

Ethical Consumption and Consumer Virtue: Insights from Iranians' Lifestyles

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Abstract

Ethical consumption involves adopting practices that seek to safeguard both society and the environment. Various forms of ethical consumption, most notably in the form of consumption refinement (Fairtrade and boycotting), have gained popularity in Western Europe and North America. However, our understanding of how ethical consumption is defined and practiced in non-Western cultures and different social structures still requires further development. This study seeks to deepen our comprehension of ethical consumption in Iran, offering insights into its realization within a societal structure that diverges from the Western origins of this phenomenon. The overarching aim is to realize interdependent connections among individuals' lifestyles, societal frameworks, and the evolution of this phenomenon in the studied society. Data was gathered from 19 semi-structured interviews with people in Iran. Data analysis indicates that Iranian individuals have particular attitudes regarding ethical consumption that originate from their given societal framework. These attitudes are manifested in different consumption stages. In the pre-consumption stage, I discuss how Fairtrade and boycotting practices are influenced by people's lifestyles. In the consumption stage, ethical considerations will be explored through the lens of 'heyfomeyl,' a deep-rooted tradition in that culture that considers taking good care of things a virtue. In the post-consumption stage, ethical considerations will be explored through the common practice of 'ehsan kardan,' originally stemmed from philanthropic and religious motivations, however, over time, it has come to be perceived as environmentally beneficial.

Keywords: consumption practices, ethical consumption, lifestyle influences, Iran, virtue, Fairtrade