

## **Sustainable consumption in México**

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<https://vinculando.org/consumidores/sustainableconsumptionmexico.html>

### **Introduction**

Each of us has the capability of influencing our environment in different ways: some of us favor the conservation of biodiversity, yet others press for the improvement of standards of living of the poor in our countries. However, there are those who favor a market system that only works to increase the profits of big companies, without internalizing the negative social and environmental fallouts of their operations.

This article will speak of the power of sustainable or responsible consumption to influence this choice by businesses.

### **Present context**

The sustainable consumption movement arose from the social, environmental and economic repercussions of the neo-liberal politics that was characterized by open markets, the predominance of capital and the exaltation of consumption.

At present we find ourselves in a world situation where the developed countries, which house on 14 percent of the world's populations corner 75 percent of the world's GDP. The 50 largest MNCs of the world have greater sales figures than 150 of the poorest countries of the planet.

The situation is weighted in favor of countries that offer more favorable opportunities for MNCs: including fiscal support, labor and resource bonds etc. Numerous studies indicate that maintaining these high levels of production and consumption comes at a cost – the undoing of the middle class, exacerbation of levels of poverty and labor exploitation, migration towards cities and developed countries, etc.

### **Sustainable consumption vs. consumerism**

Consumerism is based upon the twin pillars of accumulation and individualism. It can particularly be characterized by our current “use and throw” generation. Besides promoting a particular product or service, consumerism involves the careful selection of the information that is presented to the consumer: highlighting certain qualities while at the same time hiding other, potentially negative information like environmental repercussions and certain agro-industrial process (like GMOs). Sustainable consumption tries to counter this phenomenon. The premise of the sustainable consumption movement is that consumers can influence the market by choosing to acquire certain products and services over others. The actions of several individuals contributing sustainable consumption, when joined together will create the sustainable consumption movement. This movement can be used to call for environmental protection, improvement of labor standards etc. The movement should be used to promote products and services that are created responsibly and to drive out products and services that are attempt to reduce costs with technologies that are harmful for people and the planet.

## **Challenges of practicing sustainable consumption today**

There are many obstacles that prevent an easy change to responsible consumption practices.

First the advertising industry: Through mass media, the information that we receive is carefully tailored to induce us to purchase, by appealing to our brand consciousness, our need to “keep up with the Joneses” or by making us believe that charity is the way that we can contribute to the fight against poverty and social injustice.

Sustainable consumption means a reinterpretation of these advertising messages, as well as a constant search of independent information that will allow us to choose sustainable products and services. Sometimes, to consume sustainably, it might be necessary for us to stop the consumption of certain products that may have become habitual to use. However, one must not forget the advantages of globalization that provides us with many sustainable options.

In addition, we must present the purchasing power of sustainable consumption in such a manner that businesses and producers see it as commercially profitable and viable to adopt socially and environmentally friendly production and practices.

## **Effects of sustainable consumption**

Sustainable consumption is a framework that incorporates the values of justice, respect for human rights, as well as economic, social, environmental and cultural rights. It promotes the moderation of consumption in order to reduce the exploitation of the environment. Additionally, it promotes reuse and recycling. Additionally, it promotes organic agriculture and other environmentally friendly practices.

Fair commercial practices are to be supported. Through fair trade practices, the rights of small producers are protected. By guaranteeing the small producer a fair price for his products, goods and services of a high quality are made available to the sustainable consumer.

Sustainable consumption places a high responsibility on the part of consumers. It implies that products and services will not be chosen purely on the basis of their characteristics or their price – but instead that the consumer will consider the environmental, social and economic implications of their choice.

## **Sustainable consumption in México City**

Vinculacion y Comunicacion Social, A.C. has been promoting values and practices of sustainable consumption, fair trade and organic production among different groups within México City by different means and projects. One of the most successful projects was carried out in alliance with private and public universities, where we found an amazing interest for these topics.

Students are more and more engaged and interested with different actions that support sustainable practices, so that when we go to schools to talk about these issues, they get very excited to participate at different levels, from increasing their awareness to current national problems such as poverty caused by current consumption patterns, to

change their consumption practices, supporting small producers from our country.

We have also supported students' initiatives to recycle paper, with a tremendous interest from other schools and small enterprises. In this case, young people take in their hands the whole recycling process, and also share information for others to replicate this initiative at the local level.

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