Article

Navigating the Paradox: Materialism, Sustainable Practices and Well-Being in Emerging Markets

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Abstract

In emerging markets, the prevalence of materialistic tendencies has intensified consumption, impacting both the environment and consumer well-being. This research examines the paradoxical relationships between materialism, sustainable practices and consumer well-being through two cross-sectional studies. We explore linear and curvilinear relationships among these concepts across two sustainable practices (organic food consumption) and post-consumption (disposal of electronic waste). Study 1 investigates the relationships between organic food consumption, materialism, hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. In Study 2, we replicate the investigation, focusing on post-consumption practices, particularly the relationship between electronic waste disposal, materialism and life satisfaction as a dimension of subjective well-being. Findings reveal that materialistic values can motivate both sustainable and post-consumption practices, ultimately contributing to consumer well-being. Furthermore, to some extent, materialism can moderate the association between sustainable consumption and well-being. This research provides insights for promoting sustainable consumption and post-consumption practices in emerging markets.

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materialistic values, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, organic food consumption, e-waste disposal

Introduction

Unsustainable human consumption and waste disposal practices are recognised as major drivers of contemporary environmental problems such as global warming and pollution (Binder et al., 2020; Wynes & Nicholas, 2017). Empirical evidence indicates that the effects of climate change would have higher impacts on emerging markets (Amoah & Addoah, 2021; Díaz et al., 2020). While transitioning to sustainable consumption and responsible disposal behaviours remains paramount, adopting such practices regrettably lags behind in emerging markets (Pham et al., 2019; Sultan et al., 2020). At a macro-level, striking a balance between the seemingly competing goals of economic development and sustainability remains a daunting challenge (Liobikienė et al., 2020; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). In particular, the trade-off between economic growth and environmental sustainability needs to be delicately managed because it has the potential to harm the sustainable development of emerging markets (Henderson & Loreau, 2023). At a micro-level, materialism has emerged as a salient consumer value, exerting a substantial impact on executing sustainable behaviours (Moldes & Ku, 2020). The relentless pursuit of material possessions has been closely linked to the depletion of natural resources, consequently undermining consumer well-being (Dermody et al., 2015; Steenkamp et al., 2010).

The escalating proclivity to materialistic possessions is more pronounced in emerging markets, where ownership is often construed as an indicator of status, happiness, symbolism, and success (Gu et al., 2020; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). As an emerging market, South Africa reflects this trend, especially among the growing middle class, often referred to as the 'black diamonds', renowned for their inclination towards materialistic consumption (de Coninck, 2018; Duh, 2015). This research responds to increasing calls for examining the nexus between materialism, sustainability and consumer well-being (Dermody et al., 2015; Liobikienė et al., 2020; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). This study proposes that behavioural change is only possible and likely to benefit the environment if the power of materialistic values, widespread in emerging markets, is recognised and directed towards promoting sustainable consumption and disposal practices.

Significant gaps still persist despite considerable advancements in understanding the interplay between materialism, sustainability and well-being (Furchheim et al., 2020; Liobikiene et al., 2020; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). Notably, research has yet to fully investigate whether these linkages remain stable across sustainable consumption (e.g. organic food consumption) and post-consumption phases (e.g. e-waste disposal). Moreover, the moderating role of materialistic values in these relationships remains under-researched. These relationships are examined with the objective of broadening the current understanding of the intermediary function of materialistic values as well as

illuminating the impact of sustainable practices on consumer well-being. As Hensley (2020) and Kumari et al. (2021) highlight, a more systematic, holistic approach is required to elucidate how sustainable practices interact with materialism to influence well-being. This research addresses these gaps by examining both phases – organic food consumption and e-waste disposal – and probing the moderating effects of materialism. In doing so, this study offers novel insights, particularly regarding post-consumption behaviours, which are rarely studied despite their critical connection to materialistic consumption patterns (Gilal et al., 2018).

Furthermore, existing literature has predominantly examined linear associations between sustainability and well-being (Mansoor & Paul, 2021; Welsch et al., 2021). However, it is essential to consider the possibility of a curvilinear relationship, recognising that the effect of sustainable consumption practices on consumer well-being may only become significant at a specific level of engagement in sustainable behaviours. Consequently, this study also examines this relationship's potential curvilinear (quadratic) effects. This study's primary contribution lies in its focus on sustainable consumption behaviour (organic food consumption) and sustainable post-consumption practices (eco-friendly e-waste disposal). As the present study focuses on both consumption and post-consumption practices, it offers a nuanced comprehension of the paradoxical relationships between sustainable practices, materialism and well-being.

This research aims to address the following objectives: 1) To investigate both the linear and curvilinear relationships between materialism, sustainable (post) consumption practices and consumer well-being; 2) To examine the linkages between sub-dimensions of materialism, well-being, and sustainable practices, and 3) To assess the moderating influence of materialism dimensions on the relationship between sustainable (post) consumption and well-being. The subsequent sections of this study are structured as follows: Section 2 reviews existing literature and outlines the hypothesised relationships between the study constructs. Section 3 provides the research methodology, while Section 4 presents the results. The last sections provide recommendations, limitations and the study's overarching conclusions.

Intersection of Sustainable Practices, Materialism and Well-Being

There are divergent views in the extant literature on the interrelationships between sustainable consumption practices, materialistic values and consumer well-being (Furchheim et al., 2020; Minton et al., 2018; Welsch et al., 2021). Materialism is regarded as an antithesis to the goal of sustainability as it promotes over-consumption (Furchheim et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2020), with adverse effects on the environment and well-being due to increased carbon emissions (Hurst et al., 2013). Individuals who are high in materialism are known to be motivated by the desire to maximise self-interest with low levels of environmental concern (Dong et al., 2018; Liobikienė et al., 2020). However, a growing body of literature acknowledges the emergence of 'green

materialism' epitomised by individuals who engage in sustainable practices to enhance their status (Dermody et al., 2015; Liobikiene et al., 2020).

Although often regarded as contentious or paradoxical (Venhoeven et al., 2013), the connection between sustainable practices and well-being finds robust substantiation in contemporary literature (Carrero et al., 2020; Guillen-Royo, 2019; Minton et al., 2022). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include socio-ecological policies that promote sustainability and well-being (Henderson & Loreau, 2023). However, what has been lacking are more contextualised policy efforts aimed at implementing sustainable practices that foster a significant improvement in citizenry well-being (De Neve & Sachs, 2020). Also, well-being is conceptualised as a complex construct. The multidimensional nature of well-being has been extensively explored in literature (Diener et al., 2013; Mansoor & Paul, 2021). Established frameworks in behavioural science distinguish between facets of well-being, encompassing hedonic and eudaimonic aspects, or subjective well-being mostly identified as life satisfaction (Carrero et al., 2020; Disabato et al., 2016). Due to the multi-faceted nature of well-being, disentangling its various dimensions has the potential to yield a deeper comprehension of the intersection between sustainability and well-being (Guillen-Royo, 2019; Venhoeven et al., 2013).

The theoretical integration of materialism, well-being, and sustainable practices in this study is underpinned by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT asserts that the pursuit of autonomy, competence and relatedness guides human behaviour. While materialism is often viewed as extrinsically motivated, we posit that materialistically oriented individuals can engage in sustainable practices when these behaviours satisfy their intrinsic psychological needs. For instance, organic food consumption may fulfil the need for competence, signifying mastery over personal health choices or autonomy by enabling the expression of personal values. Likewise, e-waste disposal may satisfy the need for relatedness by enabling a sense of contribution to societal and environmental welfare. Hence, even behaviour ostensibly motivated by materialistic desires can promote well-being, insofar as it aligns with these innate psychological drivers. This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of how SDT can accommodate materialism, suggesting that extrinsic motivations can support intrinsic psychological fulfilment when aligned with these core needs.

Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework

Sustainable Practices and Hedonic Well-Being

Hedonic well-being constitutes a crucial facet within the broader well-being construct, encompassing the emotional and affective experiences of enjoyment, pleasure, and fun derived from engaging in certain behaviours (Disabato et al., 2016; Welsch et al., 2021). This dimension holds significant empirical traction when examining its relationship with sustainability. In the context of sustainable practices, the positive influence of hedonic well-being is discernible. For instance, organic food consumption is known to imbue pleasure due to its healthful attributes, consequently bolstering hedonic well-being (Goetzke et al., 2014). Similar patterns are echoed in the realm of eco-friendly

vehicle consumption, as illustrated by Rezvani et al. (2018), who uncovered positive linkages between hedonic motivation and the intent to purchase environmentally friendly vehicles. Moreover, the empirical tapestry portrays a favourable bond between hedonic orientations and environmental behaviour (Lee & Jeong, 2021). With this contextual backdrop, our hypothesis posits a positive association:

H1a: Sustainable practices have a positive relationship on hedonic well-being

Sustainable Practices and Eudaimonic Well-Being

Eudaimonic well-being, encompassing an individual's perception of personal growth, life's intrinsic meaning, and the attainment of meaningful goals, aligns seamlessly with SDT's core principles of intrinsic motivation and the pursuit of self-determined values (Ahn et al., 2019; Deci & Ryan, 2000). As individuals actively engage in behaviours that align with their inner values, they experience an acute sense of fulfilment and well-being. SDT's emphasis on intrinsic motivation highlights the significance of individuals' autonomous choice to adopt sustainable practices. This aligns with the essence of eudaimonic well-being, which flourishes when individuals engage in actions that resonate with their personal growth and values (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Disabato et al., 2016). Organic food consumption, for instance, reflects an ethical consumer choice that harmonises with one's beliefs in fair labour practices and environmental stewardship (Lee & Jeong, 2021; Wojciechowska-Solis & Barska, 2021). This congruence between actions and values fosters a heightened sense of purpose and personal growth, resonating with the principles of eudaimonic well-being.

Furthermore, sustainable practices, as advocated by SDT's, often entail a sense of relatedness and connection with larger social and environmental contexts (Venhoeven et al., 2013). The cultivation of sustainable communities through conscientious consumption exemplifies this connection, where individuals actively contribute to collective well-being and environmental integrity. Such behaviours align with eudaimonic well-being's focus on personal growth and meaningful societal contributions. Empirical studies have consistently reported the interplay between sustainable practices and eudaimonic well-being. Research by Helne (2021), Welsch et al. (2021), and Mansoor and Paul (2021) highlight the alignment between intrinsic values, pro-environmental behaviours, and enhanced well-being. This empirical consensus reinforces the theoretical premise that sustainable practices, driven by intrinsic motivation and congruence with values, positively predict eudaimonic well-being. Drawing from this intricate web of relationships, we posit the following hypothesis:

H1b: Sustainable practices have a positive relationship with eudaimonic well-being.

Sustainable Practices and Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction reflects the ultimate goal individuals strive to achieve (Diener et al., 2013; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). While the connection between sustainable practices and

life satisfaction seems intuitive, empirical investigations have yielded inconsistent findings, prompting a need for a deeper inquiry into this link (Minton et al., 2018; Özer et al., 2022). This need is emphasised by Jităreanu et al. (2022), who advocate for a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between life satisfaction and sustainable behaviour. They contend that consumers' engagement in sustainable actions not only reflects a critical motivation for life satisfaction but also amplifies the propensity for further adoption of sustainable consumption practices. Echoing this perspective, Carrero et al. (2020) report various sustainable activities, including sustainable consumption and gender-subjective well-being among younger consumers.

However, the discourse is not without complexity. Delving into the nuances of what constitutes consumers' 'life satisfaction', Binder et al. (2020) introduce a contrasting view, asserting that pro-environmental practices may potentially undermine individuals' satisfaction with life. This is particularly due to the perceived sacrifices associated with pro-environmental behaviour, such as energy-saving, which might adversely affect overall life quality. This divergence points out the complex interplay between sustainable practices and life satisfaction. In light of this discussion, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1c: Sustainable practices have a positive relationship with life satisfaction.

Materialistic values and Sustainable Practices

Materialism is a value orientation epitomised by individuals who attach importance to material possessions (Dong et al., 2018; Liobikienė et al., 2020). Materialists are known for prioritising self-rewarding or gratifying behaviours (Dong et al., 2018). Materialism is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct comprising success, happiness and centrality (Richins & Dawson, 1992). The success dimension reflects the inclination to assess one's own and others' achievements based on the accumulation and quality of material possessions. The happiness dimension captures the belief that acquiring possessions is essential for achieving happiness and personal satisfaction. Centrality refers to the degree to which possessions and the pursuit of acquisitions occupy a central role in an individual's life, reflecting the importance placed on material goods (Dong et al., 2018). Mixed findings were reported on the effect of materialism on the performance of sustainable practices, but little is known about the underlying causes of such inconsistent results. One strand of research found a negative relationship between materialism and sustainable behaviours (Gu et al., 2020; Liobikienė et al., 2020; Polonsky et al., 2014; Segev et al., 2015; Strizhakova and Coulter 2013). Segev et al. (2015) attribute this to the difference in the two concepts' value orientations. Materialism is more aligned with the anthropocentric value orientation, while sustainable behaviours are inclined to the eco-centric value orientation. Individuals who value acquiring material possessions as symbols of happiness and success were found to be less concerned with the environmental impact of such products and less likely to show concern for environmental problems (Gu et al., 2020).

Another strand of literature views materialism as a predictor of sustainable practices, suggesting that there is a 'green' side of materialism (Elliott, 2013; Griskevicius et al., 2010; Liobikienė et al., 2020; Strizhakova and Coulter 2013). For instance, Griskevicius et al. (2010) popularised the saying 'going green to be seen' to capture the symbolism associated with consuming premium-priced, environmentally friendly products. Individuals with high materialism are more likely to pay the higher price associated with organic food to demonstrate their self-worth (Strizhakova and Coulter 2013). Talukdar and Yu (2020) observed that materialistic individuals perceive sustainable luxury items as having superior functional value, which enhances their propensity to purchase these products, especially for private use. Therefore, while materialism is often associated with self-centred consumption (Polonsky et al., 2014), it can also foster an interest in sustainable options when such products are marketed as high-quality and exclusive, aligning with the materialists' desires for status and quality.

Moreover, materialism, typically associated with the desire to acquire the latest technological innovations, can positively influence e-waste disposal when leveraged appropriately. Materialistic individuals often seek to differentiate themselves by adopting cutting-edge technologies and exclusive practices (Talukdar & Yu, 2020). This propensity can be redirected towards promoting sustainable e-waste disposal methods. When sustainable e-waste disposal is framed as a modern and prestigious activity, it can encourage materialistic consumers to engage in responsible disposal practices. Consistent with the foregoing discussion, we posit that:

$H_{2a,b,c}$: Materialistic values (acquisition, happiness, success) influence sustainable practices.

Materialism and Well-Being

Materialism and Well-Being. The relationship between materialism and well-being remains a subject of extensive debate within the literature, with no clear consensus on whether the association is positive or negative (Flurry et al., 2021; Shrum et al., 2014). On the one hand, marketers face increasing criticism for fostering a materialistic culture that perpetuates inequality and promotes egotistical behaviour, which may adversely affect well-being (Furchheim et al., 2020; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). On the other hand, the pursuit of hedonic well-being often exacerbates environmental challenges (Helne, 2021; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008). A sub-dimension of materialism is the entrenched belief that acquiring and possessing products brings happiness and signifies success (Rūtelionė et al., 2022). Although the ownership and control of goods can enhance well-being (Moldes & Ku, 2020), conflicts between materialistic and altruistic values may lead to a diminished sense of well-being (Furchheim et al., 2020; Rūtelionė et al., 2022). Materialism can potentially undermine well-being by fostering a relentless pursuit of possessions and a persistent state of need, which may contribute to anxiety and stress (Furchheim et al., 2020).

Conversely, material possessions often serve symbolic functions, representing personal identity, life achievements, and significant milestones, which can enhance

emotional satisfaction (Shrum et al., 2014). This symbolic value contributes to an individual's sense of purpose and belonging within social contexts (Flurry et al., 2021). While materialists typically report lower overall well-being than non-materialists (Flurry et al., 2021), they may experience greater immediate satisfaction from materialistic purchases (Shrum et al., 2014). Specifically, materialistic individuals might enjoy a temporary boost in subjective well-being following the acquisition of luxury items. Hudders and Pandelaere (2012) provide evidence that luxury consumption increases life satisfaction, particularly among those with materialistic tendencies.

Moreover, material possessions facilitate social connections and reinforce group identity. Ownership of certain goods or brands can foster a sense of belonging to specific social groups, thereby enhancing social well-being and connectedness (Shrum et al., 2014). This is particularly evident in consumer cultures, where particular brands and products symbolise distinct lifestyles and social affiliations, representing identity and community (Belk, 1988; Richins & Dawson, 1992). Consequently, material goods can function as social symbols, contributing to interpersonal relationships and collective identity. In light of these mixed findings, the following hypothesis is proposed.

$H_{3a,\ b,\ c}$: *Materialistic values (acquisition, happiness, success) influence consumer well-being.*

Moderating Effect of Materialism. Materialistic values are widely acknowledged as drivers of consumption, often spurred by marketing stimuli. Given the propensity of materialistic individuals to consume, primarily due to their strong attachment to material possessions (Dong et al., 2018), it is expected that the impact of sustainable consumption on consumer well-being may exhibit variations contingent upon the extent of materialism. Although there is not enough empirical evidence on the moderating role of materialism in the relationship between sustainable practices and well-being, the present study seeks to bridge that gap. Those displaying materialistic tendencies are often characterised by their pursuit of short-term gratification through acquiring material goods (Dong et al., 2018). A body of research in consumer behaviour, encompassing studies by Dong et al. (2018), Özer et al. (2022), and Yu et al. (2020), has delved into materialism as a moderating factor. Yu et al. (2020) noted that the happiness aspects of materialism adversely moderate the effect of income on life satisfaction. Similarly, Özer et al. (2022) concluded that individuals with lower materialistic tendencies are more inclined to regard self-enhancement as a more potent motivator for participating in boycotts and buycotts of environmentally unfriendly products than consumers with higher materialistic values. In evaluating the moderation of materialism, Dong et al. (2018) observe that the emotional bond individuals have with their possessions when their psychological needs (autonomy and control) are elevated, while its influence on the need for affiliation is comparatively weaker.

Furthermore, when individuals with high materialistic values engage in sustainable practices, they might experience a conflict between their consumption-oriented values and the restraint required by sustainability efforts (Liobikienė et al., 2020). Therefore, materialistic individuals often proclive for short-term gratification through material

acquisition (Rūtelionė et al., 2022). In contrast, sustainable consumption promotes a long-term perspective, emphasising the contentment derived from choices that benefit future generations and the environment. This shift in focus, away from immediate gratification towards enduring fulfilment, can influence well-being by fostering a sense of purpose and responsibility. These observations underscore the evident disparity in consumption patterns and behavioural outcomes between individuals with low and high materialistic tendencies, thereby warranting a comprehensive exploration of the moderating role of each dimension of materialism. In light of these considerations, we propose the following hypotheses:

$H_{4a,b,1c}$: *Materialistic values (acquisition, success, happiness) moderate the influence of sustainability on consumer well-being.*

Based on the proposed hypotheses, the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1 suggests that each dimension of materialism values influences sustainable consumption practices and consumer well-being, and materialistic values are expected to moderate the relationship between them.

Materials and Methods

Two distinct studies were conducted to empirically examine the connections between materialism, sustainable actions and well-being within two unique contexts. Study 1 concentrated on a specific sustainable consumption behaviour, namely, the adoption of organic food consumption. This study assessed the interplay between materialism, organic food consumption, and the hedonic and eudaimonic facets of well-being.

Study 2 delved into the eco-friendly disposal of electronic waste (e-waste), a pivotal post-consumption sustainable action. This study's focal point was still to investigate the relationships between materialistic values, the sustainable practice of e-waste disposal

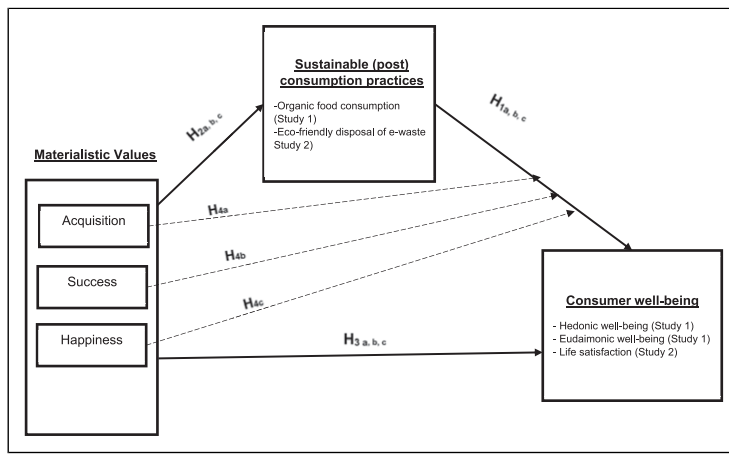

Figure 1. Conceptual framework (Studies 1 & 2).

(post-consumption), and life satisfaction – a critical facet of subjective well-being. Both studies provided a broad understanding of the relationships between materialistic values, sustainability-driven behaviours, and various facets of consumer well-being. As these studies explore actual sustainable consumption (organic food consumption) and post-consumption (e-waste disposal) scenarios, they collectively contribute to a more holistic comprehension of these consumption phases.

Study 1. Organic Food Consumption – Materialism – Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being

This first study aimed to demonstrate the linkages between materialism, organic food consumption, eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. The study also investigates the moderating role of each dimension of materialism on the relationship between organic food consumption and both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

This study employed a mono-quantitative research method, utilising an online survey to gather data from South African consumers who had purchased organic food products within the past six months. A purposive sampling technique was implemented to select respondents, ensuring a targeted and relevant sample. Following data cleaning, 550 questionnaires were deemed valid for inclusion in the analysis. The sample predominantly comprised women (65.8%) and individuals aged 18–35 (70%). Most participants were employed (54.4%) and possessed at least a degree or diploma (62%). Approximately 30% of respondents reported a monthly income below R10,000, while about 50% had an income ranging between R10,000 and R40,000.

The study employed well-established measurement scales for all constructs, as detailed in Appendix 1. Specifically, the three dimensions of materialism were assessed using the scale originally developed by Richins and Dawson (1992). Eudaimonic and hedonic well-being were measured using nine and five items, respectively, adapted from Ahn et al. (2019). Additionally, six items were adapted from Apaolaza et al. (2018) and Lee and Jeong (2021) to measure organic food consumption. All constructs were measured using five-point Likert scales.

Study 2. E-waste Disposal (Post-Consumption) – Materialism – Life Satisfaction (Subjective well-being)

An online survey was administered to gather data from a distinct cohort of South African consumers who had disposed of electronic waste within the preceding six months. The data collection was conducted by a reputable data collection company based in South Africa, utilising a convenience sampling technique to select 420 respondents. The sample predominantly comprised females (56.49%) and individuals aged between 18 and 25 (52%). The majority of respondents possessed at least a degree (63%) and were single (72%). The sample was predominantly black (84%), with the most represented income group earning between R10,000 and R40,000 (32%).

In line with Study 1, the measurements for this study were derived from established research instruments. The three dimensions of materialism were assessed using 13 items adapted from Richins and Dawson (1992). Subjective well-being was measured using four items adapted from Kuanr et al. (2022). Additionally, e-waste disposal behaviour was measured using three items adapted from Wang et al. (2018) and Setiawan et al. (2021). Detailed item statements and their respective sources are provided in Appendix 1.

Results

Study 1. Organic Food Consumption – Materialism – Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being.

Scale Validation

A partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was conducted to test the proposed model on Smart PLS 4. PLS-SEM was chosen for its ability to analyse complex models, including moderation and quadratic effects (Hair & Alamer, 2022). A two-step approach was, therefore, followed to validate the measurements and test the hypotheses. A measurement model was assessed to establish the reliability and validity of the scales. The internal consistency of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR), which are expected to be above 0.7 to confirm their reliability (Hair et al., 2020). As shown in Table 1, all the CA and CR values are above 0.7, confirming the constructs' reliability.

The convergent validity of the scale was measured by factor loadings expected to be above 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was expected to be above the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2020). Table 1 shows that all the recommended thresholds were met, confirming the convergent validity of the constructs.

Following Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the AVEs above all inter-construct correlation coefficients is presented in Table 2 and indicates discriminant validity. Additionally, the correlations' heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio was evaluated to confirm the discriminant validity. The HTMT is expected to be less than a conservative threshold of 0.850 or a liberal one of 0.900 (Henseler et al., 2015). The discriminant validity results in Table 2 show satisfactory results, as all the values meet the recommended criteria.

Hypotheses testing results

Before testing the path estimates, we inspected possible multicollinearity issues between the independent constructs using the variance inflation factor (VIF). The results indicated that the VIF values are below 10; therefore, multicollinearity is not a concern in the present study. The results of the path model presented in Table 3 indicate that organic food consumption is only influenced by materialism success ($\beta = 0.408$; $p <$

Table 1. Evidence of Reliability and Convergent Validity – Study 1.

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Materialism acquisition	MA1	0.831	0.875	0.905	0.727
	MA2	0.809			
	MA3	0.873			
	MA4	0.895			
Materialism success	MS1	0.782	0.860	0.866	0.705
	MS2	0.887			
	MS3	0.860			
	MS4	0.826			
Materialism happiness	MH1	0.860	0.900	0.910	0.769
	MH2	0.903			
	MH3	0.853			
	MH4	0.891			
	MH5	0.739			
Eudaimonic well-being	EWB1	0.832	0.926	0.929	0.574
	EWB2	0.761			
	EWB3	0.794			
	EWB4	0.728			
	EWB5	0.769			
	EWB6	0.742			
	EWB7	0.755			
	EWB8	0.724			
	EWB9	0.769			
	EWB10	0.710			
Hedonic well-being	HWB1	0.799	0.874	0.893	0.615
	HWB2	0.855			
	HWB3	0.875			
	HWB4	0.760			
	HWB5	0.717			
	HWB6	0.682			
Organic food consumption	OFC1	0.782	0.897	0.901	0.661
	OFC2	0.826			
	OFC3	0.759			
	OFC4	0.835			
	OFC5	0.848			
	OFC6	0.826			

.001). The acquisition ($\beta = 0.321$; $p < .001$) and success ($\beta = 0.137$; $p < .05$) dimensions of materialism positively influence hedonic well-being, while the happiness dimension ($\beta = -0.341$; $p < .001$) has a negative but significant influence. Only materialism success significantly predicts eudaimonic well-being ($\beta = 0.171$; $p < .05$). Organic food consumption has an equal effect on eudaimonic and hedonic ($\beta = 0.312$; $p < .001$; $\beta = 0.313$; $p < .001$).

Table 2. Evidence of Discriminant Validity – Study 1.

HTMT

	Materialism acquisition	Eudaimonic well-being	Materialism happiness	Hedonic well-being	Organic food consumption	Materialism success
Materialism acquisition						
Eudaimonic well-being	0.204					
Materialism happiness	0.620	0.164				
Hedonic well-being	0.381	0.738	0.079			
Organic food consumption	0.235	0.388	0.240	0.386		
Materialism success	0.851	0.290	0.662	0.362	0.392	

Fornell and larcker criteria

	Materialism acquisition	Eudaimonic well-being	Materialism happiness	Hedonic well-being	Organic food consumption	Materialism success
Materialism acquisition	0.852					
Eudaimonic well-being	0.184	0.757				
Materialism happiness	0.557	0.146	0.877			
Hedonic well-being	0.347	0.657	0.005	0.784		
Organic food consumption	0.219	0.357	0.217	0.352	0.813	
Materialism	0.748	0.266	0.586	0.319	0.350	0.840
Success						
Mean	2.726	4.116	3.662	3.505	3.828	3.156
Standard deviation (SD)	1.150	0.653	1.078	0.884	0.901	1.096

The relationship between organic food consumption and both dimensions of well-being was further investigated by assessing a potential curvilinear effect in the relationship and moderating effects of the three dimensions of materialism in Smart PLS version 4. The following quadratic function was adopted to test the curvilinear effect:

$Y = aX^2 + bX + c$;

X^2 is the quadratic term; X is the linear; and c is the constant term.

Table 3. Path Estimates, Quadratic and Moderating Effects – Study 1.

Relationships	Beta	t-statistics	*p*-values	Decision on the hypothesis
Materialism acquisition - > organic food consumption	−0.106	1.854	0.064	Rejected
Materialism happiness - > organic food consumption	0.037	0.693	0.489	Rejected
Materialism success - > organic food consumption	0.408	6.808	0.001	Accepted
Materialism acquisition - > eudaimonic well-being	−0.037	0.487	0.626	Rejected
Materialism happiness - > eudaimonic well-being	−0.012	0.189	0.850	Rejected
Materialism success - > eudaimonic well-being	0.171	2.492	0.013	Accepted
Materialism acquisition - > hedonic well-being	0.321	5.505	0.001	Accepted
Materialism happiness - > hedonic well-being	−0.341	6.934	0.001	Rejected
Materialism success - > hedonic well-being	0.137	2.263	0.024	Accepted
Organic food consumption - > eudaimonic well-being	0.312	7.472	0.001	Accepted
Organic food consumption - > hedonic well-being	0.313	7.936	0.001	Accepted
Quadratic effect in the relationship between organic food consumption and well-being				
QE (organic food consumption) - > eudaimonic well-being	0.019	0.486	0.627	Rejected
QE (organic food consumption) - > hedonic well-being	0.080	2.113	0.035	Accepted
Moderation effects				
Materialism success x organic food consumption - > eudaimonic well-being	−0.050	0.659	0.510	Rejected
Materialism success x organic food consumption - > hedonic well-being	0.005	0.075	0.940	Rejected
Materialism happiness x organic food consumption - > eudaimonic well-being	0.023	0.425	0.671	Rejected
Materialism happiness x organic food consumption - > hedonic well-being	0.008	0.156	0.876	Rejected
Materialism acquisition x organic food consumption - > eudaimonic well-being	0.156	1.973	0.049	Accepted
Materialism acquisition x organic food consumption - > hedonic well-being	0.136	2.165	0.030	Accepted

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Relationships	Beta	t-statistics	*p*-values	Decision on the hypothesis
Controls				
Age - > eudaimonic well-being	0.014	0.318	0.751	Not applicable
Age - > hedonic well-being	0.015	0.380	0.704	
Education - > eudaimonic well-being	0.043	1.025	0.305	
Education - > hedonic well-being	0.048	1.324	0.186	
Gender - > eudaimonic well-being	−0.005	0.120	0.905	
Gender - > hedonic well-being	0.087	2.547	0.011	
Income - > eudaimonic well-being	0.016	0.399	0.690	
Income - > hedonic well-being	0.035	0.923	0.356	

$R^2_{\text{Eudaimonic well-being}} = 0.170$; $R^2_{\text{Hedonic well-being}} = 0.310$; $R^2_{\text{Organic food consumption}} = 0.130$.

The results presented in Table 3 reveal that, on the one hand, the quadratic term (X^2) for the relationship between organic food consumption and eudaimonic well-being was not significant ($p > .05$). On the other hand, a weak quadratic term is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.080$; $p < .05$) in the relationship between organic food consumption and hedonic well-being. Figure 2 presents this positive curvilinear effect relationship showing that organic food consumption. The figure shows that organic food consumption increases hedonic well-being around the 2.6 mark, indicating an average consumption frequency.

The interaction effect (X*M) was used to test the moderation (Hair & Alamer, 2022). Table 3 shows that only materialism acquisition positively and significantly moderates the relationship between organic food consumption and eudaimonic and hedonic well-being, respectively ($\beta = 0.156$; $\beta = 0.136$). All other moderating effects were not significant ($p > .05$). A simple slope analysis was conducted to illustrate the significant interaction effects and explain the moderation further, which is presented in Figures 3 and 4.

Study 2. E-waste Disposal (Post-Consumption) – Materialism – Life Satisfaction (Subjective well-being)

Study 2 follows a similar model as proposed in Study 1, but with a distinct emphasis on post-consumption sustainable behaviour – specifically, the eco-friendly disposal of e-waste. Additionally, this study delves into how materialism and e-waste disposal relate to a particular facet of subjective well-being: life satisfaction.

Much similar to Study 1, Study 2 explores the moderating influences of all three subdimensions of materialism on the connection between e-waste disposal and subjective well-being. This approach ensures a comprehensive analysis that considers the potential interplay of these materialistic factors in shaping the relationship between sustainable post-consumption behaviour and overall well-being.

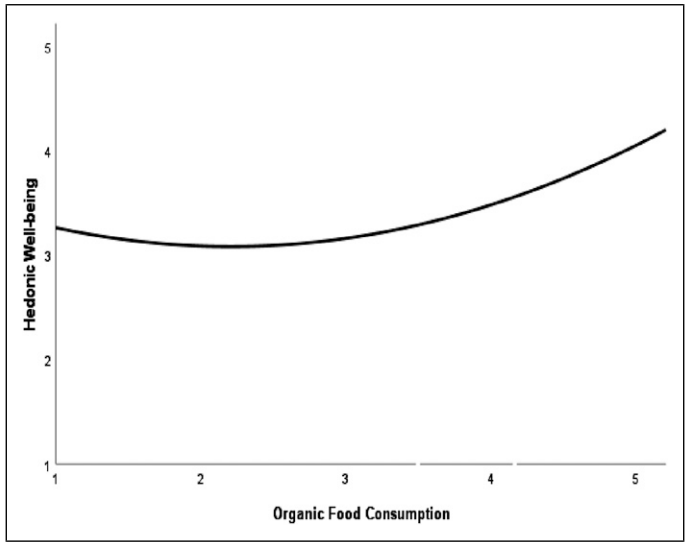

Figure 2. Quadratic effect of the relationship between organic food consumption and hedonic well-being.

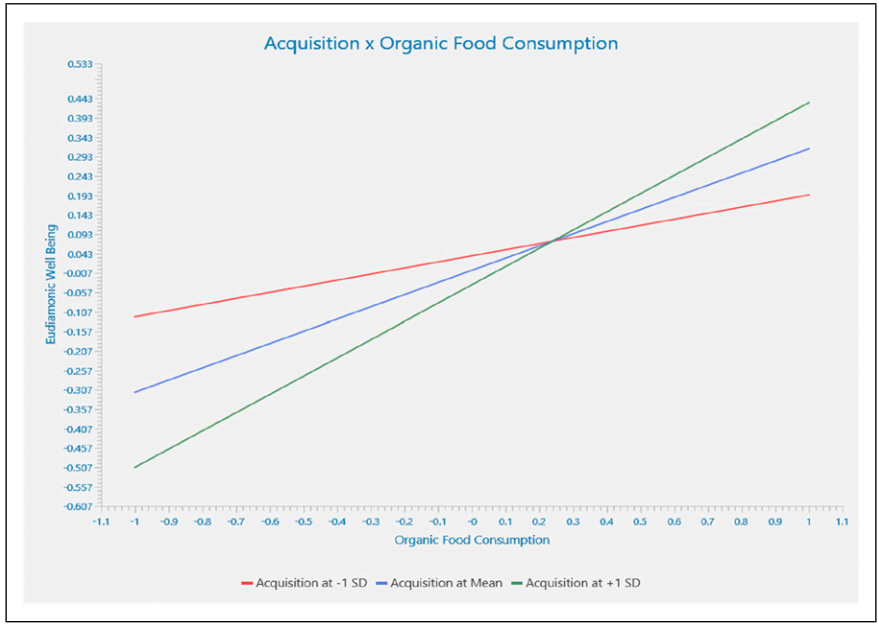

Figure 3. Slope analysis of the moderating effect of materialism acquisition in the relationship between eudaimonic well-being and organic food consumption.

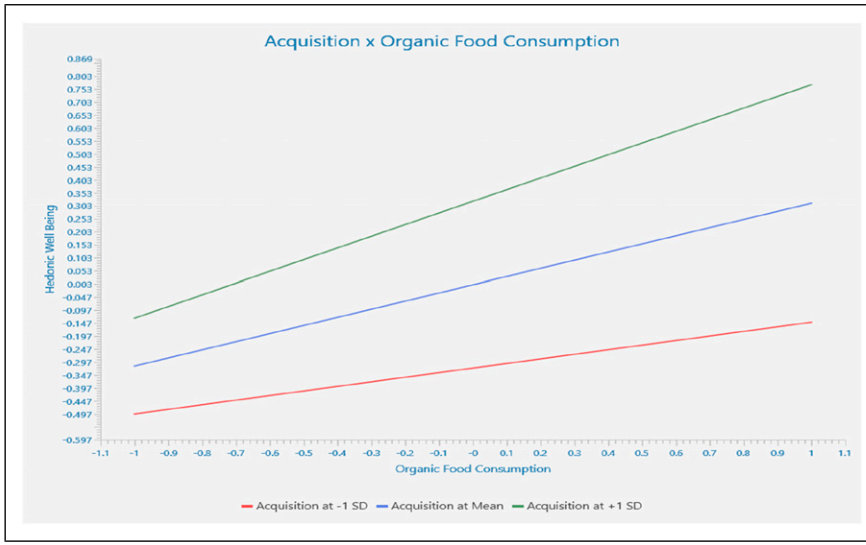

Figure 4. Slope analysis of the moderating effect of materialism acquisition in the relationship between hedonic well-being and organic food consumption. Both slopes indicate that materialism acquisition strengthens the positive effect of organic food consumption on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

A data analysis approach similar to Study 1 was adopted. The scale validation followed by a test of hypotheses using PLS-SEM was adopted.

Assessment of Reliability and Validity. Since a different sample was used, the reliability and validity of the scales were assessed. Table 4 provides evidence for the scale's reliability and convergent validity. The results confirm that the convergent validity and reliability were ascertained for all the constructs. The discriminant validity assessment in Table 5 demonstrates that all constructs used in this study discriminate from each other.

Hypotheses testing results

The results summarised in Table 6 indicate that all three dimensions of materialism are significant and positive antecedents of e-waste disposal ($p < .01$). However, materialism success has the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.236$; $p < .001$). All dimensions of materialism also positively influence subjective well-being, with happiness having the strongest relationship ($\beta = 0.236$; $p < .001$). The linear effect of eco-friendly disposal of e-waste on subjective well-being is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.135$; $p < .05$), while the curvilinear (quadratic) effect is not significant.

Similar to Study 1, an interaction effect was used to test the moderating effect of materialism on the relationship between e-waste disposal and subjective well-being. As

Table 4. Evidence of Convergent Validity – Study 2.

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Acquisition	MA1	0.918	0.668	0.744	0.744
	MA2	0.803			
Success	MS1	0.738	0.795	0.894	0.604
	MS2	0.725			
	MS3	0.876			
	MS4	0.760			
Happiness	MH1	0.819	0.791	0.795	0.704
	MH2	0.878			
	MH3	0.819			
Subjective well-being	SWB1	0.797	0.824	0.834	0.653
	SWB2	0.792			
	SWB3	0.856			
	SWB4	0.786			
E-waste disposal	eWD1	0.876	0.832	0.845	0.664
	eWD2	0.826			
	eWD3	0.790			
	eWD4	0.762			

Table 5. Evidence of Discriminant Validity – Study 2.

HTMT

	Acquisition	e-waste disposal	Happiness	Subjective well-being	Success
Acquisition					
E-waste disposal	0.227				
Happiness	0.073	0.089			
Subjective well-being	0.287	0.246	0.217		
Success	0.104	0.165	0.678	0.104	

Fornell and Larcker criteria

	Acquisition	e-waste disposal	Happiness	Subjective well-being	Success
Acquisition	0.863				
E-waste disposal	0.182	0.815			
Happiness	−0.057	0.023	0.839		
Subjective well-being	0.219	0.206	0.181	0.808	
Success	0.002	0.155	−0.521	0.053	0.777
Mean	3.931	1.817	2.340	3.617	3.074
Standard deviation	0.937	0.871	1.058	0.922	1.067

Table 6. Path Estimates, Quadratic and Moderating Effects – Study 2.

Relationships	Beta	t-statistics	*p* Values	Decision on hypothesis
Acquisition - > e-waste disposition	0.191	4.269	0.000	Accepted
Happiness - > e-waste disposition	0.157	2.641	0.008	Accepted
Success - > e-waste disposition	0.236	3.890	0.000	Accepted
Acquisition - > subjective well-being	0.213	3.945	0.000	Accepted
Happiness - > subjective well-being	0.281	5.209	0.000	Accepted
Success - > subjective well-being	0.185	2.574	0.010	Accepted
e-waste disposition - > subjective well-being	0.135	2.291	0.022	Accepted
Quadratic effect of e-waste disposal on subjective well-being				
QE (e-waste disposition) - > subjective well-being	−0.068	1.891	0.059	Rejected
Moderating (interaction) effect of materialism				
Success x e-waste disposition - > subjective well-being	−0.037	0.487	0.626	Rejected
Acquisition x e-waste disposition - > subjective well-being	0.018	0.283	0.777	Rejected
Happiness x e-waste disposition - > subjective well-being	−0.043	0.666	0.505	Rejected
Control variables				
Age - > subjective well-being	−0.041	0.980	0.327	NA
Education - > subjective well-being	0.019	0.406	0.685	
Gender - > subjective well-being	0.115	2.553	0.011	
Income - > subjective well-being	0.025	0.541	0.588	

$R^2_{\text{Subjective well-being}} = 0.152$; $R^2_{\text{Organic food consumption}} = 0.075$.

reported in Table 6, the results reveal that the moderating effects were insignificant for all dimensions of materialism ($p > .05$).

Discussion of Findings

In striving to expound the relationships between materialism, sustainability, and consumer well-being, our two distinct studies were applied to sustainable consumption (organic food consumption) and post-consumption behaviour (e-waste disposal). Sustainable practices are a continuous process, encompassing choices made before, during, and after product use. Overlooking any phase of a product life cycle may lead to an incomplete understanding of how individuals engage with sustainability in their daily lives. The ensuing findings offer rich insights contributing to the ongoing discourse around the multi-layered interactions between materialistic values, sustainability and well-being (Gu et al., 2020; Liobikiene et al., 2020).

A discernible complexity emerges as we unravel the relationship between materialism and sustainable practices. Study 1 reveals that the influence of materialistic

values on sustainability is context-dependent. Specifically, only the dimension of materialism tied to notions of success significantly influences the adoption of organic food consumption. On the other hand, Study 2, exploring e-waste disposal, presents an intriguing contrast. The trifecta of materialistic values converges to predict the eco-friendly disposal of e-waste. This divergent pattern reflects the nuanced interplay between materialism and distinct dimensions of sustainability.

Discussing the connection between materialistic values and consumer well-being paints a dynamic depiction across our studies. Study 2 exploration of e-waste recycling unveils a positive linkage between all materialism dimensions and subjective well-being – a finding echoed by prior research (Rūtelionė et al., 2022). In contrast, Study 1 introduces a layer of complexity, revealing that the materialism-well-being interplay is not monolithic, as material possessions viewed as symbols of success infuse hedonic well-being with pleasure and enjoyment. Conversely, two dimensions of materialism, viewed as happiness and acquisitions, dampen hedonic well-being but have a positive relationship with the eudaimonic facet. These results harmonise with the debate on the potential antagonist relationship between materialism and well-being (Gu et al., 2020).

At its core, this study seeks to deepen the understanding of sustainable practices' influence on consumer well-being. Study 1 points out that consumers' pleasure and fulfilment could derive from consuming organic food products (Minton et al., 2022; Welsch et al., 2021). Yet, an intriguing balance surfaces as we probe the connection between organic food consumption and well-being dimensions. Beneath this equilibrium, a curvilinear quadratic effect appears, defying conventional linear interpretations. The quadratic plot underscores that organic food consumption increases hedonic well-being when consumers have a modest frequency of organic food consumption. Therefore, consumers consuming organic food more frequently would experience higher levels of hedonic well-being. In contrast, Study 2 paints a distinct canvas for e-waste disposal and subjective well-being. Although the positive influence of e-waste disposal on subjective well-being is demonstrated, the relationship remains linear, irrespective of the frequency of e-waste disposal. Therefore, there is no specific point at which the frequency of e-waste disposal does not affect subjective well-being.

Shifting to the moderating role of materialism, the findings vary between sustainable consumption and post-consumption actions. Study 1 on organic food consumption shows that the prominence of materialistic values heightens the relationship between organic food consumption and both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. In other words, the more consumers view the acquisition of material possessions as central to their lives, the stronger the relationship between organic food consumption and both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. Also, in Study 2, consumers' propensity to materialism does not moderate the relationship between e-waste disposal and well-being. Therefore, irrespective of the level of materialism, the influence of e-waste disposal on subjective well-being remains unchanged, underlining a consistent influence independent of materialistic tendencies.

Theoretical Implications

This research provides valuable contributions to the existing knowledge on materialistic values, sustainable consumption and consumer well-being. As it direct attention to materialistic values, which are often viewed as egoistic values (Liobikienė et al., 2020), this research fills a crucial gap in the literature that has predominantly focused on the influence of environmental values such as eco-centric or altruistic perspectives on sustainable consumption practices (Furchheim et al., 2020). Particularly noteworthy is the examination of materialistic values within the context of emerging markets such as South Africa, where materialistic tendencies are prevalent (Duh, 2015). This emphasis on materialism contributes significantly to the ongoing scholarly dialogue concerning the complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship between materialism and sustainable consumption (Furchheim et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2020). Furthermore, this research extends beyond merely exploring materialistic values as antecedents; it delves into the implications of sustainable consumption (organic food) and post-consumption (e-waste disposal) for diverse dimensions of well-being, including hedonic, eudaimonic, and life satisfaction. In doing so, it enhances our understanding of how materialistic values intersect with sustainability and influence consumer well-being, thereby advancing the pro-environmental literature in emerging markets.

This research not only examines the broad association between materialistic values and sustainable practices but also delves into the distinct role played by each dimension of materialistic values. As noted by Segev (2015), materialism is a multidimensional construct that requires disentangling its various dimensions for comprehensive understanding. In doing so, this research provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which materialistic values might motivate sustainable consumption and post-consumption practices. This depth of exploration contributes to the refinement of theoretical models within materialism and sustainability (Mansoor & Paul, 2021; Welsch et al., 2021).

The study's exploration of materialistic values as moderators and its consideration of potential curvilinear effects further enhance the understanding of how sustainability relates to consumer well-being. There is limited evidence in the current literature on the detailed role of materialism as a moderator. The addition of materialism as a moderating variable represents a notable extension of current literature, adding granularity to the role of materialistic values in shaping the connection between sustainable actions and well-being outcomes. As we incorporate it as a moderating variable, this research acknowledges that the relationship between sustainable actions and well-being is context-dependent. Additionally, by examining both the linear and curvilinear dimensions of this relationship, this research transcends the common linear models, providing a more comprehensive depiction of the nuanced interactions between sustainable practices and various dimensions of well-being. This enrichment of knowledge contributes to a holistic understanding of the diverse outcomes that sustainable behaviours can yield in terms of consumer well-being.

Managerial Implications

The managerial implications drawn from our findings hold valuable guidance for both marketers and policymakers interested in promoting sustainable consumption practices, specifically organic food consumption, and eco-friendly post-consumption behaviours such as e-waste disposal. Our research highlights the importance of recognising materialistically inclined consumers as a key segment for promoting sustainable initiatives. For marketers, this insight emphasises the value of tailoring integrated marketing communications to present sustainable practices that resonate with these consumers' aspirations for status and personal success. Rather than encouraging materialism, marketing should frame sustainable products, such as organic food, as symbols of achievement and well-being, thus aligning with materialistic consumers' desire for a positive public image (Dong et al., 2018). As marketers and policymakers position sustainable choices as pathways to enhanced social status or personal fulfilment, marketers can drive pro-environmental behaviours while appealing to this segment. For instance, messages that emphasise the prestige associated with environmentally responsible products may appeal to consumers driven by success. At the same time, those valuing possessions for personal enjoyment might respond to narratives highlighting the pleasure and well-being derived from sustainable consumption (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008). This way, materialistic values can enhance consumer self-affirmation through eco-conscious choices, promoting sustainability without reinforcing materialism.

Our findings highlight the positive relationship between sustainable practices and well-being outcomes. For marketers in the organic food industry, emphasising the holistic benefits of sustainable consumption practices becomes paramount (Wojciechowska-Solis & Barska, 2021). Highlighting how consuming organic food contributes to well-being can resonate with consumers seeking a healthier and more fulfilling lifestyle. Similarly, practitioners promoting eco-friendly e-waste disposal should focus on communicating the positive influence of such post-consumption practices on life satisfaction. Such communication can encourage consumers to take responsibility for their actions, contributing to environmental preservation and enhancing their sense of contentment.

The curvilinear effects uncovered by our study offer a strategic insight for marketers. To maximise the positive outcomes associated with sustainable practices such as well-being enhancement, consumers should be encouraged to engage in these behaviours consistently. Regular engagement is vital to promote organic food consumption to reap the full benefits of well-being improvements. Marketers can employ communication strategies that underscore the cumulative effect of sustained sustainable behaviours, motivating consumers to make conscious choices repeatedly.

Limitations and Further Research

One of the limitations of this study is that it focuses on one emerging country. Future studies may improve this study by replicating the study in other emerging markets to

enhance external validity. Instead of relying on self-reported data, more direct research strategies such as experiments or observations can significantly improve the validity of this study. More focused constructs such as consumer wisdom (Luchs & Mick, 2018), consumer culture (Özer et al., 2022), and religion (Minton et al., 2018) can be added to the model as consumer value systems that can provide a richer understanding of sustainable consumption practices.

Conclusion

This research examines the relationships between materialism, sustainable practices, and consumer well-being, often viewed as paradoxical (Venhoeven et al., 2013). Through two cross-sectional studies, we explore linear and curvilinear relationships among these concepts across sustainable practice (organic food consumption) and post-consumption (disposal of electronic waste). This research establishes the nexus between sustainable (post) consumption, materialism and consumer well-being. The findings reveal that materialistic values can motivate sustainable consumption and post-consumption practices. Linear and curvilinear relationships were found between sustainability and consumer well-being. Moreover, the moderating effect of materialism on the relationship between sustainable consumption and well-being was confirmed.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Measurement Items

Constructs		Measurement items	Sources
Materialism acquisition	MA1	I Usually buy only the things I need*	Richins and Dawson (1992)
	MA2	I Try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned*	
	MA3	The things I own are not all that important to me*	
	MA4	I Put less emphasis on material things than most people I know*	
Materialism success	MS1	I Admire people, who own expensive homes, cars and clothes	Richins and Dawson (1992)
	MS2	Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions	
	MS3	The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life	
	MS4	I Like to own things that impress people	

(continued)

(continued)

Constructs		Measurement items	Sources
Materialism happiness	MH1	My life would be better if I owned certain things that I do not have.	Richins and Dawson (1992)
	MH2	I Would be happier if I could afford to buy more things	
	MH3	I Have the things I really need to enjoy life*	
	MH4	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I cannot afford to buy all the things I would like.	
	MH5	I wouldn't be any happier if I owned nicer things*	
Eudaimonic well-being	EWB1	I Lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	Ahn et al. (2019)
	EWB2	My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	
	EWB3	I Am engaged and interested in my daily activities.	
	EWB4	I Actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.	
	EWB5	I Am competent in doing the activities that are important to me.	
	EWB6	I Feel best when I'm doing something worth investing a great deal of effort in.	
	EWB7	I Am a good person and live a good life.	
	EWB8	It is important to me that I feel fulfilled by the activities that I engage in.	
	EWB9	My life is centred around a set of core beliefs that give meaning to my life	
	EWB10	I Am optimistic about my future	
Hedonic well-being	HWB1	In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.	Ahn et al. (2019)
	HWB2	The conditions of my life are excellent.	
	HWB3	I Am satisfied with my life.	
	HWB4	So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.	
	HWB5	If I could live my time over, I would change almost nothing	
Subjective well-being (life satisfaction)	SWB1	In most ways, my life is close to my ideal	Kuanr et al. (2022).
	SWB2	The conditions of my life are excellent	
	SWB3	I Am satisfied with my life	
	SWB4	So far, I have got the important things I wanted in life.	

(continued)

(continued)

Constructs		Measurement items	Sources
E-waste disposal (post-consumption)	eWD1	Take old electronic equipment to recycling facilities (e.g. fax machine; old television; unused landline phone; CD player)	Wang et al. (2018) and Setiawan et al. (2021).
	eWD2	Dispose of broken electronic equipment to recycling facilities (e.g. fax machine; old television; unused landline phone)	
	eWD3	Separated e-waste from other waste materials (e.g. leftover, garden waste) to ensure that it is properly recycled.	
Organic food consumption (never – always)	OFC1	Food that you believe is organic	Apaolaza et al. (2018).
	OFC2	Organic dairy products (e.g. milk, cheese, or yoghurt)	
	OFC3	Organic fruit or vegetables (e.g. tomatoes, salad, oranges, etc.)	
	OFC4	Organic meat, fish, and poultry products (e.g. beef, chicken or eggs)	
	OFC5	Organic cereals, bread and/or other bakery products	
	OFC6	Organic drinks (e.g. coffee, chocolate, tea, juice, wine, etc.)	

* These items have been reversed.

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