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Examining Consumers' Perceptions of Business Sustainability Performance

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ABSTRACT

Consumers are increasingly conscious of the sustainability and green credentials of their consumption choices, which has implications for businesses in terms of their innovation, sales, branding, and employment performance. It is important to understand how the *general public* as consumers perceive the performance of businesses in terms of climate change, whether people trust businesses about information on climate change, and consumers' choices in terms of their purchase preferences. There is a scarcity of extant research on these important topics.

Data from two waves of the Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Change in the Irish Mind surveys are used, which captured a nationally representative sample of 4000 adult residents of Ireland in 2021, and a sample of 1355 in 2023. Consumer attitudes to businesses and purchasing decisions are examined. Using regression analysis, individual consumer characteristics which influence these decisions, such as gender, age, educational attainment and household income, are investigated, controlling for other background characteristics.

In 2021, a majority of respondents (86%) reported they felt that businesses could do more in terms of climate change; with 60% reporting they more favourably gave their business to companies with better green credentials, while 49% reported that they purposely did not give their business to companies with poorer environmental credentials. Regression models demonstrated strong associations between positive responses on these outcomes and being female, young, of higher social classes, in employment, and of a more 'left' political affiliation.

This work contributes to a better understanding of factors which affect consumer choices in this important area and can be used by policymakers and the business community to promote more sustainable consumption choices and habits of consumers.

Keywords: Product purchases; Green enterprise; Attitudes; Environment; Policy