

# Perceived Relevance and Utilization of Sustainability-Related Product Information by Austrian Consumers – A National Survey

Tassilo Pellegrini<sup>1</sup>, Zahra Mesbahi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Innovation Systems, St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences

**Abstract.** This study investigates consumer engagement with Digital Product Passports (DPPs), focusing on how people seek product information, value DPP content, and their willingness to share usage data. A survey of 2000 Austrians revealed that interest in DPPs is shaped more by sustainability attitudes and lifestyle than by demographics. Health, durability, and environmental impact are key priorities across product types accompanied by a high willingness to share product usage data under conditions of privacy preservation. Findings suggest DPPs can influence sustainable purchasing, but success depends on addressing privacy concerns and aligning content with consumer values and lifestyles.

**Keywords:** product information, sustainable consumption, Digital Product Passport

## Problem Statement

As consumer awareness of environmental and social issues grows, the demand for transparent, detailed product information has surged. Digital Product Passports (DPPs) promise to empower consumers by offering accessible insights into a product's lifecycle, sustainability metrics, and ethical considerations. Despite their potential to shape sustainable consumption, little research has explored consumers' information-gathering behaviors, perceived relevance of DPP information, and willingness to share usage data in the context of DPPs.

## Research Questions

This study addresses the aforementioned gaps through a representative survey along the following research questions:

1. How do consumers gather information about products before or during purchase decisions?
2. What is the perceived relevance of DPP information for informed purchasing?
3. To what extent are consumers willing to share their usage data to support DPPs?

## Methodology

A quantitative online survey was conducted with 2 000 participants across Austria between May 30 and June 14, 2023, using a stratified random sampling strategy. Participants were surveyed on their behaviors, attitudes, and preferences using a structured questionnaire with Likert scale and open-ended questions. Key independent variables included socio-demographics, technological affinity, lifestyle typologies, and attitudes toward sustainability. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to uncover patterns and relationships. Ethical considerations were rigorously followed, and limitations such as response biases and the exploratory nature of the analysis were acknowledged.

## Results

Consumers actively seek product information, prioritizing items with significant investment or personal impact, such as electronics, household goods, and clothing. Gender stereotypes influence interest levels, with men favoring technical products (e.g., electronics), while women prioritize goods for daily needs. Preferences also align with lifestyles and technology affinity rather than income or education.

Perceived relevance of DPP information:

- ▶ DPP information's relevance correlates more with attitudes toward sustainability than demographics.
- ▶ Female participants and those with stronger sustainability attitudes or socio-cultural capital assign higher importance to DPP information.
- ▶ Information on health impact, durability, and disposal is most valued for various product categories.
- ▶ Lifestyle and cultural capital significantly influence perceived relevance, often outweighing income or education.

#### Product-specific trends:

- ▶ electronics: high interest in durability, energy consumption, and repairability;
- ▶ daily goods: focus on health impact and environmental friendliness;
- ▶ construction materials: durability and health impact are top priorities, especially among older participants;
- ▶ textiles: clothing garners more interest than everyday textiles, with high relevance for health and environmental data;
- ▶ batteries and plastics: sustainability and reusability information are key;
- ▶ packaging: disposal instructions and eco-friendliness dominate relevance scores.

#### Willingness to share usage data:

- ▶ 71.2% of participants expressed willingness to share data, contingent on privacy preservation.
- ▶ Incentives further enhance willingness, particularly among younger participants, those with lower education, and those with stronger sustainability attitudes and higher socio-economic capital.

## Conclusion

Findings reveal that DPPs hold significant promise for influencing sustainable purchasing behaviors. Attitudinal factors and lifestyles, rather than traditional demographics, are the primary determinants of DPP information's relevance. While most participants are willing to share data to support DPPs, privacy concerns and incentive structures play crucial roles. Further research is needed to refine DPP frameworks and tailor them to diverse consumer needs, fostering a transition toward a circular economy.