

# THE ISSUES OF SUSTAINABILITY FROM FUTURE MANAGERS' PERSPECTIVE

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This research focuses on the topic of sustainability and analyzes the level of sustainable consumption among School of Business of BSU students. The aim of this study is to identify the degree to which the future managers are ready to implement the ideas of sustainability in economy.

**Key words:** sustainable development; environmental awareness; sustainable consumption; education for sustainability; pollution prevention.

The classic definition of sustainable development states that sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the well-being of future generations [1]. The problem of sustainable consumption has been in focus for a long time and each year the problem itself becomes more and more acute. Human activities have been constantly affecting the well-being of the Earth, resulting in the rise of discussions about whether the Earth is actually dying right in front of us and what we can do in order to minimize the damage we cause [2].

Companies and organizations have a great responsibility on maintaining and spreading the ideas of sustainability, since a big part of pollution comes from production. That is why the topic under study is the degree of sustainable consumption of students. It is of significance to BSU students as we are all consumers as well as future managers and business administrators, who will later have the responsibility of managing a company's production. Besides, this topic is not explored in our business school settings, providing a rather broad field for study. One more reason for us to have chosen this particular topic is that currently the ideas of sustainable living are becoming more and more popular not only abroad, but also in Belarus with openings of eco-stores [3], [4], organizing environmentally-friendly markets [5] and events in order to raise awareness about ecological problems [6].

First, the objective of this work is to study the degree of sustainable consumption of students with a view to stimulate the ideas of sustainability, one of the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility [7, p.14]. Second, it is aimed at identifying the degree to which future managers are ready to ensure the further development of sustainable economy in a particular business school setting. Finally, it is essential to raise awareness of students about the ideas of sustainability since young people are the future of our planet and its life depends on their eventual decisions and principles.

A number of methods have been used while carrying out the research, such as the analysis of literature on the topic, the empirical collection of data, the survey on sustainable lifestyle of students and the statistic interpretation of the survey results.

The empirical data collection has been done by developing a special questionnaire, using Google Forms, for students of School of Business, BSU. This questionnaire consists of 11 multiple choice questions, 2 of which have the possibility of a free answer. Those questions can be classified into several categories: information about the respondent (quest. 1), diet habits (quest. 2) public services (quest. 3–4), transportation (quest. 5), home energy (quest. 6–7), clothing (quest. 8), recycling (quest.9), sustainability (quest. 10–11).

For calculating the percentage of answers which comply with sustainable living principles, we took questions which describe practices (quest. 2–9), calculated the percentage of positive answers in each of them, summed them up and divided by the number of questions.

The questionnaire was accessible in the English language and was spread through VK (the link was placed in the School of Business chat). The total number of students who filled in the questionnaire is 53.

The results show significant differences between awareness and practices of students. Most of the students (79.5%) believe in the possibility of sustainable development, but their practices, according to the relevant answers to the questionnaire, are not fully aligned with sustainable living. The objective of our work was to find out the degree of sustainable consumption; thus, we've identified that 56.6% of our students are living up to the ideas of sustainability. The results of the survey are presented in the Table below.

The analysis has made it possible to identify several areas which the students have most problems with: diet habits (83% of the answers are unsustainable), public services (51% of the answers are unsustainable) and recycling (50.9% of the answers are unsustainable).

A large proportion of greenhouse emissions is associated with meat production, as well as big water use and pollution [8], and veganism would be a great solution, but it is understandable that many people do not want to practice veganism for many reasons. Therefore, one of the solutions to this problem would be to reduce the amount of meat consumed.

Speaking of public services related to eating out and using delivery services, food cooked in a café or a restaurant is less environmentally-friendly than the food cooked at home because of the emissions associated with lighting and electricity used. What concerns delivery services, or so-called takeaways, their food requires additional packaging and transport emissions. That is why the way out of the problem would be to use less of those services, cook at home or go to the place itself rather than using takeaways.

Table

### Results of sustainable consumption survey by questions

Questions	Findings
How old are you?	16-18 – 84.9% 19-21 – 11.3% 22-24 – 1.9% 25 and over – 1.9%
How often do you eat animal-based products (meat, dairy, fish etc.)?	Never (vegan) – 5.7% Occasionally – 11.3% Often (meat a few times a week, dairy almost every day) – 47.2% Very often (meat and dairy daily) – 35.8%
How often do you go to restaurants, cafes, canteens?	Never – 0% Rarely (a few times a year) – 17% Occasionally (once a month/ less) – 24.5% Often (several times a month) – 39.6% Very often (several times a week) – 18.9%
How often do you use taxi and delivery services?	Never – 18.9% Rarely(a few times a year) – 37.7% Occasionally (once a month/less) – 18.9% Often (several times a month) – 18.9% Very often (several times a week) – 5.7%
Which type of vehicle do you use (both as a passenger and a driver) to travel more often?	Car or motorbike – 15.1% Public transport – 81.1% Neither (cycling, walking etc.) – 3.8%
Do you regularly turn off your lights and appliances (instead of leaving them on standby)?	Yes – 66% No – 34%
Which of these home energy efficiency improvements are installed in your home?	Energy saving light bulbs – 92.5% Solar panels – 1.9% Low flow fittings to taps, showers – 22.6% Condensing boiler – 26.4%
How often do you buy new clothes and footwear? (Don't include second-hand clothes.)	Rarely (once a year) – 5.7% Occasionally (a few times a year) – 39.6% Often (once a month) – 39.6% Very often (several times a month) – 15.1%
Which of these types of waste do you recycle?	Plastic – 37.7% Paper – 34% Food – 15.1% Glass – 20.8% Iron – 1.9% Neither – 50.9%
Do you believe in the possibility of sustainable development?	Absolutely yes -26.4% Rather yes – 52.8% Rather no – 5.7% Absolutely no – 3.8% I don't know – 11.3%
Do you think your family is living according to sustainable development principles?	Absolutely yes – 11.3% Rather yes – 30.2% Rather no – 37.7% Absolutely no – 5.7% I don't know – 15.1%

Recycling is a very important step; thus, the issues connected to it should be solved. One of the reasons of skipping recycling can be the fact that there are no special containers situated near the house. In this case, a student can write a request to the local executive body (hosing communal services) in or-

der to place those containers. The other reason might be that it is difficult and time-consuming at first to start recycling, that is why it is good to start with one material, plastic, for example, and after time add more.

In conclusion, it is understandable that the awareness about environmental issues should be improved and developed by raising ecological questions more often in the walls of the educational institutions with the aim to help students get more knowledge and as the result make action towards a sustainable future.

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