

A (In)Sustainable Lightness of Consumption: Essay on Sustainable Consumption as an Ideal Type

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Abstract

While it is widely agreed that current consumption patterns are detrimental to the environment and the human being, causing many consumers to feel pressured to make consumption more sustainable through their individual choices and behaviors, there is still much debate about what is sustainable consumption, and what choices and behaviors are best suited to guarantee the promotion of sustainability in the activities related to consumption. These discussions are present in the political, economic and social environments, resulting in a high volume of information and several proposals of conduct that directly and indirectly influence the behavior of the individual, sometimes stimulating, sometimes confusing and discouraging sustainable action. We propose to discuss consumption behaviors considered sustainable as trainers of an ideal type of sustainable consumption behavior, following the model of the ideal type presented by Max Weber. The concept of social action is rescued to identify sustainable actions pointed out in the literature. As a result of this debate, we hope to facilitate understanding of reality and to assist in the formulation of strategies and policies to adapt current consumption patterns to the social, economic and environmental needs that are the pillars of sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable Consumption. Behavior. Ideal Type. Social action. Sustainable Action.

1 Introduction

We live in a society whose primary attribute is consumerism, which is marked by excess and extravagance, and also by redundancy and waste, in which consumption assumes a vital role and the motto is "buy, use and throw away" (Bauman, 2008). However, this pattern is detrimental to the environment and to the human being himself. In this sense, consumers have been pressured to review their behaviors, through their choices, as Lipovetsky (2007) points out, it is not a matter of stopping consuming, but consuming differently, favoring products of better quality and respecting the environment.

Many researchers have studied the consumption behavior of these individuals from three perspectives, as Fraj and Martinez (2007) point out: demographic and socioeconomic variables; the amount of information and knowledge that people have about environmental problems; and, finally, psychographic variables, including values, lifestyles, personality traits, and attitudes.

The main objective of such research is to understand rationalization throughout the process of purchasing so-called sustainable consumption. In order to do so, scholars usually begin their work by trying to define "sustainable consumption", where the term may assume other denominations, such as "environmentally responsible consumption" (Haron, Palm & Yahaya, 2005), "green consumption" (Evans, 2011b), "ecological consumption" (Fraj & Martinez, 2006), or "ethical consumption" (McDonald, Oates, Thyne, Alevizou, & McMorland, 2009; Belz & Peattie, 2010; Evans 2011a).

Conceptualizing sustainable consumption is a challenge because, as Banbury, Stinerock and Subrahmanyam (2012) argue, there are different ways of defining it, and there is no consensus on what it is. Thus, many people find themselves to be sustainable consumers by adopting one or another practice with a greater or lesser intensity among the many considered environmentally correct.

Also, despite the growth of ecological awareness, there are still many barriers to diffusion (Moisander, 2007) and practice of sustainable consumption. Some of these barriers are lack of information (Alexander, 2012; Young et al., 2010), programs and policies (Cohen, 2006) and industry infrastructure (McDonald et al., 2009).

These obstacles are external to the consumer, in this way it can be understood that the sustainable consumption is a social action, as diluted Weber (1999), is guided by the behavior of others, be it past, present or expected as future. That is, sustainable consumption is how a person responds to the external influences of other people, or institutions so that this response has a rational character. This is because, as Moraes, Maestro Filho and Dias (2003) point out, the classification of social action established by Weber considers the nature of rationality in two ways: rational-purposeful action to achieve a previously defined goal, the appropriate and necessary means are used; and value-rational action, when it is guided by ultimate ends, acting by its values and convictions, involved in the action.

According to Tragtenberg (1973), for Weber, the specific theoretical instrument to be used in the sociological analysis to grasp the individualizing element that qualifies social action is the ideal type. The author also adds that the ideal type defines the set of concepts constructed for research purposes. Marinho (1990) also explains that, by definition, it was not constructed with the intention of being found in reality. For Bauman (2008), ideal types are not descriptions of reality, but instruments of their analysis and understanding, and their purpose is to make the portrayal of the society in which they live makes sense.

This essay is a working paper and our objective is to discuss the consumer's sustainable practices as formers of an "ideal type" of sustainable consumption behavior, underpinned in the "ideal type" concept developed by Max Weber (1973), and trying to rescue the idea of social action as a root of the social practices studies. The work rescues the concept of social action and the ideal type, bringing these concepts closer to the literature on sustainable consumption and then proposes a discussion about sustainable consumption, social action and sustainable actions as an ideal type to reach it.

2 Social action and ideal type

Human behavior (action) can be interpreted to have a signification, being determined by evaluations and meanings (Weber, 1973). Thus Weber (1999) noted that there is always a goal to be achieved and that this arouses in people the interest or need to act so that these actions can be driven by the expectation of a certain behavior of material objects or by the actions of third parties. The latter is called the social action, and it is the action that "is guided by the behavior of others, be it past, present or expected as future" (Weber 1999: 13).

Moraes et al. (2003) report that Weber defined sociology as the science of social action, organizing levels of action into three basic types: (i) action against a concrete situation; (ii) action based on specific rules; and (iii) action resulting from the informal understanding of the rules.

Weber (1999) proposes a classification for social action stating that, like any action, it can be determined: (i) rationally referring to ends, according to expectations about other people's behavior, using this as conditions or means to achieve our purposes, pondered and pursued rationally; (ii) rationally referring to values, through conscious belief in the absolute value and inherent to a given behavior as such, regardless of the outcome; (iii) affectively, especially emotional, guided by current affections or emotional states; and (iv) traditionally, that is, by ingrained costume.

The last two classifications - affectively and traditionally - seem to have been treated by Weber as branches of the first two. In this way, Moraes et al. (2003) point out that "the first classification of social action established by Weber took into account the nature of segmented rationality related to the ends and values involved in the process of this action" (p.69).

Guerrero Ramos (1983) points out that Weber describes the person who acts rationally in relation to ends as the one who evaluates the purpose, means and consequences of his actions, "rationally confronting the means with the ends, the ends with the consequences involved, and the different possible ends between them" (p. 38). Also, who refrain from acting affectively, emotionally in particular, or in respect to tradition acts rationally.

In all cases where human action is understood to be conditioned by purposes that have been consciously planned, and at the same time a clear knowledge of the means, understanding reaches a specifically high degree of prominence. This is because the relation between means and end is accessible to rational evidence very similar to a causal relation so that there is no rational action without causal rationalization of that part of reality that was considered as object and means of influence (Weber, 1973).

According to Tragtenberg (1973), for Weber, the specific theoretical instrument to be used in the sociological analysis to grasp the individualizing element that qualifies social action is the ideal type. The author exposes that ideal types are conventionally and abstractly established, are intelligible insofar as, in their construction, there is the integration between understanding and experimentation, synonymous with an explanation, value or concept between becoming an empirical being, constitute the synthesis between the objective and the subjective, the particular and the general. Bauman (2008) defines ideal types as abstractions that attempt to encompass the uniqueness of a configuration composed of ingredients that are not unique, and which separate the defining patterns of that expression from the multiplicity of aspects that the configuration in question shares with others.

Oliveira (2008) explains that the construction of an ideal type helps to give precision to the content of several concepts and is preceded by the cut-off of the conceptual elements of a social phenomenon, through which the interrelationships are confronted with characteristics arranged by the researcher. Thus, as Moraes et al. (2003) explain, as it is not possible to interpret a specific social reality using the exhaustive analysis of the causal relations that constitute it some of them are chosen through the evaluation of the influences or effects that are usually expected of them. For the authors, the social scientist attributes to some of these fragments a meaning so that the elaboration of an instrument that serves as a guide in their search for causal connections is nothing more than the ideal type whose purpose is to serve as a parameter for the scientist be guided.

The 'ideal' word is not related to any evaluation, this expression was not used to introduce a new conceptual tool, but to give full awareness to what social scientists and historians have been doing when using words such as economic man, feudalism, gothic versus romantic or reign (Weber, 1979). Thus, Weber (1973) reports that, about research, the concept of ideal type proposes to form the attribution judgment. Therefore, it is not a hypothesis, but aims to point the way to hypothesis formation and, although not constitutes an exposition of reality, it intends to give it univocal expressive means.

In this perspective, Udy (1978) elucidates that ideal types cannot be directly applied in the analysis of empirical data. On the contrary, the investigator must correct the ideal type in the form of a model, reformulating its specifications in a system of intercorrelated variables, or must be satisfied with the study of those aspects to which the concrete cases do not conform. Trujillo (2005), on the other hand, emphasizes that an ideal type is used to: use a common language when speaking or writing about a concept; allow comparisons with empirical realities to conclude; and formulate hypotheses. The ideal type is of no interest as

an end in itself, but as a model and a means of knowledge in relation to which reality is analyzed, allowing the investigator, in each particular case, to approach mentally the phenomenon under analysis, examining the proximity or the distance from the actual situation searched (real type), in relation to the corresponding ideal type (Souza, 2008).

The ideal types are developed from categories and concepts to produce theoretical propositions (Subbs & Cocklin, 2008). They are analytical tools used to explain and interpret social phenomena and are not a theoretical model, that is, a set of inter- which can be validated or rejected by empirical research (Marinho, 1990).

Oliveira (2008) affirms that Weber, using the ideal type resource, did not intend to exhaust all the interpretations of the empirical reality, since in any phenomenon there will be, in potential, the conceptualization of several ideal types. Similarly, Guerreiro Ramos (2006) clarifies that ideal types are pure concepts that represent deformations of reality, so the notion of ideal type implies the admission that science is not a copy of reality and that knowledge of reality is limited and imperfect.

It should be emphasized that the ideal type has neither an exemplary nor a "must-be" (Souza, 2008), nor does it need to be seen as positive, desirable, actionable, exemplary, but as abstract, pure, logical and utopian (Trujillo, 2005). Also, it has nothing in common with any perfection, except with that of a purely logical character (Weber, 1973). According to Oliveira (2008), the methodological resource found in the ideal type does not subject society to mere typifications previously defined and endowed with immutability but allows to print a specific logic to the ordering of the real and the causal explanation of historical facts. Add to this which, as Trujillo (2005) and Tragtenberg (1973) point out, do not have to be exhaustive about the reality that conceptualizes and has utility or not like any other instrument.

According to Weber (1973), it is impossible to empirically find an ideal type in its conceptual purity, since it is a utopia. Monteiro and Cardoso (as quoted in Oliveira, 2008) expound that an ideal type construct has two essential functions: (i) to provide a restrictive case with which concrete phenomena can be compared; (ii) and serve as a scheme for generalizations which, in turn, serve the ultimate goal of analysis of the ideal type, that is, the causal explanation of events.

Moraes et al. (2003) say that ideal types have three fundamental characteristics that define their possibilities and limits: (i) rationality - when the predicted means and consequences are evaluated, examined the conditions that can affect the abstractly constructed plan in the form of ideal type of future action; (ii) one-sidedness - allows to give rigor to the ideal type, since it is the condition at the same time of amplification of the characteristic traits and the elaboration of the coherent and non-contradictory set of thoughts together; (iii) and utopian character - the ideal type is not reflection or repetition of reality.

Ideal types are useful and indispensable tools, even if they deliberately illuminate certain aspects of the social reality described while leaving in shadow other aspects considered of less relevance to the essential and necessary traits of a particular way of life (Bauman, 2008). Thus, its use can help to understand certain aspects that are relevant to a specific situation in the analysis, through the confrontation between the idealized and the empirical, and the similarities, divergences or contrasts identified help to describe, interpret and clarify the researched reality (Souza, 2008). Therefore, this resource was chosen to discuss sustainable consumption, the topic discussed below.

3 Sustainable consumption

The Oslo Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption (1995) defines sustainable consumption as "an umbrella term that brings together some critical issues such as meeting needs, raising the quality of life, improving resource efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, waste minimization, considering the life cycle perspective and equity." The integration of these components is the central question of how to provide the

same or better services to meet the necessary living requirements and aspirations of improvement for present and future generations, reducing environmental damage and risks to human health.

Incorporating these dimensions into one concept is no easy task. For Peatti and Collins (2009), sustainable consumption is a problematic issue, since the term itself constitutes a paradox since to consume something means to use it exhaustively or to destroy it. In this sense, Ribeiro and Veiga (2011) argue that a definition of sustainable consumption should involve the whole cycle of consumption and emphasize, throughout this cycle, concern with environmental issues, such as reducing consumption of natural resources, supporting socially responsible businesses, and adopting a simpler lifestyle.

Many denominations prioritize the environmental pillar of sustainability and neglect social issues, but Corral-Verdugo, Mireles-Acosta, Tapia-Fonllem and Fraijo-Sing (2011) explain that sustainable behavior encompasses measures designed to protect the physical and social environment. Thus, Fabrício and Leocádio (2013) state that the emergence of the term sustainable consumption brings an expanded perspective to think about consumption, noting that the relationship between consumption and impacts on the environment arising from the exploitation of the natural resources necessary for the productive processes will also incorporate the social impacts.

However, this raises the controversy over the meaning of the term and raises conflicts of interest, as Mont and Plepys (2008) point out by elucidating that many of the issues surrounding the three dimensions of sustainability have conflicting objectives that prevent them from being easily compatible with the strategic shift towards sustainable consumption. An example of conflict is the proposal of non-consumption as a strategy to minimize the negative impacts of consumption on the environment (Evans, 2011a) because consuming less meets the prevailing neoliberal ideas and challenges the illusion of consumer sovereignty (Cohen, 2006).

Evans (2011b) adds that while it is common ground that the problem exists and must be addressed, there is still ambiguity and uncertainty as to what this means and what it implies. Thus, other questions have arisen about the meaning of the term sustainable consumption, such as the suggestion that the concept can refer not only to consumption less but also to direct consumption to ecologically correct items such as products labeled with stamps of energy efficiency or products that are not tested on animals; purchase local and fair trade products; to engage in environmental movements or campaigns, such as recycling garbage or planting trees (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Banbury et al., 2012; Leary, Vann, Mittelstaedt, Murphy, & Sherry Jr., 2013; McDonald et al., 2009).

One bias to be considered in research on sustainable consumption is attention focused only on the aspects that influence the consumer at the time of purchase. However, understanding the three pillars of sustainability - economic, social and environmental - in any form of consumption requires understanding all the impacts that occur throughout the production and consumption cycle of a product, encompassing both the actions antecedent to existence of the product itself, as well as actions arising from the use and disposal of any remaining after use (Peatti & Collins, 2009).

For this reason, it has been realized that, in addition to industry, consumers also have their share of responsibility, often self-perceived, about the effects of their lifestyles on the environment (Banbury *et al.*, 2012; Fraj & Martinez, 2007; Ribeiro & Veiga, 2011). Thus, interest in investigating the level of socio-environmental impact of individual consumption was raised, as well as factors influencing not only consumer buying decisions but also how they decide to use, maintain and dispose of products. In this sense, the current levels of consumption are unsustainable (Alexander, 2012; Leary et al., 2014; Fraj & Martinez, 2007; Fedrigo and Hontelez, 2010; Jackson, 2004; Sener & Hazer 2008; Thøgersen, 1999, 2005,

2010, 2012; Ceglia, Lima & Leocádio, 2015), and that something needs to be done. The problem, as Black (2010) asks, is knowing what and how it should be done.

Moisander (2007) presents two main trends in the debate about what would be sustainable practices: i) the most radical, which considers consumption as harmful to the environment, arguing that the ideal sustainable behavior would be non-consumption, also called of voluntary simplicity; and (ii) the more flexible, which conceptualizes the preference for environmentally-friendly products as sustainable consumption behavior (Alexander, 2012; Banbury et al., 2012; Evans, 2011; Mont & Plepys, 2008; Young et al., 2010).

Thus, authors such as Doyle and Davies (2013), McDonald et al. (2009), Gilg et al. (2005), Ribeiro and Veiga (2011) and Thøgersen (1999) list practices considered sustainable whose adoption can make consumer behavior less harmful both environmentally and socially. It is important to emphasize, however, that the authors' effort to relate a set of conduits for sustainability is not exhaustive, since such practices are infinite and very dynamic, being built and rebuilt as a result of the continuous evolution of science on issues which involve sustainability and results in new knowledge, new demands, new products, new technologies and new ways of consuming.

In this way, Moisander (2007) argues that due to the moral and conceptual complexity of ecologically responsible consumption behavior, as well as the perplexity of information about the theme, there are different conceptions and thousands of behaviors considered ecologically oriented. This author also points out that there is a particular difficulty in enumerating sustainable consumption behaviors due to the abstraction of some recommendations such as what is reduced environmental impact or fair trade. Also, energy efficiency or product/service sustainable labels help decision making at the time of purchase. However, such labels do not cover all the goods and services, and sometimes there is disinformation and disbelief for consumers (Thøgersen, 2005; Moisander, 2007).

Also, determining the environmental needs and concerns that will be prioritized involves some conflicting interests (Mont & Plepys, 2008). As an example, the energy generated by hydroelectric that although it is considered clean, renewable and helps to reduce greenhouse gases, it can harm local flora and fauna. Therefore, consumers are always making value judgments and deciding which environmental aspect deserves more attention and care (Moisander, 2007).

Arnocky, Milfont and Nicol (2003) highlight the temporal conflicts that influence individual perceptions of the impacts of certain behaviors or attitudes, since the decision to behave sustainably requires a focus on future results at the expense of immediate benefits, since long-term benefits often involve immediate costs such as time and money spent in the short run, so environmental problems imply not the only conflict between personal and social interests but also temporal conflicts between short- and long-term interests.

Although there are so many possible behaviors to be adopted for directing consumer behavior towards sustainability, there are also many barriers that hinder or discourage consumers from adopting them (Alexander, 2012; Evans, 2011b; Moisander, 2007; Thøgersen, 1999, 2005; Young et al., 2010, Ceglia et al., 2015). Also, consumer conflicts and perceptions regarding the results of their actions for the sake of sustainability can be stimulated or inhibited through customs, cultural influence, education, public policies, social, structural and economic contexts and action of other individuals (Moisander, 2007; Thøgersen, 2005).

In these terms, individual acts of consumption need to be contextualized according to the social, economic and political order in which they occur, and can not be analyzed only from the perspective of human behavior, since these structures now facilitate or make necessary some lifestyle decisions, sometimes make it difficult or impossible for other decisions, such as the lack of an adequate transport option, due to the lack of investment in

bicycle lanes or public transport; the lack of adequate employment options, which forces people to work beyond what is necessary, resulting in over-consumption of resources and under-consumption of leisure time; insufficient information on products and services; excessive exposure to consumption; the lack of adequate socialization activities; and, the lack of adequate housing (Alexander, 2012; Evans, 2011a).

Thøgersen (2005) argues that consumer choices may be limited by conditions determined by nature, social infrastructure, availability of products and services, and uncertainty about which options are most sustainable among them. For the author, choices are conditioned by the way information about alternative options is communicated to consumers by a plethora of direct and indirect subsidies for products and services that work as incentives for an unsustainable lifestyle as by cultural meanings and social norms that condition the way the individual perceives the world.

Consumers make decisions based on a number of reasons associated with needs, desires, fashion, identity, sense of self, cost, availability, convenience, aspiration, empowerment, self-esteem, need for belonging, distinction and status (Seifi, Zulkifli, Yusuff, & Sullaiman, 2012; Seyfang, 2006; Thøgersen, 2005). From this perspective, most sustainable consumption studies mainly consider these individual characteristics to explain sustainable behavior, when in fact there are external variables that contribute to the adoption of these behaviors as peer groups such as colleagues, family and friends (Salazar, Oerlemans, & van Stroe-Biezen, 2013), education (Barth, Adomßent, Fischer, Richter, & Rieckmann, 2014; Gombert-Courvoisier, Sennes, Ricard, & Ribeyre, 2014), public policies (Cohen, 2006; Safarzyńska, 2013) and companies (McDonald et al., 2009).

The studies of Ceglia, Lima, and Leocádio (2015), for example, have resulted in a conceptual model of cross-cultural consumption that considers the elements forming the national culture as external variables that influence the consumption behavior of individuals.

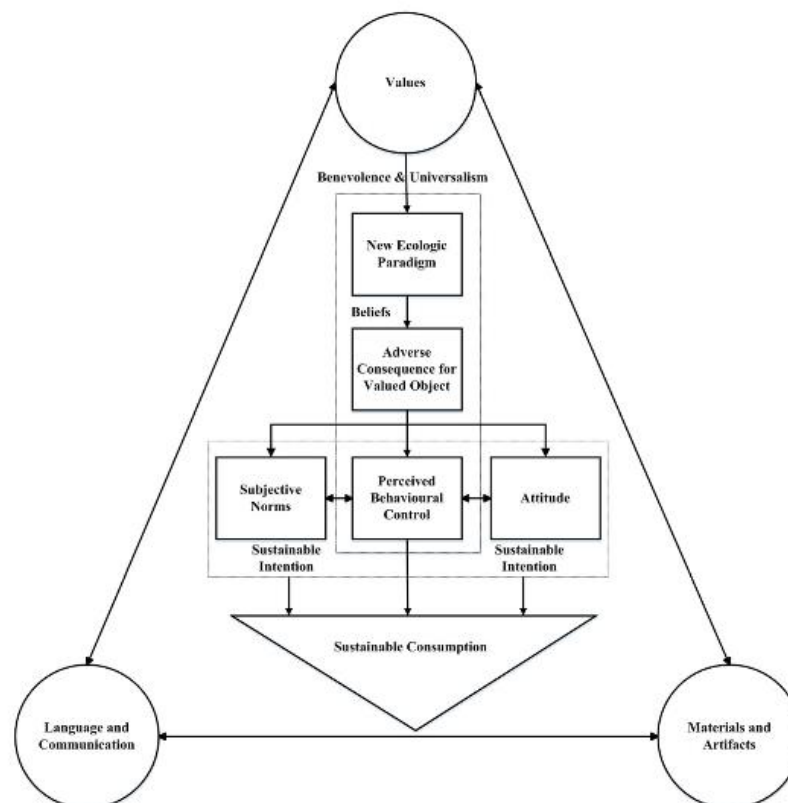


Figure 1: Cross-Cultural Sustainable Consumption Framework.

Source: Ceglia, Lima e Leocádio (2015, p. 419).

In the model of Figure 1, each country's culture-forming elements - language, communication systems, materials and artifacts, values and beliefs - influence and are influenced by each other, as in a cycling loop, and can influence the behavior of people between countries.

Sustainable consumption is complex in such a way that several different types of sustainable consumption behaviors are influenced to different degrees by several causal factors (Stern, 2000). In this sense, consumption models are desirable (Hansen & Schrader, 1997), in the same way that, in Van Bellen's (2007) view, the concept of sustainability cannot determine how reality should be, but point in a direction defined by society, which respects the criteria for a fairer distribution of natural resources.

Thus, the author mentioned above suggests that sustainable development is treated by adapting the "ideal type" model along the lines proposed by Max Weber. In this perspective, the multiple dimensions of sustainable development would determine a scale of sustainability that would be applied to assess the level of sustainability of the development process of a society. It is proposed to analyze the behavior of sustainable consumption in the same way that Van Bellen (2007) suggested to analyze the sustainable development, i.e., through the application of Max Weber's ideal type model, as will be discussed below.

4 Sustainable action and ideal consumption

In a consumer society, there are some norms, values, lifestyles, and assumptions that form a frame of reference for most people (Peattie & Collins, 2009) and, in a way, shape what, how, how much, why and where they consume. Belz and Peattie (2010) emphasize that one way of explaining consumption is the expectation that consumers have of how their consumption behaviors will be perceived by third parties and how they should reflect and influence their positions in society.

From this point of view, consumption behavior may or may not be classified as social action, since, as Weber (1999) explains, it derives from the behavior of others, as long as there is a sense in this action. So, consuming something because all people are consuming or buying a product because it is convenient would not be social action but consuming to be accepted or to be different or buying a product because it is fashionable as social action.

The meaning of sustainable consumption is also socio-culturally constructed because of the dynamics by which consumers are mutually constituted by their individual choices and by changes in the structural environment, in addition, most predispositions to sustainability are culturally learned, which emphasizes the socially-oriented development of citizens oriented towards sustainability (Cherrier, 2005; Carrol-Verdugo et al., 2011; Markkula & Moisander, 2012).

Sustainable consumption can be conceived and promoted by practice theory, which proposes that many daily consumption activities are the result of routinized social practices (Doyle & Davies, 2013), because it focuses on routines in everyday life (Røpke, 2009). Practical theorists may be said to be successors of Max Weber's theory of action since practices form structures of action which are dealt with by all kinds of social theories arising from the theory of action (Reckwitz, 2002).

Theorie of practices have stood out in the analysis of the complexities of consumption, especially of sustainable consumption, and of how it is incorporated in the relations of social reproduction and change (Halkier & Jensen, 2011). Thus, making consumption patterns more environmentally friendly does not mean educating the consumer to make different decisions, but rather changing practices to make them more sustainable (Hargreaves, 2011). The challenge is to understand how practices emerge, are reproduced, maintained, stabilized, and killed, and what is the role of social interactions and power relations in the performance of practices (Hargreaves, 2011).

From the above, one can then conjecture, applying Weber's social action to sustainability, the concept of sustainable action. The formulation of this concept is possible since the paradigm of social action can be extended to all areas of the human sciences and specifically to the applied social sciences, considering that human action derives from two factors: values and ends (Moraes et al., 2003). Also, Guerreiro Ramos (1983) did something similar to propose the concept of administrative action based on Weber's social action.

Thus, the sustainable action is as a modality of social action guided by the behavior of others, having a sense and based on rationality concerning ends and values and motivated in an affective and traditional way, so that the latter vary from individual to individual.

In this perspective, sustainable consumption can be called sustainable action, because the person who has sustainable consumption behavior acts in response to internal and external stimuli, which are socially constructed, and, in a way, are responses to external stimuli, given that sustainable consumption is mediated by a number of factors outside of consumer control (McDonald et al., 2009) and is influenced by other consumers, by government and by organizations (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014; Thøgersen, 2006). This relationship between consumption and sustainable action can be observed with some examples in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Sustainable consumption as sustainable action

SOCIAL ACTION	SUSTAINABLE ACTION
Rationally related to the purposes	<p>Consumers who believe that their decisions can significantly affect the environment and social issues are more likely to behave in a sustainable way (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014).</p> <p>The underlying assumption for various studies is that individuals make rational choices and choose alternatives with greater benefits against lower costs (e.g., regarding money, effort, and social approval) (Wang, Liu, & Qi, 2004).</p> <p>Individuals' sustainable consumption behaviors are not in all areas of apparent consumption but are especially in those areas where there is an economic advantage (Şener & Hazer, 2008).</p>
Rationally referring to values	<p>The sources of sustainable value systems vary widely: from various religious traditions to radical ecology or from the search for happiness to ancient appeals to return to the values of pre-industrial society. Regardless of the type of initiative to consume sustainably, people should become reflective about the environmental impacts of their consumption and then choose to substitute the consumer calculation for an ethical calculation (Holt, 2012).</p> <p>Sustainability-oriented people are cooperative and help other people in need (Pol, 2002), which means that they are selflessly motivated (Schultz, 2001); also, these individuals constantly practice actions that result in the conservation of natural resources (Kaiser, 1998).</p> <p>All this means that a person oriented towards sustainability seeks, at the same time, the conservation of natural resources and caring for other human beings. Thus, a series of studies and proposals indicate that sustainable actions encompass pro-ecological, frugal, altruistic and equitable behavior. (Corral-Verdugo et al., 2012).</p>
Affective, especially emotional	<p>Self-conscious emotions, such as feelings of guilt and pride resulting from previous experiences, motivate consumers to support sustainable consumption alternatives (Antonetti & Maklan, 2014).</p>
Traditionally	<p>An important part of the culture is the norms that people live by or because they are prescribed or determined by custom. What most people do is define a standard of comparison, which influences the behavior of individual members of society (Thøgersen, 2005).</p> <p>Subjective norms that refer to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).</p> <p>Most of the predispositions for sustainability are learned culturally, which emphasizes the significant weight that socialization has on the development of citizens oriented towards sustainability (Corral-Verdugo et al., 2012).</p>

Source: prepared by the authors.

Weber (1999) also argues that the four types of actions are ideal types, since a person will rarely act according to only one type. Similarly, no person will behave purely according

to all sustainable actions, there will be gradations between the rationalities as to the ends and as to the values and the affective and traditional modes so that no one will be able to behave following all the sustainable practices proposed in the literature, because its rationality is limited, and it will never have access and ability to analyze all information (Simon, 1965) to make the most sustainable decision.

According to Tragtenberg (1973), Weber structures a continuous scheme in which the social action leads to the social relation; it is stratified into habit, custom, ending by structuring itself as a legitimate order. Therefore, it can be said that when sustainable action diffuses, it becomes legitimate, not being the exception behavior, but the practice.

As mentioned earlier, the word ideal is not related to any evaluations, but to give full awareness to words like economic man or reign (Weber, 1979). Considering the relevance and frequency with which sustainability has been discussed in economic, political and social circles, it is in everyone's interest to construct an ideal concept of sustainable consumption to give meaning to reality, to guide social and individual behavior, and to assist in the formulation of public policies.

On the other hand, considering that the ideal type results from the unilateral accentuation of one or several points of view in order to form a homogeneous framework of thought (Weber, 1973), one can deduce that to construct an ideal type concept of sustainable consumption should not be the goal of researchers due to the fluidity of the term. There is a consensus regarding the unsustainability of current levels of consumption. However, there is still much discussion about the definition of the term sustainable consumption and the determination of typical practices of sustainable consumption behavior, making it difficult to form the homogeneous framework of thought proposed by Weber.

Considering that, similar to Moraes et al. (2003), it is not possible to interpret the specific social reality of sustainable consumption by means of the exhaustive analysis of the relations between sustainable actions and the respective consequences of these actions, since they are infinite and very dynamic, it is proposed, then some by evaluating the influences or effects expected of them. The concept of the ideal type of sustainable consumption behavior must, therefore, be constructed from the attribution of a sense to some of these fragments so that the instrument serves as a guide in their search for causal connections, given the purpose of the instrument, to guide the scientist.

5 Final considerations

The objective of this paper was to discuss sustainable consumption based on Weber's ideal type. In this way, it was approached that the sustainable consumption can be considered a social action, as long as it has a sense and is guided by others, being named, therefore, of sustainable action. It acts in a sustainable manner which carries out the sustainable practices, those ceaselessly listed in several manuals, which represent the behaviors typical of the sustainable individual. That is, the set of these practices represents the ideal type of sustainable consumption behavior. However, this ideal type does not exhaust reality.

The objective of this paper was to discuss sustainable consumption based on Weber's ideal type. In this way, it was approached that the sustainable consumption can be considered a social action, as long as it has a sense and is guided by others, being named, therefore, of sustainable action. It acts in a sustainable manner which carries out the sustainable practices, those ceaselessly listed in several manuals, which represent the behaviors typical of the sustainable individual. That is, the set of these practices represents the ideal type of sustainable consumption behavior. However, this ideal type does not exhaust reality.

The concept of the ideal type of sustainable consumption is, in fact, a non-concept since it is changeable. What we can have, in essence, is an approximation of a definition, considering that sustainable consumption must basically be based on the existence of an understandable meaning, the one that consumes sustainably does it by the preoccupation with

social, environmental and, ultimately economic, and is guided by others, usually by the direct influence of friends and family, education or public policy.

Thus, it is concluded that the construction of an ideal type of sustainable consumption concept must contemplate: the infinity and dynamicity of typically sustainable behaviors; the concept of sustainable consumption considering all its abstractions and conflicts; and the meanings and meanings involved in the concept of sustainable action, to serve as an instrument that serves the basic functions of providing a model that allows comparisons of phenomena and that can explain the causal relation of events.

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