

## SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

# Exploring the Intersection of Environmental Sustainability and Anti-Consumption: A Review and Research Agenda

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## ABSTRACT

Given the adverse effects of overconsumption on environmental degradation, there is an urgent need for consumers to transition toward more sustainable consumption patterns, which involve reducing or refusing consumption. This systematic literature review (SLR) explores the intricate relationship between environmental sustainability and anti-consumption behaviors, including minimalism and voluntary simplicity. Through a consumer behavior lens, we aim to understand the intersection of various forms of anti-consumption, examining internal and external drivers, as well as barriers and outcomes. Following a mixed-method approach, this SLR of 69 studies is further complemented by six qualitative interviews with experts on this topic, identifying how consumer decisions to engage in anti-consumption are influenced by a complex interplay of personal motivations and environmental concerns. There is also an interaction between different internal and external drivers, namely religion, personal values, socioeconomic conditions, and (de)marketing strategies. Hence, consumers face some challenges when navigating the complex process of adopting anti-consumption behaviors. The outcomes range from consumer well-being to influencing corporate behavior through boycotts or boycotts. Notably, sustainability can emerge as a by-product of anti-consumption behaviors. We also propose pathways for future research, contributing to the ongoing discourse on sustainable (anti-)consumption.

## 1 | Introduction

Given the negative impact of overconsumption on environmental degradation, it is imperative for consumers to transition toward more sustainable consumption patterns with a lower environmental impact (Alexander and Ussher 2012; Jain et al. 2024). Environmentally oriented anti-consumption is recognized as a way to facilitate this shift, as it encompasses not only reducing or rejecting consumption but also engaging in alternative consumption practices (García-de-Frutos et al. 2018). In pursuing environmental sustainability, consumers may adopt anti-consumption behaviors (Black and Cherrier 2010) or alternatively opt for more sustainable consumption options (Santos-Corrada

et al. 2024; Vesterinen and Syrjäla 2022), thereby embracing responsible consumption behaviors (Albinsson and Perera 2012; Nangia et al. 2023).

Anti-consumption is often defined as “a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment or rejection of, consumption” (Zavestoski 2002, p.121). This rejection extends to the entire consumption process, from acquisition to disposal, and thus anti-consumption for sustainability involves not only rejecting but also reducing and/or reusing (Black and Cherrier 2010). Anti-consumption is also considered an intentional behavior whereby consumers voluntarily choose to reduce their consumption (Makri et al. 2020) and it can take many forms. Consumer's

commitment toward AC can be seen in aversion, avoidance or abandonment, which then translates into rejection, restriction or reclamation practices (Lim 2017).

AC has been framed within the realm of sustainable consumption, as it contributes to preserving future generations' needs while avoiding excessive consumption (Lim 2017). When exploring the intersection of environmental sustainability and anti-consumption, minimalism and voluntary simplicity (VS) are often included, as both are based on deliberately reducing consumption and positively impacting individuals, society, and the environment (Elgin and Mitchell 1977; Jain et al. 2024). VS has been recognized as a variation of anti-consumption (Iyer and Muncy 2009) and minimalism has been positioned within the scope of VS (Hook et al. 2021). However, there is no study analyzing specifically environmental sustainability, AC, VS, and minimalism.

Despite the growing interest in understanding consumers who decide to reduce or reject consumption (e.g., Kuanr, Israel, et al. 2020), the literature is still fragmented. A recent systematic literature review (SLR) on the topic of sustainable anti-consumption analyzed the phenomenon from the fashion industry perspective (Vesterinen and Syrjälä 2022). In contrast, this review intends to comprehensively analyze the intersection of environmental sustainability and anti-consumption behaviors across various industries, thus not being restricted to a specific sector, nor to the concept of sustainable anti-consumption. Another prior review by García-de-Frutos et al. (2018), examining environmental sustainability and AC, presents a multilevel model based on antecedents and consequences of AC at macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. Differently, this review presents a thematic analysis of environmental sustainability and presents AC, including minimalist and voluntary simplicity. Moreover, some studies call for further research not only on the drivers but also on the outcomes of this phenomenon (e.g., Makri et al. 2020).

Hence, through an SLR, this study seeks to explore the intersection and the intricate relationship between various forms of intentional consumption reduction (anti-consumption, minimalism and VS) and environmental sustainability. Through a consumer behavior lens, this article addresses the following research objectives: (i) to determine whether reducing consumption is intricately linked to environmental sustainability concerns and identify other (internal or external) factors that may be detrimental to this relationship; (ii) to explore barriers faced by consumers in their attempts to restrain or reduce consumption; and (iii) to highlight the possible outcomes of anti-consumption behavior. The SLR method is complemented by qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts on this topic, aiming to validate the review's findings and enhance the discussion of future research directions.

The relevance of this topic aligns with the sustainable development goals (SDGs), namely, sustainable production and consumption (United Nations 2022). In fact, research indicates that anti-consumption lifestyles might contribute to achieving sustainability goals (García-de-Frutos et al. 2018). Besides, these lifestyles are gaining popularity, reaching mainstream

consumers through unconventional advertising campaigns, such as the fashion brand Patagonia's "Don't Buy This Jacket" (Hwang et al. 2016) and the Netflix series, like "Tidying up with Marie Kondo," which advocates minimalism, as mentioned by Martin-Woodhead (2022).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the methodology. Section 3 provides a characterization of the studies selected for this review. Section 4 discusses the thematic groups identified. Section 4 presents the conclusions and Section 5 discusses future research avenues.

## 2 | Methodology

To address the research objectives, an SLR method was first employed, complemented by semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including academics, marketing professionals, and an activist citizen involved in a political party. This mixed-method approach, employed in previous studies (e.g., Pandey et al. 2020), aims to validate and complement the findings that emerge from the SLR while identifying future research areas by integrating the qualitative insights from experts in this field. By combining the SLR with a qualitative study, this review offers a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of sustainable anti-consumption, ensuring both data and methodological triangulation through the integration of two methods and the collection of data from different sources and time periods (Denzin 2009; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Investigator triangulation was also ensured, as both researchers participated in data collection and analysis of the interviews and the SLR, discussing discrepancies until a consensus was achieved (Denzin 2009).

### 2.1 | Systematic Literature Review

This SLR follows the four-stage methodology proposed by Kraus et al. (2020), which builds on the three-stage model by Tranfield et al. (2003), as follows:

1. Planning phase, which involves identifying the need for a review and defining its objectives and research questions, as outlined in the introduction. It also includes developing a review protocol that specifies the criteria for data search, including defining the search string, selecting the databases, and the type of articles to be included.
2. Review phase, which involves conducting the review by identifying and assessing the quality of relevant studies, applying detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria when assessing the titles and abstracts of the studies.
3. Data extraction and synthesis phase, which involves extracting and synthesizing data, is divided into data extraction (where we created an Excel sheet to organize all the relevant information) and data synthesis (where we used tables and figures, and followed a concept-centric approach).
4. Dissemination phase, which involves disseminating the review findings.

To report the results, a two-stage report is presented: a descriptive analysis presented in Section 3, followed by a thematic analysis in Section 4 (Tranfield et al. 2003), which also includes the findings from the interviews. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted, using an interpretative synthesis, as recommended by Jones et al. (2011). Through a content analysis of the selected manuscripts, the authors were able to qualitatively organize the findings into themes (Kraus et al. 2022). This approach aligns with the thematic analysis and synthesis process, wherein analytical themes are identified and extracted from the literature based on researchers' interpretation to generate new knowledge and answer research questions (Thomas and Harden 2008).

To locate all possible relevant studies, both the SCOPUS and the Web of Science (WoS) databases were selected, as recommended (Xiao and Watson 2017). The search was carried out in October 2024, using the following search string in both databases, applied to the title, abstract and keywords: ("*consumer minimalism\**" OR "*minimalism\**" OR "*minimalistic\**" OR "*voluntary simplicity*" OR "*anti consumption behavi\**" OR "*anti-consumption\**") AND ("*sustainab\**" OR "*environment\**" OR "*green\**"). The first group of keywords encompasses the different types of anti-consumption considered in this study (anti-consumption, minimalism and VS), while the second group reflects the focus on environmental sustainability. The search was limited to articles and reviews published in peer-reviewed English-language journals. In this way, and following previous recommendations (Kraus et al. 2020; Xiao and Watson 2017), the quality assessment is ensured by relying on journals' peer-reviewed processes, thereby excluding grey literature. The search was also restricted to the following subject areas: Business, Management and Accounting; and Economics, Econometrics and Finance in Scopus; and Business, Management or Economics WoS categories. No time restrictions were applied to ensure a comprehensive view of the topic. This search yielded a total of 288 results (128 results on Scopus and 160 on WoS). After removing 76 duplicate articles, the remaining 212 abstracts were downloaded into a spreadsheet for both authors to identify and select articles for potential inclusion. Following recommended practices, both authors independently and parallelly screened the abstracts of the 212 studies to determine their relevance, discussing and resolving any discrepancies, until a consensus was achieved (Xiao and Watson 2017).

Based on abstract screening, a total of 135 papers were removed according to the following criteria: (i) lack of direct reference to both anti-consumption behaviors (including minimalism or VS) and environmental sustainability; (ii) absence of focus on consumer behavior (meaning that their unit of analysis were not consumers, or the articles were from other scientific fields); (iii) failure to address the link between environmental sustainability and anti-consumption behaviors; and (iv) concentration on very specific case studies, product categories/contexts, with no added value to this research, preventing generalization, such as the Non-Plastic Bag Campaign Day in Malaysia, the transition from sanitary napkins to menstrual cups, or the practice of Danshari in China. The exclusion of articles based on abstract screening left us with 77 manuscripts, of which the full text was obtained for in-depth

content analysis. During the full-text assessment phase, eight additional articles were excluded, as they did not relate to the scope of this review. Some studies did not focus on AC behaviors, exploring instead issues related to excessive consumption. Other articles addressed AC behaviors but failed to explore the relationship of these behaviors with environmental sustainability; for instance, some examined the effects of COVID-19 on fashion anti-consumption. Also, there was one study that focused on communities rather than individual consumers. This screening phase resulted in a final sample of 69 articles. Figure 1 provides an overview of the literature search and selection process. The final pool of articles is provided in Appendix S1.

To analyze these articles, the manuscripts were grouped based on the themes they addressed, employing an inductive approach and an in-depth content analysis. The articles were categorized into five thematic groups, presented in detail in Section 4:

1. The tension between personal and environmental concerns in driving anti-consumption behaviors.
2. The interplay between internal and external drivers on anti-consumption behaviors.
3. The role of (de)marketing strategies in shaping consumers' perceptions towards anti-consumption consumption behaviors.
4. Barriers to the adoption of anti-consumption behaviors.
5. Environmental sustainability as a by-product and other outcomes of anti-consumption behaviors.

## 2.2 | Qualitative Interviews

After the SLR, which allowed the identification of the five thematic groups presented in the sub-section above, we conducted six interviews with experts on this topic to validate the findings that emerged from the review and to identify new insights to inform future research directions. A purposive sampling was used to select the participants, ensuring representation from different fields, including academia, marketing professionals, and political activism. The participants were all based in Portugal at the time of the interview.

The interviews were semi-structured, employing open-ended questions to cover the five thematic groups that emerged from the SLR and to explore unexpected insights arising from the free-flow nature of the conversation (Saunders et al. 2009). The interviews were conducted synchronously via Zoom in January 2025, with the two researchers and the participant, lasting an average of 41 min. All interviews were recorded, with prior consent from the participants, and then transcribed to ensure an accurate analysis of the data. Table 1 shows the profiles of the interviewees.

Initially, each thematic group was presented, with one of the researchers presenting the main findings, followed by a set of open questions related to each group. The idea was to explore the interviewee's perspectives on each specific thematic group. In the end, the researchers allowed the interviewee to freely share

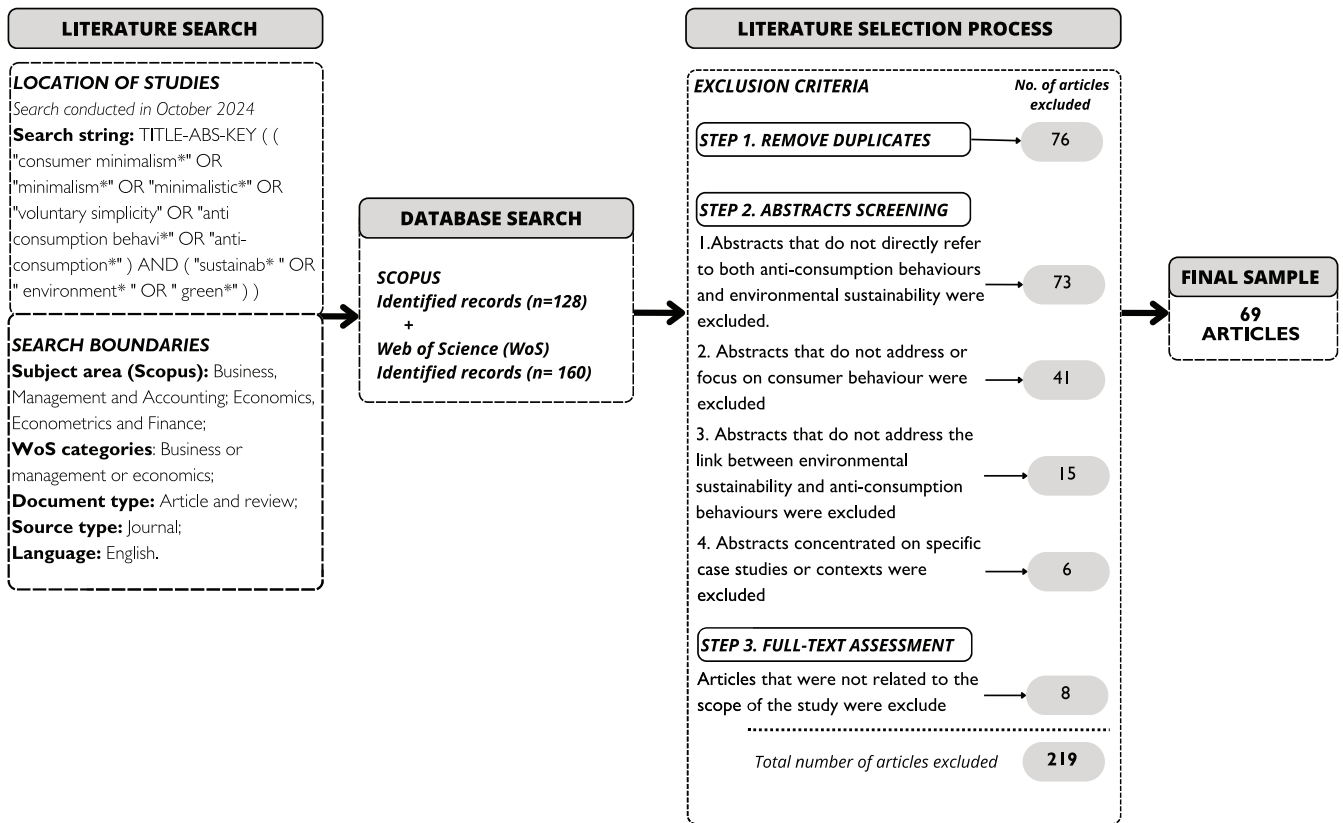


FIGURE 1 | Literature search and selection process.

TABLE 1 | Profiles of interviewees.

Code	Stakeholder type	Professional background	Academic background
I1	Academic	Marketing Professor <b>Main research areas:</b> green marketing; sustainability and consumer behavior; and entrepreneurship	PhD in Management <b>Research output:</b> 120+ documents; 5000+ citations
I2	Marketing professional	Former Marketing and Strategy Director. Expert in Sustainable Consumption Behavior in Luxury Products.	Master's in Business Administration.
I3	Academic	Professor in Management <b>Main research areas:</b> greenwashing	PhD in Business Management <b>Research output:</b> 10- documents; 100- citations.
I4	Marketing professional	Marketing Manager (15+ years). Marketing Professor. <b>Main research areas:</b> plastics, green marketing	PhD in Marketing and Strategy <b>Research output:</b> 15+ documents; 300+ citations
I5	Academic	Marketing Professor. <b>Main research areas:</b> voluntary simplicity, social networks and marketing for higher education.	PhD in Management <b>Research output:</b> 50+ documents; 1500+ citations
I6	Activist citizen	Militant of an environmentalist party. Human Resources Professor. <b>Main research areas:</b> organizational behavior	PhD in Business Management <b>Research output:</b> 10- documents; 100- citations.

Note: The research output information was retrieved from Scopus.

their thoughts and opinions regarding the intersection of AC behaviors and environmental sustainability, as well as to suggest potential areas for future research. In the discussion section, we include the findings from the interviews within the discussion of the thematic groups.

### 3 | Characterization of the Sample

This section provides a characterization of the 69 manuscripts selected for review. Aiming to provide a contextualization of this research topic, the focus was on publication dates and sources,

the most cited articles, industrial sectors, research methodologies, and geographical context.

### 3.1 | Date of Publication

The articles included in this SLR were published between 2002 and 2024, as illustrated in Figure 2. Although the publication rate was relatively low during the early years, there has been a notable rise in publications starting in 2018, with eight articles published that year. From 2019 to 2023, the number of publications fluctuated between six and eight articles annually, suggesting a growing interest in this research topic. The publication trend suggests that this topic, although not a recent one, is expanding rapidly. More than half of the reviewed papers (39 articles) were published in the last 5 years, signaling the growing relevance of this topic. The slight increase in 2024 signals continued growth, despite the search being conducted in October 2024.

### 3.2 | Publication Source

The 69 manuscripts selected for this SLR were published across 37 peer-reviewed journals, as detailed in Appendix S1. Of the 37 different outlets, only 10 journals published three or more articles: *Psychology and Marketing* (5 articles), *Journal of Business Ethics* (4), *Journal of Cleaner Production* (4), *International Journal of Consumer Studies* (3), *Journal of Business Research* (3), *Journal of Consumer Behavior* (3), *British Food Journal* (3), *European Journal of Marketing* (3), *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* (3) and *Journal of Macromarketing* (3). This indicates both the dispersion and the multidisciplinary nature of the research topic under analysis.

### 3.3 | Citation Analysis

Table 2 presents the top 20 most cited papers in this review, including total global citations (TGCs) and the average citations per year (ACY). TGC represents the total number of citations an article has received in the SCOPUS or in the WoS database (Batista-Canino et al. 2023; Halibas et al. 2023). Both the TGC and the ACY are citation metrics used to assess an article's performance and identify the most influential contributions in the field (Donthu et al. 2021).

The interdisciplinary nature of this topic is further shown by the diversity of publication sources in which these 20 articles were published. The most significant contributions can be found in journals focusing on marketing, consumer behavior, ethics and psychology, which demonstrates the wide range of perspectives of this research stream, spanning various academic disciplines.

### 3.4 | Sector

Although 43 of the reviewed studies do not specify a particular sector, our analysis shows that the fashion industry is the most examined sector in the context of environmental sustainability and anti-consumption behaviors. Table 3 shows the most explored industries in our sample, with 12 articles focusing on the fashion industry and exploring topics such as consumers' intention to reduce clothing consumption (e.g., Joanes 2019) or the impact of having a minimalist wardrobe (Bardey et al. 2022).

### 3.5 | Research Methodologies

The studies included in this review predominantly employ quantitative methodologies, with 56.5% of papers applying this data analysis method. Twenty-one papers (30.4%) were identified as qualitative studies, and five employed a mixed-method approach, applying both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Only one paper is classified as being conceptual, and three studies adopted a SLR methodology.

Figure 3 presents the distribution of research methodologies by year, showcasing the evolution of methodological trends over time. Quantitative studies have become predominant, especially in recent years, from 2016 onwards. Overall, as the initial emphasis on qualitative research is gradually giving way to a predominance of quantitative methodologies, we now identify an opportunity for researchers to focus on qualitative methodologies to enhance the methodological landscape and provide greater depth to this research stream.

### 3.6 | Geographical Context

There is a clear concentration in European countries when analyzing the geographical focus of the articles, as illustrated in Table 4. Eighteen out of the 69 reviewed papers examined

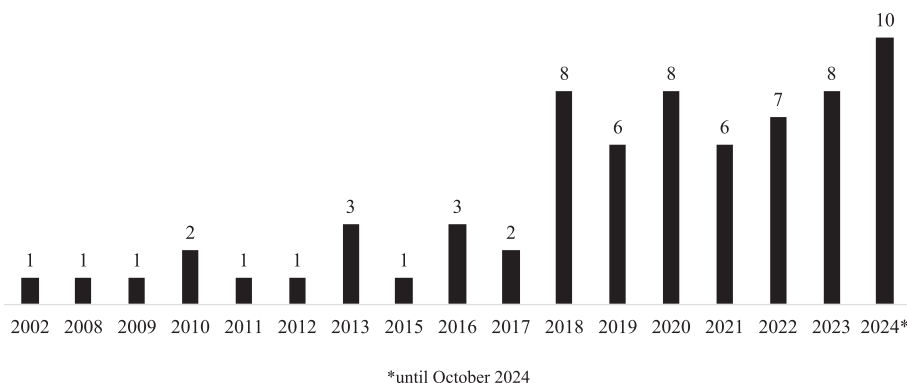


FIGURE 2 | Number of articles per year of publication.

**TABLE 2** | Top 20 most cited papers.

Authors (year)	Source title	TGC	ACY
Black and Cherrier (2010)	Journal of Consumer Behavior	208**	17
Chatzidakis and Lee (2013)	Journal of Macromarketing	205*	19
Alexander and Ussher (2012)	Journal of Consumer Culture	202*	17
Craig-Lees and Hill (2002)	Psychology and Marketing	188*	9
Cherrier et al. (2011)	European Journal of Marketing	171*	13
Seegebarth et al. (2016)	Journal of Consumer Affairs	128*	16
Joanes (2019)	Journal of Cleaner Production	94*	19
Shaw and Moraes (2009)	International Journal of Consumer Studies	93*	6
Isenhour (2010)	Journal of Consumer Behavior	84**	7
Chowdhury (2018)	Journal of Business Ethics	81*	14
García-de-Frutos et al. (2018)	Journal of Business Ethics	76*	6
Kropfeld et al. (2018)	Journal of Public Policy and Marketing	73*	12
Oates et al. (2008)	Journal of Marketing Communications	70*	4
Peyer et al. (2017)	Journal of Business Research	69*	10
Armstrong Soule and Reich (2015)	Journal of Marketing Management	68*	8
Hüttel et al. (2018)	Journal of Cleaner Production	62*	5
Reich and Soule (2016)	Journal of Advertising	61*	8
Balderjahn et al. (2020)	Journal of Consumer Affairs	49*	12
Makri et al. (2020)	Psychology and Marketing	49**	12
Kuanr, Israel, et al. (2020), Kuanr, Pradhan, et al. (2020)	Psychology and Marketing	47*	12

Abbreviations: ACY, Average citation per year; TGC, Total Global Citation (\*actual Scopus global citation; \*\* actual WoS citation).

**TABLE 3** | Industrial sector.

Sector	Number of articles
Fashion	12
Food	5
Consumer goods	4
Cross-sectorial	2
Rental services/products	2
Transportation	1
Not specified	43

consumers from this continent, with Germany leading the ranking with eight articles. In the American continent, the USA is the most analyzed country, with a total of seven articles. There are also some studies conducted in emerging markets. This reflects the growing academic interest in emerging markets, marking a shift from the traditionally dominant Western world.

#### 4 | Discussion of the Thematic Groups

Based on an in-depth and inductive content analysis of the selected manuscripts, it was possible to classify the articles into five main thematic groups, presented and discussed in the next sub-sections. While the SLR allowed us to categorize the literature into these thematic groups, we further enriched the discussion by integrating the findings from the interviews and merging both data sources.

##### 4.1 | The Tension Between Personal and Environmental Concerns in Driving Anti-Consumption Behaviors

The literature on anti-consumption highlights a fundamental tension between self-interest and sustainability or environmental concerns (Black and Cherrier 2010; Hüttel et al. 2020; Martin-Woodhead 2022; Shaw and Moraes 2009). This tension arises as consumers must balance the personal benefits of engaging in certain behaviors against their potential environmental harm (Culiberg et al. 2023). On one hand, this motivational dichotomy is rooted in the fact that reasons against consumption are not always the direct opposite of reasons for engaging in consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2013), complicating consumer decision-making. On the other hand, the intention-behavior gap further exacerbates this tension, with evidence suggesting that environmental concern does not always consistently translate into reduced ecological impact (Kropfeld et al. 2018). In some instances, it can even lead to a rebound effect (Balderjahn and Hüttel 2019), particularly when consumers are unable to reject consumption due to associated costs (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019), such as price or lack of perceived quality (Black and Cherrier 2010).

This tension further indicates consumers' conflicting identities when pursuing a more sustainable lifestyle by engaging

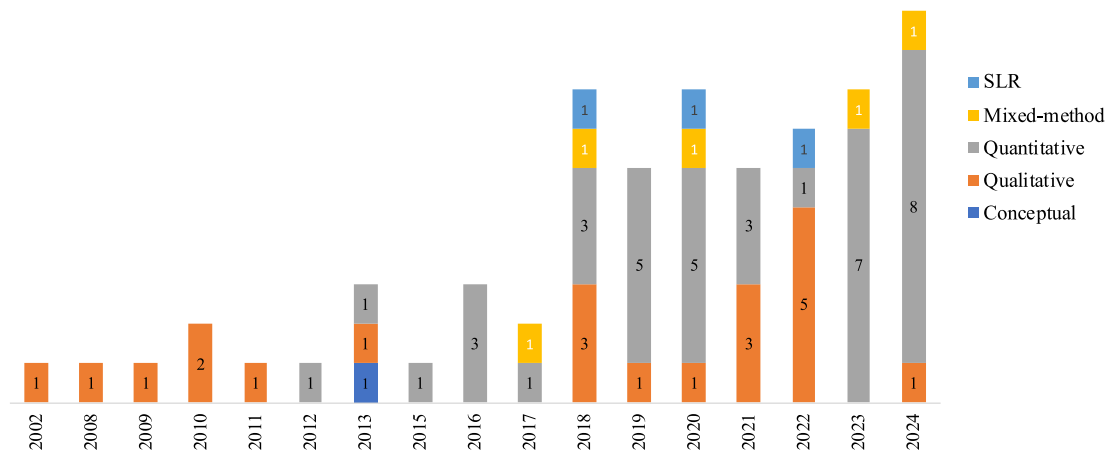


FIGURE 3 | Research methodologies by year.

in AC practices—the desire to protect the environment versus personal preferences—reflecting the interconnection of both drivers (Black and Cherrier 2010). Moreover, anti-consumption behaviors do not always stem from sustainable consumption intentions (Shaban and El-Bassiouny 2017). Indeed, pro-environmentally motivated anti-consumption often implies a trade-off, and not all consumers are willing to make sacrifices, especially average consumers who do not have strong personal or prosocial motivations (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019).

To navigate this dilemma, some adopt environmentally friendly strategies, such as appreciative materialism—possessing fewer items for longer periods (Kramarczyk and Oliver 2022), purchasing more sustainable options (Vesterinen and Syrjälä 2022), or preferring to rent products rather than buying new ones (Malhotra and Fatehpuria 2024). In fact, environmental awareness regarding the negative impact of (over)consumption can drive consumers to make more sustainable purchases, particularly in the food industry (Fernandes and Saraiva 2022), by choosing organic or local products (Martin-Woodhead 2022) or by motivating anti-consumption of meat and animal by-products (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019; Malek et al. 2019; Tosun and Yanar Gürce 2018). Thereby, in some cases, environmental concerns may prompt consumers to restrict the consumption of specific products perceived to have a catastrophic environmental impact or to choose products/brands considered more environmentally friendly (Kropfeld et al. 2018; Shaban and El-Bassiouny 2017). This trend is also evident in the fashion industry, where consumers opt for sustainable purchases as an alternative when refusing consumption is not feasible (Bardey et al. 2022; Campos et al. 2023; Vesterinen and Syrjälä 2022). In the retail sector, environmental consciousness increases the likelihood of consumers opting for rented products, although this effect may be mitigated by consumer skepticism (Malhotra and Fatehpuria 2024). Similarly, in the context of rental services for household durables, minimalism enhances millennials' willingness to use these services, particularly under the influence of self-conscious feelings, such as consumer guilt and consumer pride (Mishra et al. 2024).

These alternative forms of consumption are also part of a broader perspective of AC, especially environmentally oriented anti-consumption (EOA) going beyond rejecting or reducing

practices (García-de-Frutos et al. 2018). Interestingly, two interviewees highlighted “eco-anxiety” (I3) or “climate anxiety” (I6) as a “specific psychological dimension” (I6) that can act as an internal driver of AC behaviors. This anxiety stems from the “fear that the end of the world will come” (I6), reflecting consumer’s “environmental concerns” (I3), particularly now, in light of events like the “United States withdrawal from the Paris Agreement” (I3). However, as noted, this anxiety “goes beyond [personal] values” (I6). Although such behaviors represent only one aspect of responsible consumption (Jain et al. 2023), they can lead consumers to progressively adopt other sustainable practices, transitioning towards anti-consumption and VS lifestyles (Fernandes and Saraiva 2022). Furthermore, mindfulness can enhance these sustainable consumption behaviors, namely, VS, by fostering a consumer’s sense of spiritual well-being—encompassing personal, communal and environmental dimensions (Daniel et al. 2024).

Additionally, prior lifestyle choices, such as veganism, which is based on meat avoidance, can serve as catalysts for anti-consumption behaviors (Fernandes and Saraiva 2022; Martin-Woodhead 2022; Tosun and Yanar Gürce 2018). However, the motivations for avoiding meat differ from those associated with reducing its consumption: the latter is driven by price and personal health concerns, while the former is mostly associated with environmental protection (Malek et al. 2019). VS is thus a gradual process, motivated by both personal and environmental concerns (Demirel 2022), with small daily practices contributing to shifts in consumption behavior (Rebouças and Soares 2021). The key distinctions between mainstream consumers and voluntary simplifiers lie in daily sustainable practices rather than environmental concerns (Rich et al. 2020). Engaging in AC practices for sustainability is an iterative and non-linear journey, requiring effort, commitment, and willingness to experiment and try (Black and Cherrier 2010).

While environmental concern is a key driver of anti-consumption lifestyles, like minimalism or VS, it is not the sole motivator (e.g., Kropfeld et al. 2018). In some studies, environmental concerns are not even the most prevalent motivating factor for adopting VS (Tosun and Sezgin 2021). This is particularly true among “average” consumers, who are less aware of the environmental impact of their consumption choices

**TABLE 4** | Distribution of articles by geographical context.

Countries	No. of articles	References
<i>America</i>	8	
USA	7	Armstrong Soule and Reich (2015); Hwang et al. (2016); Lu and Sinha (2024); Peifer et al. (2020); Reich and Soule (2016); Sekhon and Soule (2020); Yoon et al. (2023)
Brazil	1	Campos et al. (2023)
<i>Europe</i>	18	
Germany	8	Balderjahn and Hüttel (2019); Balderjahn et al. (2020); Hoffmann et al. (2018); Hüttel et al. (2018); Klug and Niemand (2021); Peyser et al. (2017); Seegebarth et al. (2016); Ziesemer et al. (2021)
UK	5	Culiberg et al. (2023); Martin-Woodhead (2022); Oates et al. (2008); Shaw and Moraes (2009); Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher (2018)
Poland	2	Chowdhury (2018); Kramarczyk and Oliver (2022)
France	2	Daniel et al. (2024); Guillard (2018)
Sweden	1	Isenhour (2010)
<i>Asia</i>	11	
India	6	Jain et al. (2023); Jain et al. (2024); Kuanr, Israel, et al. (2020), Kuanr, Pradhan, et al. (2020); Malhotra and Fatehpuria (2024); Mishra et al. (2024)
Turkey	2	Tosun and Sezgin (2021); Tosun and Yanar Gürce (2018)
Pakistan	1	Shafqat et al. (2023)
South Korea	1	Lee (2021)
China	1	Huang and Jiang (2024)
<i>Oceania</i>	2	
Australia	2	Craig-Lees and Hill (2002); Malek et al. (2019)
<i>Africa</i>	2	
Egypt	1	Shaban and El-Bassiouny (2017)
South Africa	1	Petzer et al. (2023)
<i>Other</i>	28	
Multiple Countries	15	Alexander and Ussher (2012); Armstrong Soule and Ortega Egea (2024); Bardey et al. (2022); Black and Cherrier (2010); Chen and Liu (2023); Fernandes and Saraiva (2022); Gong et al. (2023); Hüttel et al. (2020); Joanes (2019); Kropfeld et al. (2018); Lasarov et al. (2019); Lučić and Uzelac (2024); Oral and Thurner (2019); Paschen et al. (2020); Rich et al. (2020)
Not Specified	13	Armstrong Soule and Sekhon (2019); Armstrong Soule and Sekhon (2022); Chatzidakis and Lee (2013); Chen et al. (2024); Cherrier et al. (2011); Demirel (2022); García-de-Frutos et al. (2018); Hutter and Hoffmann (2013); Joy and Jain (2024); Makri et al. (2020); Rebouças and Soares (2021); Vesterinen and Syrjälä (2022); Wu et al. (2013)
Total	69	

(Paschen et al. 2020). The role of environmental concerns on anti-consumption behaviors varies across different consumer types and forms of anti-consumption (Hüttel et al. 2020; Kropfeld et al. 2018). Voluntary simplifiers are often intrinsically motivated to reduce their consumption, driven by the desire to express nonmaterialistic values that promote personal growth, in addition to environmental concerns (Kropfeld et al. 2018). Personal growth often is considered more relevant than environmental issues in driving simplicity (Tosun and

Sezgin 2021). Interviewee I2 stresses personal growth as a key motivation, explaining why people who once consumed excessively reach “a point of saturation” (I2). The accumulation of goods leads to feelings and discomfort and even guilt, having a detrimental psychological impact, ultimately prompting a desire to declutter and adopt AC behaviors. As the interviewee expresses “I have bought so much that I felt ‘dirty’ for having so many things. So, I felt like throwing everything away and keeping only the essentials” (I2). In this sense, AC can be seen

as a reactionary behavior, arising as a way to counterbalance overconsumption, because once “*you reach the maximum, you want to do exactly the opposite*” (I2).

Besides, personal benefits, such as reduced time spent shopping and increased flexibility when relocating due to fewer possessions, also play a significant role (Martin-Woodhead 2022). Particularly, the aspect of “*valuing time as a resource*” is stressed by interviewee I5, who perceives it, based on research experience, as an important driver at the beginning of the voluntary simplifiers journey.

In developing countries, Kuanr, Pradhan, et al. (2020) found that consumers may espouse VS due to personal environmental concerns. This suggests that environmental concerns can be egoistic or egocentric, as individuals may reduce consumption out of self-interest when environmental degradation represents a threat to their health or well-being (Klug and Niemand 2021; Kuanr, Pradhan, et al. 2020). In some instances, a negative attitude towards consumerism is a stronger driver of anti-consumption than environmental concerns (Paschen et al. 2020), driven by “*a certain desire (...) not to be manipulated by market forces,*” as mentioned by interviewee I5.

Consumers’ individualized moral foundations, anticipated guilt and sense of personal responsibility decisively shape their intention to reduce consumption for environmental reasons, particularly in the context of air travel (Culiberg et al. 2023). In line with personal responsibility, perceived consumer effectiveness (Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher 2018) and outcome efficacy (Joanes 2019) also influence consumer engagement in anti-consumption, indicating that individuals are more likely to take action if they believe their actions can effectively address the problem. Personal norms, driven by identification with and care for humanity, a sense of moral obligation and ascribed responsibility, influence consumers’ behavioral intention to reduce consumption (Joanes 2019). Peifer et al. (2020) suggest that other-oriented empathy, i.e., a general feeling of concern for others and a sense of responsibility for how individual behavior affects them, also enhances consumers’ commitment to VS, particularly when combined with an environmental reminder linking consumption to climate change. Additionally, as stressed by interviewee I6, ethical considerations, including concerns with “*social dumping,*” also play a key role in shaping AC behaviors. In the case of fast fashion, “*we will not buy from Shein or Temu, not just for environmental reasons, but for ethical reasons, because of social dumping*” (I6). This ethical driver also applies to food consumption, as adopting a vegan lifestyle is often driven by ethical concerns (I6).

Human values (see Schwartz 1992), such as self-direction and security, are antecedents of consumer consciousness regarding sustainable consumption, contributing to reduced impulsive buying and product possession (Balderjahn and Hüttel 2019). Simplifiers often seek self-determination to control their consumption choices (Rebouças and Soares 2021; Tosun and Sezgin 2021). In addition, self-transcendent human values, which reflect concern for preserving the welfare of people and the planet, are antecedents of VS (Hüttel et al. 2020),

shaping consumers’ motivations to reduce consumption (Paschen et al. 2020). Besides, identity aspects can act as internal drivers of AC behaviors. As emphasized by interviewee I5, there seems “*to be a propensity in some individuals*” (I5) to engage in these behaviors, with “*behavioral*” and “*personality traits*” (I5) potentially playing a key role in driving them.

In sum, consumers strive to balance multiple personal benefits with prosocial goals (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019; Rebouças and Soares 2021; Shaw and Moraes 2009), and focusing solely on environmental motivations might overlook other important internal drivers that can influence consumption decisions.

## 4.2 | The Interplay Between Internal and External Drivers on Anti-Consumption Behaviors

Different internal and external motivations shape consumers’ engagement in anti-consumption behaviors (Makri et al. 2020; Wu et al. 2013), and there is an interplay between them. Besides environmental concerns and personal benefits, socioeconomic factors also play a key role in shaping anti-consumption. First, anti-consumption behaviors, including minimalism and VS, are deeply connected to societal and community values (Demirel 2022; Shaw and Moraes 2009). Second, since consumption choices often serve as a form of social signaling, social norms can motivate the adoption of minimalism due to their normative influence, providing a means for consumers to reflect a desired image or group affiliation (Jain et al. 2024). The pursuit of social status is one motivation behind reduced consumption and can explain consumers’ partial engagement in VS (Rebouças and Soares 2021).

Although social norms are a key enabler of minimalism, Joy and Jain (2024) suggest that it is mainly driven by consumer’s personal attitude, cautious shopping, self-sufficiency and decluttering practices. In line with this, interviewee I5 also mentions “*a certain desire for self-sufficiency*” as a relevant driver of these behaviors. Similarly, Petzer et al. (2023) show that psychological factors, namely, behavioral involvement, are more influential in driving AC practices and motivating consumers to encourage their peers to adopt these behaviors than social norms. Conversely, the interview findings suggest that social norms are relevant, especially in the case of social justice and social dumping. As interviewee I6 explains, the “*idea that we should not exploit countries with weaker social and labour rights for cheaper products*” has become internalized within consumers’ “*value matrix*” driven by social groups advocating for ethical labor practices. This awareness is not “*internal*” but rather a result of external influences—“*it came from the outside in and ends up being embedded in our matrix of values*” (I6), pushing consumers to reconsider their purchasing decisions.

Social comparisons play a significant role in influencing consumers’ preferences for minimalism (Chen et al. 2024). Those engaging in downward social comparisons, comparing themselves with those perceived to be worse off, are more likely to adopt minimalism, driven by affiliation motives, i.e., the desire to connect with others (Chen et al. 2024). Voluntary simplifiers also thrive for this social connection (Rich et al. 2020).

Conversely, engaging in upward social comparisons with those performing better off can trigger a sense of inferiority, leading to consumption for status signaling and reducing the probability of adopting minimalism (Chen et al. 2024). For consumers with a higher need for status signaling, strategies such as adding conspicuous signals to make anti-consumption actions visible to others can be effective (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2022). These strategies facilitate self-expression, allowing consumers to define their identity in contrast to more careless consumers (Black and Cherrier 2010; Cherrier et al. 2011). Engaging in AC behaviors allows consumers to express their real or desired self-images, making self-expression a key driver for AC behaviors in the context of sustainable living (Black and Cherrier 2010).

Conversely, financial constraints, such as saving money or avoiding waste, can also motivate consumers to refrain from buying certain items to avoid financial burdens (Hüttel et al. 2018). In this context, the economic dimension of sustainability is the primary driver for these behaviors, rather than environmental concerns (Hüttel et al. 2018). Moreover, regulatory measures that impose financial sanctions, such as waste disposal fees, can influence consumer behavior, connecting anti-consumerism to a “financial issue” that can impact even “families with high economic and social status” (I4).

Social groups also influence consumers’ use of information sources during the decision-making process, particularly when purchasing sustainable technological products (Oates et al. 2008). While beginner voluntary simplifiers rely on in-store salespeople, more experienced voluntary simplifiers tend to be more independent, relying on green publications and pressure groups (Oates et al. 2008). In the context of minimalism, social media usage (SMU) presents a paradox by making consumers more vulnerable to experiencing the fear of missing out (FoMO) (Lu and Sinha 2024). While SMU can promote impulsive consumption and decrease engagement in minimalism, it can also be strategically used to promote minimalism through targeted campaigns, such as closet decluttering, which leverage FoMO appeals on the benefits of minimalism and encourage more sustainable practices (Lu and Sinha 2024).

Additionally, social media and online communities also have an impact on voluntary simplifiers (Wu et al. 2013), especially beginners (Demirel 2022; Rebouças and Soares 2021), underscoring the importance of social relationships when adopting this lifestyle. Beginner voluntary simplifiers tend to follow profiles that promote sustainable practices, with TED talks and social media posts serving as key drivers in their journey (Rebouças and Soares 2021). Participating in online communities also provides social support and facilitates the sharing of experiences, enabling collective sense-making (Demirel 2022; Rebouças and Soares 2021). As members support each other in these groups, a sense of social connectedness is fostered (Shafiqat et al. 2023), reinforcing the idea that “there is someone else on the other side who [also] wants to consume less” (I1). Additionally, the role of communities is also relevant in helping consumers who want to adopt a more “living off the grid” lifestyle, as mentioned by interviewee I5.

Both interviewees 1 and 6 share the view that social media plays a key role in raising awareness about environmental and

social issues by exposing people to documentaries, activist campaigns and art that challenge current consumption patterns. Interviewee I1 emphasizes that social media has a “positive influence,” fostering “a more sustainable consumption style by engaging people and enabling the discovery of new products and trends,” reinforcing “anti-consumption more than they contribute to accelerating consumerism” (I1). Interviewee I6 mentions Chris Jordan’s impactful photographs of mass consumption waste, such as the photograph of thousands of discarded mobile phones (Jordan 2005).

Besides social media, there are other external factors, particularly “public policies” and “political regulations” (I6), along with “normative” power (I4) that play a key role in making people “aware of a reality they did not previously know” (I6). As expressed by interviewee I6, this awareness can trigger cognitive dissonance, creating a conflict between “our current consumption reality and what our consumption should be, given the Planet’s possibilities” (I6). This conflict arises when external factors, including “public policies, regulations, regulatory incentives” (I6), documentaries or social media, challenge consumers’ internal values by exposing them to new information and knowledge that contradicts their current consumption habits, ultimately encouraging AC behaviors. Thus, cognitive dissonance can bridge the gap between internal and external drivers, acting as a “regulator” (I6). In the case of meat consumption, consumers often “only know the harm of livestock exploration because someone informed [them] about it, not because [they] had prior knowledge. So, that would be an external factor, which ends up generating this cognitive dissonance” (I6), making consumer rethink their consumption habits and stop eating meat “because there was a wake-up call” (I6). In line with this, interviewee I3 also refers to the role of policies and legislation, specifically “European Union directives (...) associated with the European Green Deal” that can enhance consumers’ “knowledge on these subjects” and “eventually encourages anti-consumption” (I3). Similarly, interviewee I4 also refers to EU regulations related to the application of the SDGs, “in which, in 2030, all inhabitants will pay for the amount of waste they produce” (I4).

In the context of advertising, consumers’ socioeconomic status is linked to minimalism, with lower socioeconomic consumers evaluating minimalist brands less favorably (Chen and Liu 2023). This segment tends to value quantity over quality and may be attracted to minimalistic brands if these brands emphasize the link between minimalism and increased product-usage frequency, a strategy not widely adopted (Chen and Liu 2023). Conversely, consumers with higher socioeconomic status are more inclined to favor minimalist brands (Chen and Liu 2023). This suggests that only consumers with high levels of income, not worried about making ends meet, can voluntarily engage in consumption restrictions (Peyer et al. 2017). Among younger generations (who may still rely on parental income) and those without disposable income, financial motivations, including internal drivers related to saving/avoiding wasting money, are crucial to driving anti-consumption behavior (Ziesemer et al. 2021), offering a sense of financial control (Martin-Woodhead 2022). External financial factors, like the high price of meat, can also drive anti-consumption behaviors (Tosun and Yanar Gürce 2018).

Regarding socioeconomic factors, the interview findings are not consensual. Some interviewees suggest that this factor is “*very relevant (...) because whether we like it or not, environmentally friendly products still are more expensive*” (I3). Hence, “*sustainability is the new luxury*” (I2). Besides, socioeconomic status also seems to be a predictor of environmental concerns—one interviewee explains that “*a person with lower income also does not have much environmental concern, they are concerned with other types of needs*” (I3). As further elaborated, when individuals “*have to distribute [their] disposable income, they will not be thinking about whether they are polluting the environment or not*” (I3). Indeed, “*for normal people, they have other concerns and this is not part of their day-to-day mentality as they have more important things to think about*” (I2), emphasizing that “*lower-income individuals naturally will not have that [social and environmental] concern, nor will they want to*” (I3), as those with lower income and education levels tend to have little interest in discussing these issues (I1). Although recognizing this, some interviewees strongly believe that the socioeconomic variable “*is not necessarily a predictor*” (I1), as people with fewer economic resources can still engage in these behaviors “*with the intention of consuming less*” (I5). Besides, “*people with high financial resources are not always sensitive to recycled products*” (I4). However, it should be stressed that when we talk about these behaviors, including VS, “*it is a deliberate choice, it is not because of economic restrictions*” (I5). As such, interviewee I2 strongly believes that in countries with lower minimum wages, like Portugal, it becomes too difficult to adopt AC behaviors. In such cases, saving money can be a driver of these behaviors, arising as an alternative to managing living expenses.

Other external factors, such as socio-cultural and environmental influences, also impact anti-consumption. First, consumers’ geographical location seems to be important for VS, as living in rural areas provides a peaceful environment conducive to particular consumption choices (Shaw and Moraes 2009). Moving to rural areas can thus help mitigate the tensions that arise when consumers alter their consumption behaviors (Shaw and Moraes 2009). Additionally, exposure to social crowding, a type of environmental cue, can drive minimalist consumption as a coping strategy for managing crowded and chaotic shopping environments (Gong et al. 2023). In this context, and particularly when there are no familiar members in the crowd, the psychological need for order motivates consumers to reduce the number of possessions (Gong et al. 2023).

Second, religiosity is connected to VS (Chowdhury 2018). Religious beliefs can significantly influence meat anti-consumption, as certain religions prohibit the consumption of specific types of meat (Tosun and Yanar Gürce 2018). For example, a study of predominantly Christian consumers found that intrinsic religiosity, reflecting interiorized core values of religion, serves as an antecedent for VS, enhancing a sense of personal, communal, and environmental well-being and leading to greater environmental concerns (Chowdhury 2018). Spirituality is also associated with the adoption of VS (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002; Rebouças and Soares 2021).

Thirdly, cultural values, namely collectivism–individualism, also have an impact on AC behaviors (Kuanr, Israel et al. 2020). While collectivism has a positive impact on AC, individualism

indirectly influences AC behaviors when mediated by self-efficacy, i.e., individual’s self-belief in their own skills and capabilities (Kuanr, Israel et al. 2020). Moreover, cultural differences were said to influence sustainability-related AC behaviors, including product lifespan expansion (PLE) that pertains to consumers’ willingness to keep an item for a longer period (Armstrong Soule and Ortega Egea 2024). Interestingly, while Americans are mainly driven by self-transcendent motives, such as environmental concerns and simplicity, Spaniards are influenced by a mix of self-transcendent and self-enhancement motives, including financial considerations and lack of need for new products, to engage in PLE (Armstrong Soule and Ortega Egea 2024).

Besides, varying levels of awareness and engagement can be found across different generations. An interviewee teaching sustainability courses, often asks students about the origins of the products they use, and the answer is mostly “*Oh well, I don’t know*” (I3). This might indicate that while younger generations are “*more environmentally conscious*,” their level of concern varies by product type, placing greater importance on what “*works, lasts, is affordable, and has good value for value*” (I3). Conversely, one Marketing Professor has reflected on the fact that the “*younger generations are more individualistic, living apart from social life*” (I1) and are not always “*aware of what is happening*” (I1). Similarly, a Marketing professional, reflecting on recent experiences with young interns, notes a decline in young people’s engagement with environmental issues, particularly as they are “*not sensitive to basic recycling*” (I4), lacking household habits for proper waste disposal.

Other influential factors driving anti-consumption include perceived lack of brand or product quality (Shaban and El-Bassiouny 2017), increased product functionality (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002) and the perceived environmental impact of regularly purchased items, such as food (Kramarczyk and Oliver 2022). Peifer et al. (2020) found that establishing a connection between products and their environmental outcomes may lead to VS. However, this can be challenging in certain daily products, such as clothing, while being more apparent in product categories where environmental consequences are more obvious, like cars (Peifer et al. 2020). This view is shared by one of the interviewees, who believes that “*depending on the type of product, the level of concern decreases*,” citing cosmetics as an example (I3). Nevertheless, according to the literature, consumers are increasingly becoming environmentally conscious regarding everyday product categories (Kramarczyk and Oliver 2022), particularly in sectors such as food and fashion—the two most analyzed sectors in the reviewed articles.

### **4.3 | The Role of (de)Marketing Strategies in Shaping Consumers’ Perceptions Towards Anti-Consumption Consumption Behaviors**

Consumer efforts to break free from traditional consumption patterns have led certain brands to explore the role of (de)marketing strategies in driving this behavioral shift (Armstrong Soule and Reich 2015). These brands seek to reflect their environmental concerns and acknowledge the potential of marketing strategies in addressing the ecological damage caused

by consumerism (Chen and Liu 2023; Hwang et al. 2016). As a novel sustainable business strategy, green demarketing aims to reduce/suppress demand at the category level through sustainability appeals, thus influencing consumers to adopt environmentally oriented anti-consumption behaviors (Armstrong Soule and Reich 2015; Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2022).

However, for green demarketing to be effective, consumers must perceive a strong alignment between a brand's environmental reputation and its sustainable practices (Armstrong Soule and Reich 2015). Besides environmental reputation, consumers' perceptions of a brand's genuine environmental concern also significantly shape their attitudes (Reich and Soule 2016). The interview findings stress that AC practices must be genuinely integrated into the brand to be effective (I2). Interviewee I2 explains that, indeed, Patagonia is a prime example, as their AC campaigns are not just a strategy but rather part of their core values, with in-store messaging focused on "*durability and repairability*" (I2).

The literature examines the use of minimalistic or anti-consumption appeals in advertisements or campaigns (e.g., Chen and Liu 2023; Hwang et al. 2016), as well as consumer responses to such unconventional marketing communications, which encourage buying less as a means to protect the environment (Armstrong Soule and Reich 2015; Lee 2021; Reich and Soule 2016), and ultimately help consumers signal a more desirable self-image to their peers (Huang and Jiang 2024). By incorporating a conspicuous AC cue, such as visible branding or messaging that conveys environmental concerns, rather than financial constraints, as the motivation for reducing consumption, brands can help consumers signal a higher socioeconomic status (Sekhon and Soule 2020). Without such a cue, AC behaviors are often perceived to be a sign of lower socioeconomic status, and so adding a conspicuous message can make AC more appealing to "average" consumers, mitigating the stigma and reframing it as socially desirable behavior (Sekhon and Soule 2020). This conspicuous aspect of AC is interesting, as Interviewee I5 notes, because although "*closely associated with materialism*," some consumers "*are conspicuous in their desire not to consume*" (I5). As such, some consumers engage in AC, deciding to deliberately showcase their minimalistic or sustainable choices through visible cues. For example, they may wear items with messages like "*I am a sustainable bag*" (I5) to socially signal their commitment to AC and their membership in the "*save the planet*" group (I2). According to interviewee I2, this behavior reflects a "new" consumer segment, the "*conspicuous sustainable consumer*" (I2), who buys sustainable products, like electric cars or Patagonia jackets, to "show off" their good intentions. However, the primary motivation behind these purchases is oftentimes driven by a desire to save money (I2).

While it might seem contradictory to traditional marketing's focus on driving consumption, some brands are adopting strategies that support environmental sustainability by encouraging consumers to reduce consumption or even suppress demand through "buy less" or "don't buy" campaigns (Armstrong Soule and Reich 2015; Chen and Liu 2023). These strategies challenge the misconception that demarketing means avoiding marketing altogether. Instead, the objective is to promote "*a more balanced*

*form of consumption*" (I4), where consumers aim to "*consume better*" (I4). Hwang et al. (2016) analyze consumer attitudes and purchase intentions by comparing a traditional advertisement with Patagonia's unconventional "Don't Buy This Jacket" ad, demonstrating that exposure to the anti-consumption ad leads to lower purchase intentions. However, Patagonia's strong environmental reputation may have positively impacted consumer trust in this campaign (Hwang et al. 2016). These studies are also in line with Lučić and Uzelac (2024), who indicate that most marketing campaigns promoting anti-consumption originate from the fashion industry. Nevertheless, in this context, interviewee I3 raised an important concern about a potential rebound effect: depending on the strength of the message and the credibility of the brand behind it, telling consumers not to buy something, might motivate them to do the opposite.

Some studies explore consumer responses to green advertising ("buy green" or "buy more sustainable" products) and green demarketing appeals ("buy less"), two strategies demonstrating a brand's commitment to sustainability (Huang and Jiang 2024; Reich and Soule 2016; Yoon et al. 2023). Reich and Soule (2016) find that consumers, including those not specifically identified as being green, perceive more genuine environmental concerns and develop more favorable attitudes toward brands using green appeals, particularly in product advertising. Conversely, in institutional advertising, green demarketing appeals are received slightly more positively, especially when accompanied by an anti-consumption message that reminds consumers of the environmental damage caused by overconsumption (Reich and Soule 2016). Adding conspicuous AC messages or cues is an effective green demarketing strategy that encourages consumers to reduce their consumption for environmental reasons, while also positively impacting the brand, by fostering positive brand attitudes or willingness to pay (Huang and Jiang 2024; Sekhon and Soule 2020).

To address some challenges that marketing strategies may face in effectively encouraging consumers to reduce consumption, minimalistic brands might need to highlight the quantity-quality trade-off, associating minimalism with increased product-usage frequency to attract a broader consumer base, especially those with lower socioeconomic status (Chen and Liu 2023). Through this distinctive approach, brands indirectly advocate sustainability concerns even without directly advocating them (Chen and Liu 2023). For environmentally oriented consumers, brands should focus on product quality and its sustainable attributes (Hwang et al. 2016; Rebouças and Soares 2021). This aligns with interview findings that suggest that brands should stress "*exclusivity, good materials, sustainability, durability, repairability [...] and craftsmanship*" (I2) to appeal to (anti-)consumers.

When engaging in demarketing practices across multiple channels (e.g., a brand's homepage and paid media ads), companies must ensure congruency in their marketing messages (Yoon et al. 2023). This is especially important when the paid advertisement is viewed in a news browsing context, where higher cognitive effort is required compared to a shopping context (Yoon et al. 2023). Hence, placing promotional ads on shopping websites may help mitigate negative consumer reactions (Yoon et al. 2023).

Besides advertising, marketing claims on food packaging also influence consumer motivations toward sustainable anti-consumption (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019). For instance, vegan brands that promote meat anti-consumption often emphasize taste and health appeals to target “middle of the roads” consumers, who may not have strong personal or pro-social motivations (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019). This approach positions their products as efficient and less costly in terms of behavioral change by appealing to personal motives while downplaying their prosocial nature (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019; Tosun and Yanar Gürce 2018). Interviewee I4 recalls a very effective (de)marketing initiative in the hotel sector that raises awareness about food waste and promotes the consumption of imperfect products. In this hotel group, guests are welcomed with a basket of imperfect fruit, accompanied by an explanation that “30% of all fruit produced in Portugal goes to waste,” being discarded for not meeting the aesthetic standards. Instead of being discarded, the hotel partners with national cooperatives and repurposes the fruit for breakfasts, fruit salads and guest offerings. This not only reduces waste but also educates consumers on sustainable consumption, emphasizing the role of businesses “in applying SDGs (...) and informing consumers” (I4), ultimately influencing their behavior.

In sum, marketing communication strategies can effectively promote anti-consumption and should be adopted worldwide across various industries, including both for-profit and non-profit organizations (Lučić and Uzelac 2024). By doing so, companies can meet the growing demand from today's consumers, who are increasingly seeking to embrace anti-consumption lifestyles (Lučić and Uzelac 2024). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that demarketing strategies pose additional challenges to business models. As stressed by interviewee I2, based on their experience in the luxury sector, although their brand promoted an AC message, emphasizing “consuming less and with higher quality” and offering repair services, the economic reality of running a business may force companies to adopt strategies that undermine their original AC message (I2). In fact, it is difficult “for a company to thrive on AC alone” because the business model thrives on selling more. Besides, “it costs so much to find a client, and once you find one, you want to maximize that relationship” (I2). This paradox is especially evident in fashion brands that initially started with a message of durability and high-quality, but later reduced product quality to ensure more frequent purchases. From the consumer side, even those who initially align with [AC] values find themselves “caught in a cycle of consumption” as “consuming is addictive” (I2).

#### 4.4 | Barriers to the Adoption of Anti-Consumption Behaviors

When adopting anti-consumption behaviors, consumers encounter several challenges, as lifestyle decisions are shaped by socio-cultural and economic contexts (Alexander and Ussher 2012). Voluntary simplifiers face barriers such as limited time, mistrust, consumption temptations, personal relationships, convenience, complexity, and social influence (Rebouças and Soares 2021). Social status and the influence of friends and family play a key role, and in some cases,

consumers may hesitate to embrace anti-consumption due to potential rejection of their social environment (Alexander and Ussher 2012; Rebouças and Soares 2021). Additionally, consumers' lack of awareness about the negative impact of their behaviors can hinder the adoption of AC practices, including at the final stage of consumption (Guillard 2018; Lasarov et al. 2019). However, if consumers possess some environmental concerns, this barrier can be overcome by developing an AC consciousness that corresponds to consumers' knowledge about the wastage they generate by accumulating possessions, without requiring them to adopt a specific AC lifestyle, but rather to practice daily environmental practices (Guillard 2018). When consumers have a strong environmental knowledge and perceive these problems as serious, they are less likely to engage in counter-arguing, that is, to develop arguments to avoid reducing their consumption (Lasarov et al. 2019).

Complexity, particularly in the form of decision fatigue, arises from the overwhelming number of options available, especially in industries such as fashion (Bardey et al. 2022). The obstacle of convenience, also validated in the interviews (I3, I6), explains why voluntary simplifiers may continue to shop at supermarkets, despite this practice conflicting with their values (Shaw and Moraes 2009), and why consumers may rely on salespeople to make sustainable decisions, even when they acknowledge a lack information regarding green certification (Oates et al. 2008). Additionally, interview findings highlight the “issue of product availability” (I6) as a barrier, as sometimes consumers do not engage in AC behaviors because “no other solutions” or “alternatives” are available and so they must use “what is available on the market” (I6). Another interviewee (I3) also highlighted that limited product availability in supermarkets can lead consumers to make decisions that go against their initial (sustainable) intentions. As a result, real behavior can differ from consumers' intentions due to these external barriers.

Mistrust reflects consumers' skepticism about the authenticity of promoted sustainable practices (Rebouças and Soares 2021). This skepticism is often linked to greenwashing, where companies falsely claim higher levels of environmental sustainability than they actually achieve. This might arise as a barrier to the effectiveness of demarketing strategies, as “consumers are sceptical about this [type of] advertising strategies that some brands use” (I1). Moreover, despite governmental pressure “to apply SDGs, many companies do not respect this, unless they have very attractive co-financing projects” (I4). On another note, consumer skepticism can also derive from social media influencers that “promote things that turn out to be false” (I4), which then “serve as a justification [for consumers] to not changing behaviours, delaying behavioural shifts” (I4).

The issue of price as a barrier is debated in the literature and is not consensual. While some simplifiers find it to be an obstacle, particularly when purchasing organic food or solar panels, others express a willingness to pay for sustainable alternatives (Shaw and Moraes 2009) and high-quality brands/products (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002). Socioeconomic conditions may explain this disparity, as employment opportunities influence the ability to adopt a simpler lifestyle (Alexander and Ussher 2012).

In such cases, purchasing from “*flea markets*” (I2) or second-hand markets can offer a way to overcome the price barrier. Interviewee I4 also reflects on how price is often “a prejudice,” as “*political and social leaders*” tend to manipulate the public discourse to associate “*sustainable products with higher prices.*” However, this is a “*false issue,*” that is convenient for many, often serving as an “*excuse*” for consumers to justify “*not changing consumption habits*” (I4). Moreover, price can play a psychological role in shaping consumer perceptions of environmental sustainability. Even when guided by AC values, consumers tend to associate “*exorbitantly priced products*” with “*high quality,*” often disregarding its true quality or whether it was ethically produced (I2). Pricing strategies can thus distort value perception, reinforcing the commonly held belief that environmental sustainability is expensive.

The lack of reliable information is often cited as a barrier for voluntary simplifiers (Alexander and Ussher 2012; Rebouças and Soares 2021), emphasizing the need for more information on product labels (Alexander and Ussher 2012). Nevertheless, insufficient information alone is not the main obstacle when adopting a more sustainable lifestyle, because “*when we are very interested in a product (...) we look for information*” (I1), especially if we are talking about socially and environmentally concerned consumers. Interviewee I2 shared an example of a fashion company that, despite not advertising repair services, receives requests from customers asking for repairs. This demonstrates that when consumers are genuinely interested, they will actively seek information and solutions. This barrier is also currently being addressed by the implementation of product traceability in different sectors, as stressed by interviewee I1, which increases transparency and so “*if consumers are really interested, [they] will be able to understand where the product comes from and have some knowledge of [their] ecological footprint.*”

As such, social factors can play a more important role here, ultimately requiring significant changes in public policies and political structures to change the mainstream consumerist culture (Isenhour 2010). This view is also shared by interviewee I1, who stresses that “*convictions and beliefs*” (I1) can be a much more significant barrier than the lack of information. Particularly, social barriers, including the stigma associating AC with poverty or lack of taste, as well as the need for social acceptance, prove to be more significant barriers than awareness or knowledge (Isenhour 2010). In line with this, interviewees I4 and I6 also emphasize the importance of “*political and regulatory*” (I6) factors put in place by “*government entities*” (I4), noting that the focus on recycling today exists largely due to policies implemented years ago. In Portugal, for instance, strong recycling campaigns in schools have been playing a key role in raising awareness about waste separation (I4). Hence, government entities play a major role in “*sensitizing*” (I4) citizens. Also, interviewee I3 mentions the important role of “*legislation*” to ensure that the consumer is “*aware*” of environmental claims made by companies. For instance, a recent “*European Union directive*” (I3), the Green Claims directive, aims to address greenwashing and consumer skepticism, by ensuring that companies have evidence to support their green claims. As noted, this increased knowledge stems from greater transparency, imposed by legislation, “*which eventually encourages AC behaviour by discrediting of certain brands*” that do not align with consumers’ concerns (I3).

Finally, structural barriers, including the absence of safe bike lanes or efficient public transportation, can also hinder some anti-consumption behaviors, particularly the choice to stop using a car (Alexander and Ussher 2012). These barriers may arise at various stages of the buying decision process and extend to product disposal (Rebouças and Soares 2021).

#### 4.5 | Environmental Sustainability as a By-Product and Other Outcomes of Anti-Consumption Behaviors

Anti-consumption behaviors can have different outcomes. Minimalism, for instance, has been shown to positively impact on consumers’ well-being (Hüttel et al. 2020; Jain et al. 2024), reducing stress and enhancing life satisfaction (Bardey et al. 2022). Consumers are willing to engage in sustainable anti-consumption practices and lifestyles, including VS, provided that these behaviors do not compromise their personal well-being (Balderjahn et al. 2020). While Oral and Thurner (2019) demonstrate that AC enhances consumer well-being, particularly from the perspective of low material desire and intrinsic happiness, other studies show that reducing or rejecting consumption for sustainability reasons does not negatively affect consumers’ well-being; instead, these behaviors are often associated with beneficial outcomes, including enhanced self-esteem, self-determination, autonomy and financial stability (Balderjahn et al. 2020). Hence, living with less has been linked to increased well-being (Rich et al. 2020) and consumer satisfaction (Jain et al. 2023; Shafqat et al. 2023), ultimately contributing to a happier life (Alexander and Ussher 2012). The interview findings reveal that the well-being outcome is crucial, especially when associated with personal fulfilment (I1), or when it enables the consumer to experience a “*coherence between [their personal] values*” (I6) and consumption choices. Conversely, impulsive buying can also enhance well-being, as reported by a sample of students (Seegebarth et al. 2016).

The intention to reduce consumption for environmental reasons can also lead to outcomes such as environmental activism (Campos et al. 2023) and positive word-of-mouth, wherein consumers encourage their peers to reduce consumption (Culiberg et al. 2023). This is also a way to make anti-consumption practices visible to others, taking a conspicuous approach, especially relevant when consumers are less intrinsically motivated (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2022; Culiberg et al. 2023). Conversely, the interview findings suggest a different perspective, especially in the case of anti-consumers who purchase expensive and high-quality products (I2). As the interviewee explains, unlike conspicuous luxury consumers, who buy to signal their social status, anti-consumers experience conflicting feelings. Although the products are durable and sustainable, their high price contradicts their AC values, thus making consumers perceive these purchases as a “*sin,*” causing them to remain “*very quiet*” (I2). As a result, there is an absence of WOM, as these consumers are unlikely to openly discuss or display their purchases. Also, these consumers may not make brand recommendations to maintain exclusivity, further limiting WOM and making it more difficult for brands to attract new customers.

Another outcome of anti-consumption behaviors is their potential influence on corporate behavior (Hoffmann et al. 2018). This impact is often achieved through collective consumer activism, like boycotting or buycotting (Chatzidakis and Lee 2013; Hoffmann et al. 2018; Hutter and Hoffmann 2013). Interestingly, this view is shared by interviewee I6, who connects ethical concerns related to social dumping with both boycotting and buycotting outcomes. Boycotting serves to punish irresponsible companies that harm the environment or violate human rights (Hoffmann et al. 2018; Seegebarth et al. 2016), while buycotting rewards companies perceived as responsible and sustainable (Hoffmann et al. 2018). Buycotts serve as a positive influence on corporate behavior, utilizing purchase power to encourage pro-environmental actions (Hutter and Hoffmann 2013). This contrasts with more adversarial forms of anti-consumption, yet positively impacting society, as it forces companies to adopt more socially and environmentally responsible practices (Hutter and Hoffmann 2013). While social and environmental concerns drive boycott and boycott actions, hedonic consumers engage in buycotting as it allows them to balance personal and societal interests, thereby providing additional incentives for shopping, a pleasurable activity (Hoffmann et al. 2018). As an example, voluntary simplifiers often participate in buycotting fair trade products (Shaw and Moraes 2009). Boycotts, on the other hand, involve the deliberate avoidance of certain products or companies (Hoffmann et al. 2018; Seegebarth et al. 2016). These prosocial behaviors can influence how corporations respond to consumer demands and concerns (Hoffmann et al. 2018). In countries like Portugal, where “*there is no activist culture*” (I1) that promotes boycott or boycott, there is instead a practice of “*discouragement*” as one interviewee stressed, usually carried out “*in groups or communities*” (I1).

Although most studies focus on the drivers of anti-consumption behavior, some studies interestingly note that these behaviors can result in sustainable outcomes, even when sustainability is not the primary intent (Martin-Woodhead 2022). Even though consumers may not be primarily motivated by broader sustainable/environmental concerns, they often perceive these outcomes as positive consequences or by-products of their minimalistic lifestyle (Martin-Woodhead 2022). Evidence suggests that individuals who lead simpler lives primarily adopt these lifestyles for personal benefits (such as having more time, freedom, and healthier and happier lives), which, in turn, positively impacts society and the environment (Alexander and Ussher 2012; Wu et al. 2013). For instance, VS leads to a lower ecological impact, regardless of consumers’ level of environmental concern (Kropfeld et al. 2018). Similarly, a minimalistic lifestyle positively impacts the environment by helping to preserve resources, reduce waste and lower carbon emissions (Jain et al. 2024). Even if consumers do not reduce their overall consumption, opting for more eco-friendly alternative expressions of materialism can still have a positive environmental impact (Kramarczyk and Oliver 2022; Kropfeld et al. 2018). This helps to bridge the dualism between materialism and anti-consumption idealism, as consumers, instead of resisting consumption altogether, create change from within the market by embracing a mindset that encourages rethinking (Kramarczyk and Oliver 2022). This view is shared by one interviewee, who refers that “*sustainable practices*” (I1) have been carried out for years in various industries, though they are not always labelled as sustainable. As such, the

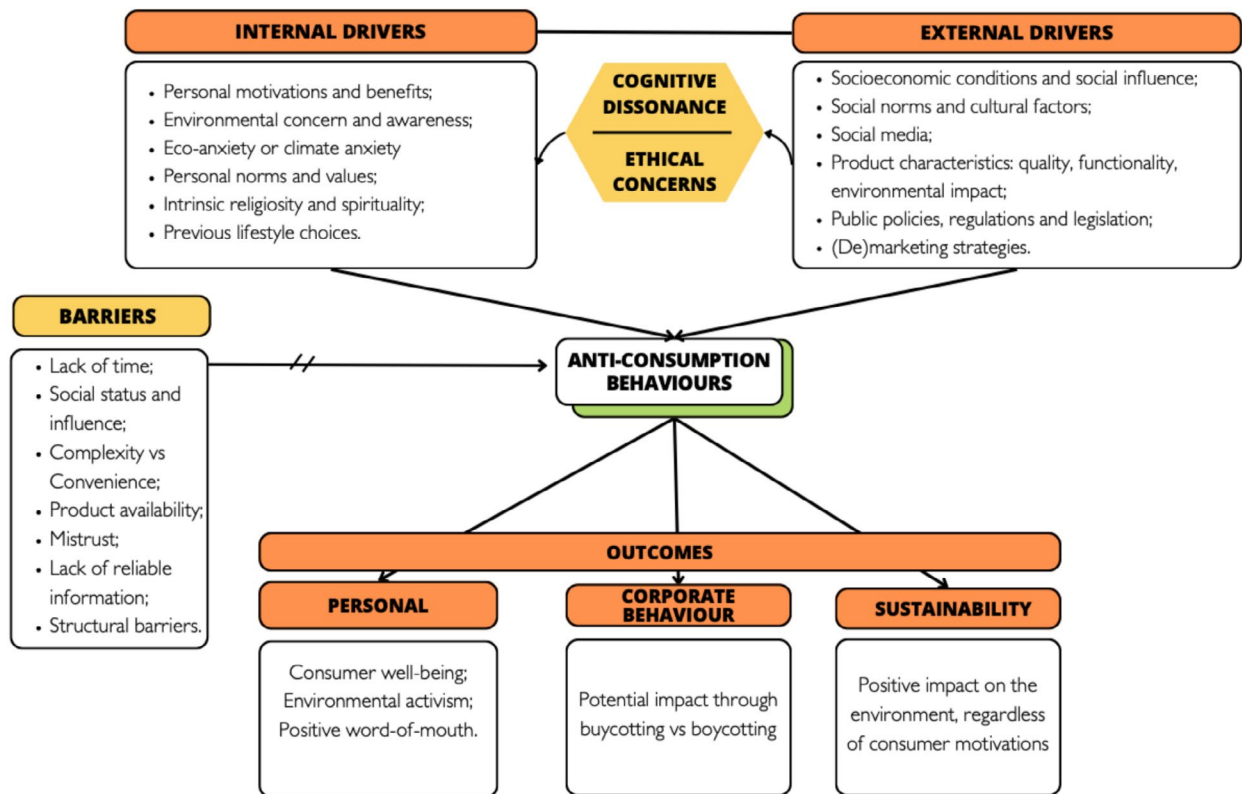
“trick [might be] to sell the practice as normal and when the consumer realizes it, they are engaging in relevant sustainable behaviour” (I1).

Regardless of the different motivations driving minimalistic lifestyles, one of the possible outcomes might be the enhancement of conscious and sustainable consumption (Bardey et al. 2022). For example, an experiment involving female consumers participating in the capsule wardrobe phenomenon (a minimalist fashion movement that limits the number of clothing items) revealed that participants prior to the experiment had no particular sustainability concerns (Bardey et al. 2022). However, following the experiment, they exhibited a broader sustainability awareness of the negative impacts of fashion consumerism, leading them to take care of their clothes, buy less, and purchase higher-quality items that last longer (Bardey et al. 2022). Similarly, interviews with self-defined voluntary simplifiers reveal that some do not mention sustainability in their discourses, even though their behaviors are inherently sustainable (Rich et al. 2020). This suggests that sustainability can indeed be a by-product of consumers’ anti-consumption behaviors.

## 5 | Conclusion

This article aims to uncover the intricate relationship between sustainability and anti-consumption behaviors, including minimalism and VS. The analysis has provided valuable insights into the nuanced dynamics that shape consumer behavior, focusing on the role of various drivers, the barriers consumers face, and the diverse outcomes associated with reducing or restraining consumption. Figure 4 synthesizes this review’s main findings, organized around four building blocks: external and internal drivers, barriers, and outcomes.

Understanding the tension between self-interest and societal concerns is crucial to grasping the dynamics behind anti-consumption behaviors. Consumer behavior related to reducing or restraining consumption is not solely driven by environmental sustainability concerns; rather it is influenced by a complex interplay between personal benefits/motivations and macro-oriented concerns, which may coexist and overlap (Black and Cherrier 2010; García-de-Frutos et al. 2018). Clearly, the reasons against anti-consumption are not simply the inverse of the reasons for consumption, with some consumers experiencing a rebound effect when they cannot fully reject consumption due to associated costs. Thereby, anti-consumers do not represent a homogenous segment with uniform shared values and beliefs (Hüttel et al. 2020). It is also unveiled that environmental sustainability-driven anti-consumption does not always result in the avoidance of consumption. Instead, it can lead to more sustainable choices, such as purchasing organic products or engaging in green purchasing practices. Rather than adopting true anti-consumption behaviors, consumers may focus on reducing or replacing specific categories of products, such as meat (Armstrong Soule and Sekhon 2019; Malek et al. 2019). However, these behaviors and previous lifestyle choices can serve as catalysts, progressively guiding consumers toward anti-consumption behaviors. Other internal drivers, such as personal norms, values, or intrinsic religiosity, also play a significant role



**FIGURE 4** | Illustrative findings of this review.

in shaping consumers' decisions to reduce consumption and embrace anti-consumption.

This article also sheds light on the interplay between internal and external drivers, noting that consumers' decisions are often constrained by the contexts in which they live. These structures/contexts can either tether them to consumerist lifestyles (Alexander and Ussher 2012) or enable them to break free from consumerism. Socioeconomic conditions, social pressure and cultural factors are particularly influential. Self-transcendent values, which emphasize the welfare of others and the planet, are important antecedents of anti-consumption behavior and VS, and they play an important role when consumers feel a moral obligation to reduce consumption. Online communities also play a critical role in influencing consumers' behavioral shifts, providing support in navigating the complex decision-making process through the sharing of opinions and experiences, also fostering close social relationships. Additionally, environmental awareness can drive more sustainable purchases. This indicates that anti-consumption is often a gradual process influenced by daily practices and existing values. As such, marketing strategies can encourage anti-consumption by shaping consumers' perceptions towards reducing consumption. While both consumers and marketing play a key role in promoting environmental sustainability and preventing excessive consumption, there is a tendency among consumers to attribute the blame for overconsumption to marketing activities, while downplaying their own responsibility, mainly due to a lack of awareness regarding the negative environmental consequences of their own consumption habits (Heath and Chatzidakis 2011). Thereby, it becomes urgent for marketing communications to enhance the

connection between overconsumption and environmental issues, fostering greater consumer consciousness about personal responsibility.

As consumers engage in anti-consumption behaviors, they encounter numerous challenges, highlighted in Figure 4, due to the complex nature of their decisions. These behaviors can lead to various outcomes, such as enhanced well-being or influencing corporate behavior through participation in buycotts or boycotts. One interesting conclusion is that environmental sustainability can emerge as a by-product of anti-consumption behaviors. In other words, sustainability may be an unintended outcome, as the behavior itself is not always primarily motivated by environmental concerns (Martin-Woodhead 2022). Some consumers may engage in anti-consumption for personal benefits, yet in doing so, they still exert a positive environmental influence by reducing consumption.

There are subtle differences between VS and minimalists, as the former are driven primarily by external factors, such as reducing carbon footprint and avoiding waste, and see consumption reduction as a way to align with values like environmental sustainability, fairness, and social justice. Minimalists, differently, are driven by internal factors, such as personal well-being, mental clarity, and reducing stress that lead to environmental sustainability. However, their main motivations are related to psychological well-being, stress reduction, and desire for simplicity. If VS often reject materialism and consumerism due to environmental concerns, minimalists are not necessarily against consumption but aim to own fewer, higher-quality items. As such, environmental sustainability is differently sought after by both.

As demarketing strategies are usually meant for discouraging consumption, minimalists and VS need to be approached differently. Encouraging eco-friendly products or encouraging community-led anti-consumption movements could be particularly effective for VS, as their environmental values are aligned with their activism and may encourage boycotting. This would not be as effective among minimalists, as they are less likely to be influenced by social pressure. Those two different target segments deserve further research.

This analysis contributes to the ongoing debate on sustainable (anti-)consumption from a consumer behavior perspective, offering both theoretical and managerial insights. However, this study has several limitations. It is possible to recognize that including Psychology as a subject area could have yielded some results dealing with how individuals behave.

## 6 | Future Research Agenda

Both the SLR and the interviews with experts have identified several avenues for future research. Adopting anti-consumption behaviors driven by environmental concerns requires that consumers embrace a *rethinking* mindset to change conventional consumption patterns. While much of the focus has been on the traditional “3 Rs”—reuse, reduce, and recycle (Armstrong Soule and Reich 2015), additional R-strategies, like refuse, repair, and repurpose, commonly associated with the circular economy, should be analyzed as anti-consumption practices (Zimmermann et al. 2024). As Black and Cherrier (2010) conclude, pursuing a sustainable lifestyle through AC practices involves reusing, rejecting, and reducing. This would allow us to understand how consumers might employ them and how brands can leverage them to influence sustainable anti-consumption. Also, given the disposition activities practiced by voluntary simplifiers to declutter their lives, it would be interesting to explore if possessions are disposed of in a sustainable manner, as suggested by Ballantine and Creery (2010). In this context, it is pertinent to investigate how consumers embrace a *rethinking* mindset when decluttering, which can ultimately promote CE principles, such as the sharing economy.

From the consumer behavior standpoint, it would be of added value to explore, among others, the following research avenues: to investigate the psychological and emotional factors that create tensions between personal and environmental concerns, and also the influence of external events in shaping that tension, including public health crisis, like COVID-19 pandemic, or geopolitical events, such as the “*United States withdrawal from the Paris Agreement*” (I3). In the words of interviewee I1, “*the tension between personal and environmental concerns in motivating anti-consumption behaviours has existed for many years. However, in recent years, due to the pandemic, this tension is becoming more acute and taking on new contours,*” suggesting that consumers are increasingly valuing “*indulgent behaviors,*” which might impede the adoption of AC behaviors. Additionally, the role of “*government entities*” should be further explored, as they can act both as push mechanism to drive AC behaviors or as barriers to these behaviors (I4).

The following streams of research would also be interesting to explore from a consumer behavior point of view: to examine

how personal and social identities influence anti-consumption behavior; to study the impact of emotions like guilt and pride on sustainable consumer behavior; to investigate how upward and downward social comparisons influence consumers' engagement in minimalism and VS; to study the relationship between intrinsic religiosity, spirituality and anti-consumption behaviors; to explore how consumer trust in a brand's environmental reputation influences their response to green demarketing strategies; to investigate how the fear of social rejection or the desire for social acceptance influence the extent of an individual's commitment to anti-consumption; to examine how hedonistic tendencies, such as the pleasure derived from shopping, can coexist with or even enhance anti-consumption behaviors like boycotting. In terms of personal norms and values, future studies could also investigate the importance that consumers who engage in AC behaviors attribute to the “*value of time*” (I5). This value is closely linked to what they prioritize, thus possibly acting as a driver of these behaviors.

Notably, as pointed out by one interviewee, an interesting future research direction would be to explore Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to understand “*the need for consumers to adopt sustainability practices*” (I3). The interviewee questioned whether this need is “*a need for esteem*” or a “*need for self-actualization*” (I3). Further exploring this aspect can help to understand whether anti-consumption behaviors are driven by social recognition or personal fulfilment.

From a branding and marketing perspective, future studies could explore: how brands can position themselves effectively in a market where consumers are increasingly adopting anti-consumption behaviors encouraging responsible consumption; how transparent communication about the environmental impact of products influences consumer trust and loyalty; how minimalist brands can appeal to consumers across different socioeconomic statuses; the effectiveness of adding conspicuous signals to anti-consumption behaviors as a form of status signaling; how minimalist brands can tailor their marketing strategies to resonate with consumers of varying socioeconomic statuses; how companies respond to consumer activism, such as boycotting and boycotting, and how these actions influence corporate sustainability practices. From a corporate behavior perspective, it would be interesting to evaluate the “*training*” of “*young marketing professionals*” to understand how it might change the perception of demarketing strategies, challenging some common prejudices or misconceptions associated with anti-consumption behaviors (I4).

Additionally, as the literature lacks a consensus on the role of environmental concern in driving anti-consumption behaviors, it would be of added value to further examine how innovation and digitization, which ultimately promote the establishment of a CE, can motivate consumers to adopt sustainable consumption behaviors (Nangia et al. 2023).

The phenomenon of anti-consumption from a consumer behavior perspective has primarily been explored within the food and fashion industries. Hence, future studies could examine sustainable anti-consumption practices across diverse product and service industries to identify their unique drivers. As stressed by one interviewee, other industries, particularly the transport

industry, require further examination (I1). Besides, interviewee I5 shared their experience of replacing detergent products with “*soap nuts*,” highlighting the potential for AC trends in personal care and cleaning products.

Given the growing importance of social media, future research could explore how consumers use these platforms, particularly trendy ones like TikTok, to signal their anti-consumption behaviors, thereby increasing their visibility to others (Yoon et al. 2023). Recently, a “No-Buy” trend has emerged on TikTok, where consumers showcase their AC behaviors, sharing their journey to reduce consumption and free themselves from shopping addiction and debt while challenging others to adopt similar practices (Cannon 2025). This phenomenon exemplifies the important role of social media in enhancing AC behaviors and promoting behavioral change. Another interesting avenue would be to study the role of new technologies, including mobile applications, in reducing consumption levels (Tosun and Sezgin 2021). In this context, exploring age as a moderating factor would be of added value, as younger consumers may be more active on social media and more susceptible to FoMO (Lu and Sinha 2024). Additionally, further research is needed on the role of collaboration and co-creation in online communities to foster sustainable anti-consumption behaviors (Demirel 2022). Indeed, these online communities are crucial, acting as a network that supports and guides consumers into their minimalistic journey toward reducing consumption (De Mendonça et al. 2020). Thus, how can educational campaigns and digital tools be used to encourage mindful consumption despite the pressure of social media? Additionally, as suggested by interviewee I5, analyzing the behavior and motivations of consumers who participate in swap events, where participants donate items and, in return, exchange them for other items at no cost, could provide valuable insights of AC behavior.

In order to address sustainability as a result of anti-consumption behavior, previous studies tend to focus on privileged consumers, typically from more affluent backgrounds and in countries that are in an advanced phase of the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors, like Germany (Balderjahn and Hüttel 2019; Ziesemer et al. 2021) or France (Guillard 2018). Future studies could examine anti-consumption behaviors among less affluent groups with different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. This would help to clarify the so-called “paradox of prosperity”, as pointed out by Black and Cherrier (2010), by exploring whether AC practices for sustainability (such as rejecting, reducing or reusing) are mainly adopted by individuals from affluent backgrounds and whether financial resources play a role in enabling these choices. It would also be of added value to conduct cross-country comparisons, including both developed and developing countries, to uncover cultural variations in the adoption of sustainable anti-consumption behaviors at the individual level. For instance, as suggested by Huang and Jiang (2024) in collectivist cultures like China, where social norms and the desire to signal a favorable self-image are stronger, green demarketing strategies incorporating conspicuous environmental AC can be more effective in encouraging consumers to reduce consumption, when compared to individualist and Western cultures. Furthermore, Kuanr, Israel et al. (2020) highlight the importance of cultural values in influencing AC behaviors. However, their analysis

focuses only on the collectivism–individualism dimension, thus leaving an opportunity for future research to explore the remaining five dimensions proposed by Hofstede (1980), as also suggested by Armstrong Soule and Ortega Egea (2024).

Even though most studies tend to examine developed countries (e.g., Yoon et al. 2023), anti-consumption behaviors are also relevant in emerging economies (e.g., Jain et al. 2023; Kuanr, Israel, et al. 2020; Kuanr, Pradhan, et al. 2020). As emphasized by interviewee I4, market assumptions about consumers’ sustainable anti-consumption preferences can be misleading. While the European market is often perceived, “*out of prejudice*” as being more receptive toward recycled products or products with a recycled component, the reality tells a different story (I4). The professional experience of the interviewee has shown that, for instance, emerging markets, especially in Africa, “*have a greater appetite for buying recycled products (...) even in technical [industrial] sectors*” (I4). This ultimately challenges the notion that only wealthier markets are more inclined towards anti-consumption behaviors. It would also be of added value to develop methods for quantifying the environmental benefits of anti-consumption behaviors as well as to understand how consumers’ perceptions of product quality, functionality and environmental impact drive anti-consumption, minimalism or VS. Finally, a long-term perspective is mandatory to measure the actual environmental impact of widespread adoption of anti-consumption behaviors to understand how these behaviors contribute to sustainability over time. Regarding the methodologies used, this review revealed that there is a predominance of quantitative research, which brings some limitations. As such, future studies could explore qualitative methodologies to “*learn more about [consumers] experience*” (I1), for instance, by collecting data through observation, as suggested by interviewee I1.

Another promising path for future research would be to investigate the impact of greenwashing on consumer behavior and perceptions related to reducing or suppressing consumption. For instance, in the context of packaging, and according to Nangia et al. (2023), skepticism and consumers’ perception of a mismatch between packaging claims and the real environmental benefits of a product may influence consumers’ purchasing behavior and the overall effectiveness of their environmental concerns. Comparative studies between brands using genuine sustainable versus greenwashing advertising could reveal the extent of consumer skepticism and potential behavioral shifts induced by demarketing strategies (Lee 2021). Such studies could include both environmentally conscious and average consumers to better understand their differences. Interviewee I2 also stresses the need for further studies on how brands can effectively communicate credible information and facts to influence consumer behavior, addressing greenwashing.

Another aspect that deserves further research is the different types of anti-consumption, namely between minimalists and simplifiers, as they are differently motivated and influenced by internal and external drivers. As such, variables like environmental concerns, financial stability, well-being, social identity, and environmental values need to complement the understanding of internal motivation and their approach to consumption and the consequences for the environment.

For firms, demarketing strategies need to consider that as simplifiers respond more effectively to environmental sustainability, ethical sourcing, and activism, minimalists are more tuned with decluttering, quality, and mindfulness. As such, future studies on green demarketing need to address, for example, how to encourage eco-friendly choices (green demarketing), how higher prices influence environmental-led products (price-based demarketing), and how effective community-led anti-consumption movements (social demarketing), among others.

To address the intention-behavior gap and mitigate the risks of social desirability bias, future studies should focus on observing real consumer behavior rather than relying solely on experiments (e.g., Reich and Soule 2016) or self-reported measures. Given that consumers' engagement in anti-consumption behaviors is often a gradual process, longitudinal studies are necessary to evaluate the consistency of these behaviors over time. Finally, future studies should empirically investigate sustainability as a by-product of anti-consumption behaviors, moving beyond its conventional characterization as merely an antecedent.

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#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

#### Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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### Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.