

Consumption and sustainability: a brief conceptual history

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Introduction

Several challenges need to be overcome, so that, as a society, we can achieve a good quality of life. One of the greatest difficulties faced is related to ecological problems, which are caused by the production and consumption system (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997). Thus, consumption represents a relevant research topic, due to its impact on cultural, ecological, economic, political, and social relations present in society.

Consumption investigation becomes more complex when it relates to other topics of social relevance, such as sustainability (Holden, 2004; Hostaa & Žabkar, 2016). It represents an institutional concept, as a response to environmental problems caused by “developed” countries. Since its origin, a lot of studies were developed based on different understandings about what should be sustained (Mebratu, 1998; Osorio et al., 2005).

Practical results, from the articulation between consumption and sustainability, produces several concepts that overlap in understandings (Galvagno, 2011; García-de-Frutos et al., 2018). This may be due to the characteristic of the phenomenon, which is investigated under different terms. Sometimes, these studies analyze the same event with operationalization and measurements differently (Catlin et al., 2017). It was chosen to group in the same construct, called consumption towards sustainability, which is related to the activities of appreciation, acquisition, appropriation, and post-use of products and services – that have at least some relation to sustainability dimensions – i.e. ecological, economic, or social.

Several literature reviews have been conducted, whether on a specific term (e.g. Galvagno, 2011; Groening et al., 2018); or even covering diverse concepts (Koskenniemi, 2019; e.g. Lim, 2017). However, these studies do not succeed to address all the concepts available in the literature.

In this sense, this literature review aims to comprehend, from a qualitative perspective, the different types of consumption towards sustainability present in the literature. Fifteen terms were identified, which were presented into twelve concepts, which are related. The construct identified were: alternative, anti-consumption, collaborative, conscious, critical, ethical, frugal, green, mindful, political, responsible, and sustainable. The examination sought to understand construct history, emerging issues, and possible action motives.

In order to a better organization of the themes, it was decided to structure the article with the following section: introduction; methodology; consumption and sustainability interwoven on time; concepts of consumption towards sustainability; and final considerations.

Methodology

Concerning achieve the objective proposed, this literature review, this literature review was conducted from a qualitative perspective. Data collection data was divided into four different stages, namely: identifying constructs, cataloging studies, deepening in concepts, and snowballing manuscripts.

In the beginning, in order to identify constructs, was conducted a survey in the Scopus database, in February 2020, with the terms “Consumption” and “Sustainability” - in the title, abstract, and keywords – in which 1,845 articles were found. It was considered articles and reviews limited to the Business, Management, and Account concentration area. Analyzing the title and keywords of these studies, it was possible to identify 15 relevant terms: alternative, anti-consumption, collaborative, conscious, critical, ethical, frugal, green, mindful, non-consumption, political, pre-environmental, pro-social, responsible, sustainable.

After that, it was carried additional researches, in the cataloging studies' phase. This time, the survey was conducted on the Scopus and Web of Science databases, with the following formula: "Term Consum*" AND "Sustain*" – in the title, abstract, and keywords – in which 920 total articles and 743 unique articles were found. It happens because, as the searches were done individually, some articles appeared in more than one research. Figure 1 presents the number of duplicate articles and their related terms. Works published between the years 2015 to 2019 were considered. The choice was also made by articles and reviews limited to the Business, Management, and Account concentration area. Through the connections existing between the article, it is more evident the relations between the different concepts.

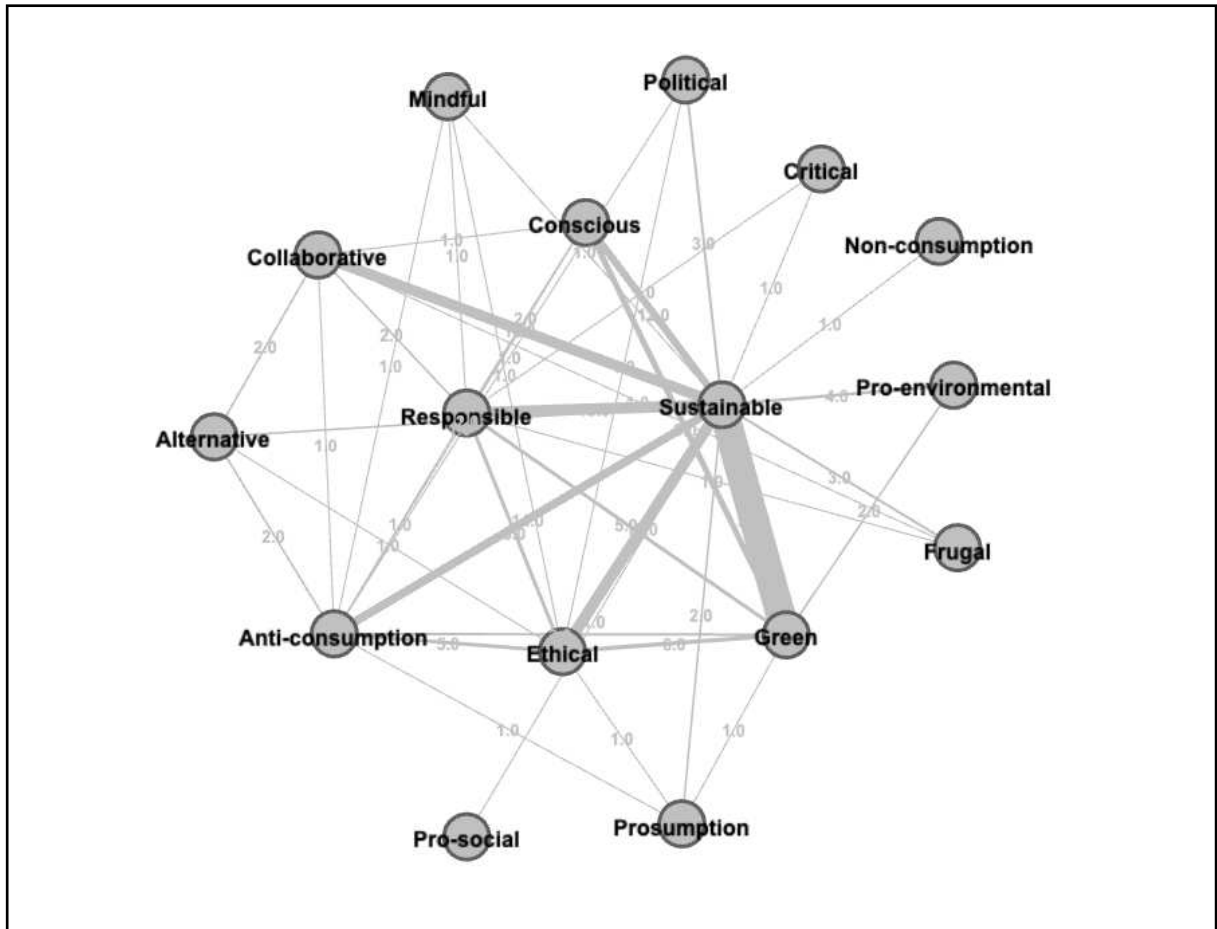


Figure 1. Duplicate articles

In the third phase, deepening in the concepts, it was used the NVivo program as an auxiliary instrument. With the assistance of the "Text Search" tool, it was possible to identify and save the excerpts with the terms identified in phase 1. In the sequence, these query results were read, looking for its conceptual definition, as well as historical characteristics of their emergence. When relevant elements were found for the research, the excerpts were coded with their respective terms.

Snowballing manuscripts was the fourth phase of this study. The new reading was taken, with more attention to details. Original sources were identified, from its conceptual definitions. In a recursive process, new and more accurate codings were made.

Consumption and sustainability interwoven on time

Consumption with elements of sustainability has emerged and changed over time. In this sense, the following will present some relevant historical issues.

Through literature analysis, it was possible to identify that one of the first publications that problematize consumption dates from the late 1950s. Galbraith (1958) connects unsustainable consumption behavior with the problem of environmental resources. This work, which questions the American consumption pattern, is a signal of what would become the concern of the next decade.

The 1960s were characterized by the emergence of the environmental movement, founded on Carson's (1962) book, with a warning about environmental problems. Another remarkable event was the creation of the Club of Rome, in 1968, in which groups of intellectuals sought to discuss the problems of society, especially environmental issues (Meadows et al., 1972). In this context, consumers' first concerns with the environment arise (Mostafa, 2007).

The ecological movement brought environmental discussions to academic analysis in the 1970s, with fragmentation in scientific research (Peattie, 2010). The beginning of the decade was influenced by two publications. The first, with great expression, is the Club of Rome report, which addresses the crucial problems for the future developmental society (Meadows et al., 1972). The second is a report from the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm – the first organization's environmental event (United Nations, 1972). On the economic dimension, this decade was marked by a crisis, caused by the oil crisis (Heiskanen & Pantzar, 1997; Mostafa, 2007). In general terms, in this decade, discussions revolved around political solutions to social and environmental problems (Roberts, 1996). It is from this scenario that conscious, green, and responsible consumption appears, influenced by the studies of psychology.

Media coverage of environmental problems increased during the 1980s, and studies on purchasing behaviors considered green was consolidated (Roberts, 1996). In that decade, the concept of sustainable development was promoted, supported by the World Commission on Environmental and Development, in 1987 (WCED, 1987). In literature, sustainability was addressed based on corporate social responsibility and continued until the following decade (Cho et al., 2015).

The concept of sustainable production and consumption appeared for the first time in 1992 at United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Earth Summit, also known as Eco-92 (Evans et al., 2017). As a result of the event was create the Agenda 21, a blueprint for action strategic for achieving sustainable development. It was created, as a result of the event, Agenda 21, a blueprint for action strategies for achieving sustainable development. Chapter four advocates for the development of public policies to reduce unsustainable consumption patterns (Akenji, 2014).

However, the conceptual definition of sustainable production and consumption was introduced at the Oslo Conference, in 1994 (Ahn, 2019; Norwegian Ministry for the Environment, 1994). Thus, the 1990s were characterized by a demand increase for green and recycled products, in which consumers' social and environmental concerns were investigated in purchasing behaviors (Roberts, 1996). During this period, studies on ethics, sustainability, and resistance of the consumer gained expression.

The idea of transformation in sustainable production and consumption patterns was reinforced in 2002, during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, also identified as Johannesburg Summit (United Nations, 2002). In broad terms, the new millennium brought several technological changes and was regarded by the economic crisis in the late 2000s. This promoted changes in business models and consumption behavior (Barbosa & Fonseca, 2019). In this scenario, the concepts of anti-consumption, and political consumption started to increase.

An institutional event related to sustainable production and consumption was the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in 2012, also called Rio+20, with the renewal of the political commitment to sustainable development (Cohen & Muñoz, 2016).

Also, another event was the definition, in 2015, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations General Assembly. These objectives are part of the 2030 Agenda – a set of programs, actions, and guidelines that seek to guide to achieve sustainable development in 2030. The 12th goal aims to guarantee sustainable and consumption patterns (Aitken et al., 2019; Beylot et al., 2019). It is in this scenario that the collaborative and mindful consumption begin to be investigated considerably.

Concepts of consumption towards sustainability

Alternative

The term collaborative consumption does not constitute a structured field of study. Generally, the term is used in several works as a synonym for other constructs but without a concern for its definition.

Among the few studies that present the concept, it is possible to notice that the alternative dimension is related to the acquisition of products and services from unconventional places. That means obtaining products and services from several spaces that deviate from what is considered traditional in a given time and space (Williams & Paddock, 2003).

Alternative consumption represents an opposition to the hegemonic social order. It results from shared ecological, economic, health, and social concerns – from which the consumer engages in alternative consumption processes against the rationalities established in industrialization and globalization (Eden, 2017; Koskenniemi, 2019; Manna et al., 2016; Peter et al., 2016).

Anti-consumption

Despite being a new area, anti-consumption constitutes a field with several developed studies, especially with the creation of the International Center of Anti-Consumption (ICAR) in New Zealand, in 2005 (M. S. W. Lee et al., 2009). The initial works that investigated voluntary consumer abstention were based on studies of consumer resistance – with emphasis on the works of Poster (1992) and Peñaloza and Price (1993). The consumer resistance studies were interested in investigating issues related to power asymmetry and opposition to an established order (Koskenniemi, 2019).

Zavestoski (2002, p. 121) was one of the first authors who presented the concept of anti-consumption, defined as “resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment or rejection of, consumption more generally”. However, one of the most widespread concepts was written by Lee and colleagues (2009, p. 145) where the authors, in a broader perspective, state that anti-consumption “literally means against consumption”. This concept has expanded the possibilities of interpreting anti-consumption beyond power issues.

Binkley (2008) identifies two research perspectives: an individual and a collectivist. The individualistic perspective is related to everyday rationalities and is based on the assumption that consumers are reflective agents taking into account their personal needs. On the other hand, the collectivist view, approaches consumption as an object of a social movement aimed at different objectives shared, considering community, ecological and economic concerns.

Cherrier and colleagues (2011) organized non-consumption into three categories: intentional, incidental, ineligible – anti-consumption is the first category because there is intentionality by the consumer. Thus, the studies concentrate on the deliberate choice to abandon, avoid, control, reclaim, reduce, reject and/or restrict the use of products and services (Cherrier & Hill, 2018; Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Lim, 2017).

In this perspective, anti-consumption may be driven by ecological protection, individual concerns for personal benefits, moral beliefs, political participation against the consumption culture, and/or social concerns related to solidarity and sense of belonging (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009).

There is no consensus in regard to a unified anti-consumption definition, however, what is shared between the different conceptualizations is the opposition to consumption (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018).

Thus, anti-consumption is the absence of certain consumption activities as an intentional choice driven by ecological, individual, moral, political, and/or social concerns – related to consumer resistance. It means to abandon, avoid, control, recover, reduce, reject, and/or restrict the use of products or services in an attempt to improve the quality of life.

Collaborative

Nowadays, there are a lot of studies focusing on collaborative consumption, promoted by the economic crisis, environmental movements, and technological developments in the late 2000s (Barbosa & Fonseca, 2019; Correa et al., 2019). The construct appeared in the late 1970s, coined by Felson and Spaeth (1978), in which sharing, at first, was related to sociability in the consumption process. Thus, the first studies were interested in the aspects of trust and generosity (Toni et al., 2016).

However, it was only in the early 2010s that the construct received attention. Thus, investigating new social configurations, arising from business models empowered by advancement in technology, Botsman and Rogers (Botsman & Rogers, 2010, p. xv) amend the idea of collaborative consumption, describing it as activities such as “traditional sharing, bartering, lending, trading, renting, gifting, and swapping” that have been transformed through technology and peer communities.

A few years later, Belk (2014, p. 1597) conceptualized collaborative consumption as “people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation”. This assumption conveys a commercial relationship in which there are market exchanges between people – a phenomenon the author calls 'pseudo-sharing', and denominated by Toni and colleagues (2016) as fee-based sharing.

Although its origin is derived from sociability aspects, analyzing the articles, it is possible to notice that investigations have a high economic influence, a fact that is more evident by the synonymous term, 'shared economy'.

Collaborative consumption consists in the sharing of products and services with some counterpart involved, whether ecological, economic, psychological, social, and utilitarian (Binninger et al., 2015; Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Lamberton, 2016; Milanova & Maas, 2017). I argue that there are two types of phenomena related to collaborative consumption. The first is characterized by the ownership replacement with access-based products and services (lending, renting, and sharing), while the second is characterized by the transfer of products and services (bartering, gifting, recovering, recycling, reselling, stealing, and trading) (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Binninger et al., 2015; Scaraboto, 2015; Seegebarth et al., 2016).

Conscious

The rise of conscious consumption overlaps with responsible consumption. Its origin comes from studies of psychology, which attempted to understand issues of human personality. The first studies were developed by Berkowitz and Daniels (1963, 1964) Daniels and Berkowitz (1963) and Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968) who were interested in altruistic behavior, human kindness, and reciprocity prescribed in the social responsibility norm.

These studies served as a basis for the work of Anderson and Cunningham (1972, p. 25) who “assumed that socially conscious individuals, whose orientations are reflected in a variety

of socially responsible behaviors, would manifest social consciousness in consumption decisions". Through this assumption, it is possible to perceive the overlap between issues of consumers' conscience and responsibility – taking into account environmental, personal, and social concerns.

The following studies developed by Kinnear and Taylor (1973) and Kinnear and colleagues (1974) directed their efforts to measure consumers' environmental behavior. It is noticeable that ecological issues were included due to their presence in the world public agenda. Webster Jr. (1975) goes further by proposing that the conscious consumer can generate social change through their purchases. Mayer (1976) begins, in an embryonic way, to distinguish between socially and environmentally conscious consumers.

Diversely, Brooker (1976) asserts that the activities of conscious consumers are associated with their level of self-actualization, raised on the idea that they are persons looking to improve their quality of life through altruistic and social actions. Roberts (1995) in turn, in a perspective that brings together the concepts of conscience and responsibility, was one of the first authors to make a clearer distinction between environmental and social concerns. Several studies emerged regarding measures of consumer behavior, based on the premise that the solution to social and environmental problems would be answered through consumers' awareness – in relation to purchase behavior (Roberts & Bacon, 1997)

Conscious consumption can be used to address problems related to animal care, environmental pollution, human rights, labor conditions, personal and economic well-being, and/or social differences (Balderjahn et al., 2013; Gandhi & Kaushik, 2016; Lobato-Calleros et al., 2016). Conceptually, it is possible to understand that conscious consumption is related to awareness, concerns, intentions, and acknowledgment of the appropriate way to act in consumption to achieve a better world (Salmela & Varho, 2006).

Critical

Critical consumption is intertwined with ethical and political consumption, common in Italian studies (Koskenniemi, 2019; Orlando, 2012; Yates, 2011). A relevant factor can be linked to the Critical Consumption Guide, published for the first time in 1996, by the *Centro Nuovo Modello di Sviluppo*, which is regularly updated – reporting specific companies' issues related to labor practices and environmental policies (Forno & Ceccarini, 2006).

In comparison with the other concepts investigated here, critical consumption does not represent an expressive number of studies. It is due to a consumer conscious reflection, which produces new forms of doing politics, through the purchase, use, and disposal of products (Bellotti & Mora, 2016; Yates, 2011).

The activities linked to critical consumption express themselves in symbolic protests which include boycott and buycott. The former is related to refusal to purchase brands and products, while the latter is associated with rewarding correct organizations (Yates, 2011). Aside from these actions, another possibility is to purchase at an alternative provision network (Sassatelli, 2014).

It represents a critical expression of beliefs, concerns, and power to target social problems prompting the disarticulation of production and consumption systems, promoting social justice, and causing a positive ecological change in the world (Bellotti & Mora, 2016; Sassatelli, 2014; Yates, 2011).

Ethical

The initial discipline responsible for investigating individuals' moral principles was consumer ethics, which emerged in the early 1990s. This was preceded by a concern with ethical business practices in the previous decade, highlighted by the creation of the Journal of

Business Ethics and the Business & Professional Ethics Journal in the early 1980s (Shaw & Clarke, 1998; Vitell & Muncy, 1992).

An initial concept, that inaugurated an analytical perspective, was introduced by Muncy and Vitell, (1992, p. 198) who understand consumer ethics to be “the moral principles and standards that guide behavior of individuals or groups as they obtain, use, and dispose of goods and services”.

In studies on ethical consumption, two complementary approaches can be identified. The first holds an individual and normative perspective, which realizes that people are rationally seeking self-satisfaction. It is based on personal characteristics (attitudes, beliefs, concerns, identities, principles, norms, standards, and values). The other perspective has a socio-anthropological origin, from a phenomenological approach. This perspective perceives consumption as a socio-cultural experience and also as a mechanism to demonstrate resistance to the mainstream by being part of an identity project or in-group membership (Davies & Gutsche, 2016; Gulyás, 2008; Sebastiani et al., 2013).

Therefore, ethical consumption is driven by the moral beliefs, concerns, moral principles, standards, and virtues of the agents – understood as synonymous with excellence and human goodness. The reasons may be altruistic, ecological, egoistic, philanthropic, political, social, or spiritual in which the person is aware of the impact and consequence of their actions (Clarke et al., 2007; Gandhi & Kaushik, 2016; Gummerus et al., 2017).

Frugal

Frugal consumption is not a structured field of study, but it is one of the terms that emerge from the literature concerning sustainability. One of the few studies related to this subject was started by Lastovicka and colleagues (1999), without, however, having a reference to sustainability.

According to the authors, frugality is related to a rational way of living with prudence and self-control. The result is the careful use of goods, the saving of money, the privation of momentary desires, and the prudence in acquiring a long-term goal (Fischer et al., 2017; Gossen et al., 2019; Lastovicka et al., 1999). More recent studies highlight that frugal consumption has elements that may lead to sustainability, with pro-social and pro-environmental intentions (Evers et al., 2018; Fischer et al., 2017; Gossen et al., 2019).

Hence, frugal consumption is a result of a disciplined, prudent, restricted and simple life to achieve long-term goals. The activities related to consumption processes will be more calculated and moderate, and, will consequently result in less money spent. The reasons are related to saving economic and material resources (Evers et al., 2018; Fischer et al., 2017; Gossen et al., 2019).

Green

Ecological marketing was one of the first terms presented that attempted to understand how environmental problems affected the market techniques of organizations, in the mid-1970s. One factor that helps legitimize that idea can be related to the event organized by the American Marketing Association – the first National Workshop on Ecological Marketing, in 1975. It was an event that sought to discuss the impact of environmental issues on management from different perspectives (Henion & Kinnear, 1976).

Its origin was immersed in the diverse ecological claims in the 1970s (Peattie, 2010; Tamashiro et al., 2016). In the following decade, the concept of the green consumer was consolidated, resulting in the publication of a green consumer guide in the late 1980s (Elkington & Hailes, 1988; Ribeiro et al., 2016).

In general, studies on green consumption are marked by researches that attempt to identify attitudes, beliefs, intentions, knowledge, lifestyles, motivations, psychographic

variables, socio-demographic characteristics, and values – with emphasis on the commercial acquisition of products and service (Groening et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2015; Peattie, 2010).

An emerging topic in green consumption studies is the attitude-behavior dilemma, related to the mismatch between the intention to buy eco-friendly products and effectively purchasing them (Gupta & Ogden, 2009; Moser, 2015).

A criticism of green consumption is related to the phenomenon known as the rebound effect. Boström & Klintman (2019) emphasize that the green consumption discourse may encourage greater and efficient use of natural resources and energy through practices, but on the other hand, it can encourage even more consumption, since there is an efficiency gain.

In this sense, green consumption results in concerns about the impact of human activities on the ecological environment. Activities related to consumption, especially acquisition, will be directed towards products and services that are aligned with environmental protection. These products are manufactured without chemical toxins and pesticides, using recycled materials and resources, with biodegradable packaging, and with renewable energy (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki, 2015). Green consumption can be traced to three reasons: altruistic, biospheric and selfish (Stern et al., 1993).

Mindful

Mindful consumption is a relatively new concept that has emerged in studies in the early 2010s. However, mindfulness ideas and practices began to be investigated in the late 1970s, especially examined by medicine and psychology (Lim, 2017).

From Buddhist origin, mindfulness means paying attention in the present moment, with acceptance, awareness, and clarity (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Lastovicka et al., 1999). In consumer studies, the seminal work was developed by Sheth and colleagues (2011) based on the premise that people, aware of the consequences of their consumption, make deliberate and conscious choices according to values and preferences.

In this perspective, mindful consumption is the consequence of a mindset that reflects the agents' care for the community, nature, and self. Activities, in the different consumption processes, will reflect the virtues of benevolence, compassion, generosity, kindness, and temperance related to ecology, economy, social, and spiritual concerns (Fischer et al., 2017; Hunting & Conroy, 2018; Sheth et al., 2011).

Political

Influenced by political science, political consumption emerged in the early 2000s. The most widespread definition of political consumption was developed by Micheletti (2003, p. 2), who conceptualizes it as “actions [developed] by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices”. According to the author, individual and collective market choices are based on ethics, values, and virtues, with the assumption that the goods are embedded in a complex social and normative network.

Bossy (2014) criticizes that dominant definition assuming that Micheletti's (2003, 2004) mixed two different realities – the individual and collective perspective. The author states that people can use political consumption for various purposes, while collective social movements have their own identity and discourses. She also points out the distinction between political consumption and consumerism. The former refers to the repertoire of actions that individuals or social movements can use in various contexts, while the latter indicates a social movement that politicizes the act of purchase. In the last perspective, it is suggested that consumption activities are collectivized individual actions, in which choices are individualized, but acquiring meaning within a collective movement.

Baumann and colleagues (2015) notice two parallel views on political consumption. An optimistic perspective understands consumption as the extension of the actor's political activity, performing through consumption. However, a critical perspective is more negative which recognizes political consumption as a distraction from real politics, and its transformation is limited in terms of structural change and environmental protection.

Activities related to political consumption include actions aligned with a less materialistic way of life (i.e. voluntary simplicity), boycotts, buycotts, culture jamming, and ethical investment (Bossy, 2014; Echegaray, 2016; Jacobsen & Dulrud, 2007). Thus, political consumption represents an expressive tool in which agents (individuals and collective), are aware of the implication of their actions, and attempt to influence and change dominant market practices. It is due to ecological, economic, ethical, political, and social concerns – related to consumer activism based on moral beliefs about what is recognized as right (Bossy, 2014; Shah et al., 2007).

Responsible

Responsible consumption is linked to the concept of social responsibility, which appeared in literature in the early 1950s. Bowen (1953) discusses the responsibilities of the businessman, and since then the concept of corporate social responsibility has become widespread. Previous studies, framed in individuals' levels, were interested in human's social responsibility – as altruism, kindness, and reciprocity (e.g. Anderson & Cunningham, 1972; Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963; Daniels & Berkowitz, 1963).

It was in the early 1970s, linked to conscious consumption, when the investigation into responsible consumers began, influenced by psychology studies. The concept of responsible consumption was coined by Fisk (1973, p. 24) described as the “rational and efficient use of resources with respect to the global human population”.

Since ecological concerns were introduced on the global political agenda, several other studies have been developed aiming to measure aspects of responsible consumer behavior (Antil, 1984; Maloney et al., 1975; Maloney & Ward, 1973; Stone et al., 1995).

Responsible consumption represents a manifestation of genuine, intentional, voluntary actions by the agents which are translated into responsibilities. The consumer will take into account, during the consumption process, concerns of an altruistic, ecological, economic, ethical, legal, and selfish order (Ertz et al., 2018; Gandhi & Kaushik, 2016; Hostaa & Žabkarb, 2016; Nguyen & Dekhili, 2019).

Sustainable

Sustainable consumption corresponds to a political project as an answer to the high levels of exploitation patterns in industrialized countries (Evans et al., 2017). Sustainability, a concept outlined by the United Nations, has its origins dated to the early 1970s which acknowledged environmental problems that gained evidence at the time. Evidence of this was the realization of the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm (United Nations, 1972).

However, the first conceptual definition of sustainable consumption took place at the Earth Summit in 1992– also named Rio 92 –, formulated on the idea of sustainable development described in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987). This idea states that sustainable consumption is related to activities that do not compromise the needs of future generations, while meeting the needs of the current ones (Lim, 2017; Palekhova et al., 2015). Through this analysis, it is possible to assume that sustainable consumption is the idea of meeting the needs of current generations and preserving resources so that future generations may satisfy theirs.

A more elaborate definition was presented at the Oslo Symposium in 1994, which the concept of consumption is still directly linked to production (Evans et al., 2017; Lukman et al., 2016). At that time, sustainable consumption was defined as “the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations” (Norwegian Ministry for the Environment, 1994).

A clear distinction between consumption and production was displayed in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, in 2002 (Lukman et al., 2016). It supports the idea that all countries should implement sustainable production patterns (United Nations, 2002).

Regarding the approaches explored in the analysis of sustainable consumption, Liu and colleagues (2016) highlight three perspectives: economic, socio-psychological, and systematic-structural. The first assumes that people are rational actors whose behaviors are guided by the maximization of results. The second seeks to understand the social and psychological characteristics of humans' behaviors, feelings, and thoughts. Finally, the last approach attempts to explain human actions as a product of structural constraints.

Despite a large number of studies, few theoretical contributions have been made towards the concept of sustainable consumption. An emerging topic is linked to behaviors classification and measurement – e.g. in terms of low, medium, or high commitment, which represents the amount of effort involved in the adoption of sustainable consumption (e.g. Sharma & Jha, 2017). The individuals' reasons for action are to achieve ecological, economic, and social impacts in terms of effectiveness (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016).

Sustainable consumption corresponds to an instrument to achieve positive ecological, economic, and social impacts in terms of effectiveness – with the aim to satisfying the needs of current and future generations at the same time so that life on the planet is sustained (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016; Norwegian Ministry for the Environment, 1994).

Final Considerations

This study presented some historical events that influenced different constructs linked to what was here considered consumption toward sustainability. Data presented show that constructs overlap, which became more evident in figure 1. It is possible to notice the existence of terms that precede current research concepts, this may be related to changes in people's practices. It is expected that this study starts discussions about possible conceptual, theoretical, and practical approximations, without, however, seeking unified overt generalizations. Instead, the search for similarities can contribute to a clearer understanding of social reality. Also, as proposed by Shove and colleagues (2012), understand the meanings, can contribute to the promotion of more sustainable practices.

Since this review aimed to comprehend, from a qualitative perspective, the different types of consumption towards sustainability present in the literature, issues have not been addressed. Future studies may investigate the geographic distribution of these studies, as research approaches employed, and also research focus areas.

It is also expected that possible connections become relevant to public policymakers, organizations, managers, and consumers. A deeper understanding may help can be appropriate to build a better world to live, for everybody. New perspectives that seek to promote integrations from the contributions of this work are also appreciated.

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