making. Data from Eurostat (2022) show that eco-friendly products account for approximately 15% of retail turnover in the Czech Republic, with the highest share of purchases made by consumers with higher incomes. Gifford and Nilsson (2014) emphasise that many consumers face a value-action gap, where they declare their support for sustainability but in reality prefer other factors such as price and availability. Institutions need to take action to encourage sustainable consumer behaviour. Thøgersen (2023, p. 197): "Without substantial institutional and infrastructural support, the impact of individual choices remains limited, even if consumers are motivated to act in line with sustainable goals." In this area, it is possible to introduce various incentives to support sustainable consumer behaviour, but also strict regulations that promote sustainable consumer behaviour. These have been introduced, for example, by Sweden, one of the leading countries in terms of sustainable policies and global sustainability performance. In 2016, Sweden introduced a reduced VAT rate for repair services (e.g. sewing, patches) for clothing, footwear and home textiles – originally from 25% to 12%. From 1 January 2025, a law requiring separate collection of textile waste, including damaged items (e.g. underwear, socks), will come into force in Sweden. The law is intended to encourage greater reuse and recycling of textiles and reduce the amount of textiles that end up in landfills or in general waste. From 1 January 2025, under the so-called RUT-avdrag / RUT deduction, households will also be able to deduct 25% of the cost of professional laundry and home textile services, even though this work could normally be done at home. This also includes minor repairs to clothing or textiles and transport (pickup/drop-off) as part of this service.

Effective strategies to promote sustainable behaviour should therefore combine economic incentives, regulatory measures against greenwashing and a targeted communication strategy tailored to different age groups. Only in this way can long-term changes in purchasing behaviour be achieved and sustainability be strengthened as a standard part of consumer decisions. To support all of the following recommendations, it is important to realise that even small changes in behaviour can lead to rapid and widespread social shifts towards more sustainable consumption patterns, as emphasised by Thøgersen (2023) in his concept of social tipping points.

5 CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the attitudes of individual generations towards sustainable behaviour and a healthy lifestyle differ, but only from a certain point of view. Overall, the data indicate a high level of interest in sustainability and a healthy lifestyle. The factors that influence individual generations and their sustainable behaviour are fundamentally influenced primarily by personal preferences. Although younger generations show a higher level of environmental awareness, their consumption behaviour is influenced by affordability, available product information, and the overall situation in society. This study shows that younger generations (especially Generation Z and Millennials) expressed a greater willingness to pay extra for eco-friendly products compared to older generations. Generation Z is most sensitive to issues such as ecology, fair trade, ethical production and sustainability. Generation X remains more focused on utility and price. The degree of influence of sustainability perceptions on actual consumer behaviour is determined both by price and by the availability and transparency of information for consumers.

The study shows that respondents across generations attach great importance to the careful use of natural resources, waste minimisation and environmental protection, while sustainable transport and ethical production were perceived as less important. Healthy eating was among the most emphasised areas, with most respondents reporting a conscious effort to eat healthily, with Generation Z rating this area as the most important. Respondents most often cited high financial costs, habits and convenience, as well as stress and mental discomfort, as barriers to a healthy lifestyle. The perception of stress as an obstacle varies significantly across generations, with Generation Z mentioning it most often and Generation X least often. An intergenerational difference was also noted in the assessment of the influence of lifestyle on the environment.

A key element in promoting sustainable consumption is ensuring transparency of information about eco-friendly products and transparency of sustainable production by companies. Supporting sustainable consumption requires cooperation between public institutions, companies and the non-profit sector. Transparency and consistent monitoring of companies' environmental claims, together with effective awareness-raising and educational programmes, can contribute to a gradual shift in consumer behaviour towards more sustainable choices. Institutions should emphasise clear and understandable communication and certification of eco-friendly products so that consumers have access to verified data and are able to make informed decisions. A key step towards effectively promoting sustainable behaviour is to tailor communication strategies to different age groups. Across all generations, the higher price of eco-friendly alternatives was most often cited as a barrier, confirming that economic factors remain a key element influencing sustainable consumer behaviour. The results obtained and the recommendations derived from them are also a suitable basis for social marketing creators.

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