
A Management Process of Contentment (Santutṭhi) for Sustainable Consumption in Vietnam Contemporary Society

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Abstract

This article examines consumerism in contemporary Vietnamese society and proposes a Buddhist management process of contentment (santutṭhi) for sustainable consumption. The study had three objectives: (1) to analyze the major issues of consumerism in contemporary Vietnam, (2) to interpret consumption from Buddhist perspectives on contentment, and (3) to formulate a management process of contentment for sustainable consumption. A qualitative design combined documentary analysis of Buddhist scriptures and academic literature with semi-structured interviews with eight Buddhist scholars and monastic teachers in Vietnam and Thailand. Data were analyzed through thematic comparison of doctrinal sources, scholarly interpretations, and interview evidence. The findings indicate that consumerism in Vietnam has become a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by market expansion, globalization, digital media, and status competition. Its major expressions include excessive consumption, consumer debt, impulsive online purchasing, psychological dissatisfaction, weakening communal values, and environmental degradation. From a Buddhist perspective, consumption is not rejected but ethically reoriented through contentment, moderation, mindfulness, and Right Livelihood. Contentment is understood as sufficiency with the four requisites and as a discipline that restrains craving and redirects desire toward well-being and responsibility. On this basis, the study proposes an integrated management process consisting of four dimensions: individual ethical discipline, economic ethics, community responsibility, and supportive state governance. The article argues that sustainable consumption in Vietnam requires more than regulatory or technological intervention; it also requires a transformation of values, desire, and everyday habits. In this way, Buddhist moral philosophy offers a culturally grounded and practically relevant framework for sustainable consumption in contemporary society.

Keywords: Consumerism; Contentment (santutṭhi); Sustainable consumption; Buddhist ethics; Vietnam Contemporary Society

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, consumerism has expanded beyond a pattern of market exchange into a broader cultural logic shaping identity, aspiration, and everyday social life. In this context, goods are valued not only for their practical use but also for their symbolic meanings, as they communicate success, taste, and social belonging (Solomon, 2009). This tendency is especially visible in post-Đổi Mới Vietnam, where economic liberalization has widened consumer choice and transformed everyday consumption practices. Research on young Vietnamese consumers shows that consumption has become closely tied to self-expression, individualization, and changing social identities, while materialistic values increasingly influence purchase intentions and lifestyle preferences (Nguyen et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2019).

These developments are reinforced by media and platform economies. Public communication and media framing can significantly shape consumer attitudes in Vietnam, while digital environments intensify visibility, comparison, and status-oriented desire (Pham & Ta Thi Nguyet, 2022). At the same time, studies of sustainable behavior in Vietnam suggest that environmental awareness does not automatically translate into consistent practice, and problematic forms of consumption—such as entrenched plastic bag use—remain widespread despite policy efforts and public concern (de Koning et al., 2016; Makarchev et al., 2022). More recent research also indicates growing interest among Vietnamese youth in circular-economy products, though such choices are still shaped by perceived convenience, incentives, and social attitudes (Nguyen, 2024).

For this reason, consumerism in Vietnam should not be analyzed only in economic or policy terms. It also raises moral and cultural questions concerning desire, dissatisfaction, and the ethical use of material resources. Buddhist thought offers a relevant framework for this inquiry. Early Buddhist teaching identifies craving as a root of suffering and emphasizes moderation, right livelihood, and contentment as conditions for genuine well-being (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994; Rahula, 1978). Buddhist ethical reflection has also been extended to environmental and economic issues, arguing that inner restraint and sufficiency can counter both social excess and ecological harm (De Silva, 1998; Payutto, 1994).

Accordingly, this article examines consumerism in contemporary Vietnamese society through the Buddhist principle of contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). It aims to investigate the ethical problems associated with consumerism, reinterpret consumption through Buddhist perspectives on contentment, and propose a management process to support sustainable consumption. In doing so, the study argues that sustainable consumption requires not only policy instruments and behavioral interventions but also a transformation of values, desire, and everyday conduct (Jackson, 2005; OECD, 2019; UNEP, 2021; Latouche, 2010).

Research objectives

- (1) to analyze the major issues of consumerism in contemporary Vietnam,
- (2) to interpret consumption from Buddhist perspectives on contentment,
- (3) to formulate a management process of contentment for sustainable consumption.

Literature review

In Buddhist ethics, **contentment (*santuṭṭhi*)** is not equivalent to passivity or economic stagnation. Rather, it refers to a disciplined and sufficient relationship to material life, one that reduces craving and supports mental balance. Bhikkhu Bodhi (1994) explains that the Buddhist path is grounded in right view and ethical practice aimed at ending suffering, while Rahula (1978) emphasizes that the Buddha's teaching does not condemn material life itself, but rather attachment, greed, and delusion concerning it. This perspective becomes especially clear in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, where household well-being is associated not only with possession and use of wealth, but also with freedom from debt and blameless living (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, AN 4.62). In this sense, Buddhist contentment is both a personal virtue and a practical principle for regulating economic desire.

Modern Buddhist scholarship has extended this principle into social, economic, and environmental analysis. De Silva (1998) argues that Buddhist ethics offers an important response to the environmental crisis by questioning acquisitiveness and emphasizing restraint, compassion, and interdependence. Similarly, Payutto (1994) proposes a Buddhist economics in which production and consumption should serve human well-being rather than stimulate endless want. These approaches are important because they move beyond purely doctrinal

description and show that Buddhist ethics can be applied to contemporary public problems, including consumerism, sustainability, and social imbalance.

The sustainable consumption literature reaches a related conclusion from a different direction. Jackson (2005) argues that unsustainable consumption cannot be explained by price and information alone, because consumer behavior is also shaped by identity, habit, aspiration, and social norms. UNEP (2015) defines sustainable consumption and production as meeting needs and improving quality of life while reducing resource use, waste, and environmental harm. OECD (2019) likewise stresses that coherent, integrated policy is necessary for sustainability, while Latouche (2010) critiques growth-centered development and calls for a reorientation toward sufficiency and ecological balance. Yet much of this literature still emphasizes external regulation, technological innovation, and institutional design more than the inner moral drivers of consumption.

This limitation is especially significant in Vietnam. Research shows that post-Đổi Mới consumption among young Vietnamese is deeply connected to identity formation and self-cultivation (Nguyen et al., 2018), while materialistic values continue to shape purchase intentions even in sustainability-oriented domains such as green apparel (Nguyen et al., 2019). Media discourse also affects consumer attitudes (Pham & Ta Thi Nguyet, 2022), and environmentally damaging habits such as routine plastic bag use remain persistent (Makarchev et al., 2022). Although Vietnam has also seen efforts to encourage sustainable behavior and circular consumption (de Koning et al., 2016; Nguyen, 2024), relatively few studies have integrated Buddhist ethical principles into a systematic framework for managing consumption in contemporary Vietnamese society. This study addresses that gap by bringing **santutṭhi** into dialogue with consumerism and sustainable consumption as both a personal discipline and a social ethic.

Conceptual Framework

The research conceptual framework is based on the concept of contentment (*santutṭhi*) together with the theory of consumerism. The details are as follows:

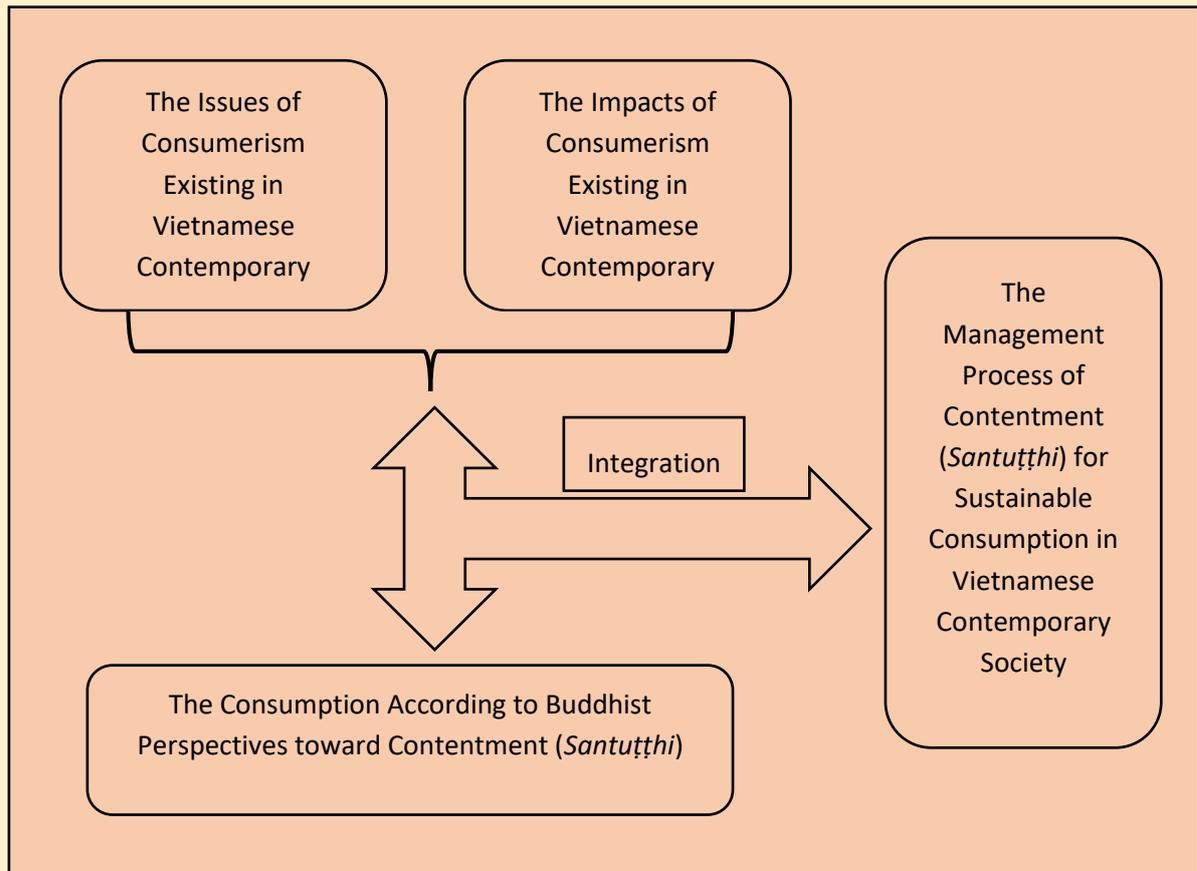


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative design, combining documentary research with semi-structured interviews to examine consumerism in contemporary Vietnamese society and to explore Buddhist perspectives on contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) as a framework for sustainable consumption. The methodology integrates doctrinal analysis of Buddhist texts with empirical insights obtained from scholarly interviews.

Step 1: Documentary Research

The research begins with documentary research by examining primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the *Tipiṭaka* of the *Theravāda* Buddhist tradition, particularly the English translations published by the Pali Text Society, as well as selected scriptures from the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition. Secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, and prior research studies on Buddhist ethics, consumerism, and sustainable consumption. These materials were analyzed in order to identify key Buddhist concepts relevant to

consumption behavior, including contentment (*santutṭhi*), fewness of desires (*appicchata*), moderation (*mattaññutā*), and ethical livelihood (*sammā ājīva*).

Step 2: Participant Selection

To obtain contemporary perspectives, purposive sampling was used to select key informants with expertise in Buddhist studies and related fields. A total of eight interviewees participated in the research, including Buddhist scholars and monastic teachers from Vietnam and Thailand who hold academic qualifications such as doctoral degrees, associate professorships, or professorships. These participants were selected for their academic expertise and familiarity with Buddhist ethics and social issues related to consumption.

Step 3: Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather expert insights on consumerism and Buddhist ethical perspectives on consumption. Interviews with Thai scholars were conducted on April 4, 2025, while interviews with Vietnamese participants were conducted between April 28 and May 28, 2025. Depending on geographical conditions and participant availability, interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via FaceTime.

Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and accompanied by written notes to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. The interview protocol consisted of seven guiding questions derived from the research objectives, focusing on consumerism, its social and environmental impacts, and the potential role of Buddhist principles, such as the Five Precepts and the avoidance of the five sensual pleasures, in promoting sustainable consumption.

Step 4: Data Analysis

The collected data from documentary sources and interviews were analyzed using qualitative comparative analysis. The doctrinal teachings found in Buddhist scriptures were compared with contemporary scholarly interpretations and interview responses. Through this process, recurring themes related to consumerism, ethical consumption, and Buddhist principles of moderation and contentment were identified and synthesized.

Step 5: Validation of the Proposed Framework

Based on the analysis of doctrinal sources and interview data, the research proposes a conceptual management process for contentment (*santutṭhi*) to support sustainable consumption in contemporary Vietnamese society. To enhance the validity of the findings, follow-up consultations were conducted with Buddhist scholars and religious practitioners representing the three major Buddhist traditions present in Vietnam: *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, *Theravāda* Buddhism, and the Vietnamese Mendicant tradition. Their feedback was used to refine and validate the proposed conceptual framework.

Research Results

Consumerism in Vietnam's Contemporary Society

Placed at the intersection of economic development and cultural change, consumerism has become a defining force in modern Vietnam. The following analysis explores its conceptual meanings, practical challenges, and multidimensional impacts, providing insight into how material aspiration is reshaping Vietnamese values, lifestyles, and ecological responsibility.

First, in terms of meanings, consumerism emerges as a multifaceted concept shaped by economics, psychology, sociology, religion, and cultural scholarship. Dictionaries and encyclopedias define consumerism both positively, as a movement for consumer protection, and negatively, as a lifestyle of materialistic overconsumption. From an economic perspective, consumer spending is considered vital to growth, yet it also creates vulnerabilities, such as resource depletion and planned obsolescence. Psychologically, consumerism reflects a compulsive desire stimulated by marketing and the pursuit of status. Sociologically, it becomes a social order in which identities are increasingly constructed through brands, while Buddhism interprets excessive consumption as rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion (Kramer, 2006; Rajagopal, 2018).

Second, the study identifies prominent issues of consumerism in Vietnam. These include overconsumption, especially of luxury goods and fast food; the rising culture of debt through installment-based purchases and consumer loans; and the rapid spread of online shopping, which encourages impulse buying. Materialism and the pursuit of status through possessions have also intensified, especially among younger consumers. Furthermore, the exploitation of natural resources to meet consumer demand has accelerated environmental degradation. These issues demonstrate that consumerism in

Vietnam is intertwined with modernization and globalization but simultaneously threatens sustainability and traditional values (Nguyen & Truong, 2020; Asian Development Bank, 2022; Pham et al., 2022).

Finally, the research highlights the wide-ranging impacts of consumerism at individual, social, and environmental levels. Individually, consumerism fosters indebtedness, anxiety, and identity formation tied to material display. Socially, it can weaken restraint, widen inequality, and encourage imitative lifestyles. Environmentally, it accelerates waste generation, plastic pollution, and pressure on natural resources. These impacts indicate that while consumerism may support short-term economic expansion, it also creates long-term risks for Vietnamese cultural integrity, social stability, and ecological sustainability (United Nations Development Programme, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

In summary, the findings demonstrate that consumerism in Vietnam is both a product of global economic integration and a challenge to sustainable development. Its multiple meanings reflect its complexity, its issues reveal pressing social concerns, and its impacts underscore the urgent need for critical reflection. Addressing these problems requires not only economic policies but also ethical and cultural approaches, including Buddhist perspectives on contentment and moderation, to ensure that consumerism does not erode the moral and ecological foundations of Vietnamese society.

Consumption According to Buddhist Perspectives toward Contentment (*Santutṭhi*)

While modern societies often equate consumption with material progress, Buddhist thought offers a contrasting ethical framework grounded in contentment (*santutṭhi*). This section explores how Buddhist teachings redefine consumption through moderation, moral restraint, and inner freedom, providing a meaningful alternative to desire-driven consumerism.

First, regarding the meanings and types of contentment, *santutṭhi* is defined as satisfaction and sufficiency with necessities, rooted in the *Pāli* word *tussati* (“to be satisfied”). The Buddha emphasized contentment with the four requisites—robes, food, residence, and medicine—encouraging simplicity and detachment. Ascetic practices (*dhutāṅgas*) and Vinaya rules were designed to cultivate this attitude and protect practitioners from attachment. Furthermore,

three categories of contentment are distinguished: contentment with what one gains (*yathālābha-santosa*), contentment according to one's ability (*yathābala-santosa*), and contentment according to suitability (*yathāsārappa-santosa*). These forms guide both monks and lay followers in maintaining moderation and harmony with circumstances.

Second, the teachings that support contentment reinforce its centrality in Buddhist practice. Moderation in eating (*bhojane mattaññū*), moderation in sleeping, cultivating a calm and non-offensive attitude toward nature, and practicing overall moderation (*mattaññutā*) are repeatedly praised by the Buddha. These practices ensure both physical health and spiritual development. For lay practitioners, moderation also extends to vegetarianism, ethical consumption, and gratitude. Through such practices, contentment is not only a personal discipline but also a social ethic that promotes compassion, ecological care, and sustainable living.

Finally, the research identifies dhammas that hinder contentment, leading instead to craving and consumerism. The Buddha warned against the depletion of natural resources caused by greed, miserliness, and moral decline, as described in the *Aggañña Sutta*. The five sensual pleasures (*pañcakāma*—wealth, sex, fame, food, sleep) and the three poisons (*lobha, dosa, moha*) are seen as primary obstacles. These forces generate attachment, competition, and suffering at both individual and collective levels. When unchecked, they foster consumerism, environmental destruction, and social conflict. Conversely, recognizing and restraining these hindrances allows contentment to flourish as “the greatest wealth” (*santuṭṭhi paramaṃ dhanam*).

Overall, the findings show that Buddhist perspectives on contentment offer profound insights into consumption. They present contentment not as deprivation but as freedom from greed and excess. By cultivating moderation and restraining harmful dhammas, individuals and societies can reorient consumption toward sustainability, ethical responsibility, and inner peace. It affirms that *santuṭṭhi* is both a personal practice and a collective path for addressing contemporary issues of consumerism and environmental decline.

The Management Process of Contentment (*Santuṭṭhi*) for Sustainable Consumption in Vietnamese Contemporary Society

The findings of this research indicate that the management process of contentment (*santutṭhi*) for sustainable consumption in contemporary Vietnamese society can be conceptualized as an integrated ethical framework that combines individual discipline, economic ethics, community responsibility, and state governance. These interconnected dimensions operate together to guide individuals and society toward responsible and sustainable patterns of consumption.

1. Individual Ethical Discipline: At the individual level, Buddhist teachings emphasize the cultivation of personal discipline as the foundation of contentment. The practice of mindfulness (*sati*) enables individuals to become aware of their desires and consumption habits, thereby distinguishing genuine needs from excessive wants. The observance of the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*) further strengthens ethical self-regulation by discouraging harmful behaviors rooted in greed and attachment. In addition, moderation in the use of the four requisites—food, clothing, shelter, and medicine—encourages individuals to consume only what is necessary for well-being rather than indulgence. Through these practices, contentment becomes an ethical guideline for daily life and helps reduce the psychological roots of consumerism.

2. Economic Ethics: Buddhist teachings on Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) emphasize that economic activities should avoid exploitation, injustice, and environmental harm. Individuals are encouraged to earn wealth through ethical means and to use it wisely. The Buddhist teaching on the four kinds of happiness of a householder—ownership of wealth, enjoyment of wealth, debtlessness, and blameless living—provides practical guidance for responsible financial management. This perspective encourages balanced economic participation while discouraging excessive consumption and debt-driven lifestyles.

3. Community Responsibility: Beyond the individual level, the management process of contentment is reinforced through communal relationships and social support. The concept of spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*) plays an important role in guiding individuals toward ethical behavior and mindful living. Communities, monasteries, and social networks can promote values such as simplicity, gratitude, and moderation. Through collective practices such as meditation programs, ethical education, and community engagement, Buddhist communities can help cultivate social environments that resist consumerist pressures and support sustainable lifestyles.

4. State Governance: The final dimension involves the role of the state in regulating consumption and promoting sustainable development. Inspired by the Buddhist ideal of righteous governance, state institutions can implement policies that encourage responsible consumption, environmental protection, and social welfare. These measures may include sustainable development policies, consumer protection regulations, and public education programs that promote ethical consumption. By aligning policy initiatives with ethical values, governments can support the transformation of consumer culture toward sustainability.

Overall, the management process of contentment (*santutṭhi*) illustrates that sustainable consumption cannot be achieved solely through economic policies or technological innovation. Instead, it requires an integrated approach that combines inner ethical cultivation with social institutions and governance structures.

Discussion

The findings indicate that consumerism in contemporary Vietnam should be understood not merely as an economic phenomenon, but as a broader cultural transformation that reorganizes values, identity, and everyday aspiration. Rajagopal (2018) argues that modern consumer culture turns commodities into carriers of symbolic meaning, while Solomon (2009) explains that consumption increasingly functions as a language of self-presentation and social distinction. This perspective is highly relevant to the Vietnamese context, where changing lifestyles, urban modernization, and rising purchasing power have encouraged consumption patterns that are tied to visibility and status. The present findings therefore support earlier observations that market transition in Vietnam has not only expanded consumer choice but has also intensified desire-driven modes of life (Nguyen & Truong, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2018).

A particularly important dimension of this transformation is the role of digital media and credit-based consumption. The study found that online shopping, image-driven platforms, and status comparison encourage impulsive purchasing and normalize overconsumption, especially among younger consumers. This aligns with Pham et al. (2022), who show that media environments shape consumer attitudes, and with research indicating that new forms of consumption in Vietnam are increasingly mediated by visibility, aspiration, and symbolic value. At the same time, the expansion of installment

credit and consumer lending has made debt-financed consumption more common, thereby heightening financial vulnerability (Asian Development Bank, 2022). The environmental cost is equally significant: expanding consumption directly contributes to waste generation and ecological stress, particularly through plastic use and disposable products (United Nations Development Programme, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

From a Buddhist perspective, the findings highlight the relevance of contentment (*santutṭhi*) as an ethical response to the psychological and social dynamics of consumerism. Buddhist teaching does not deny the legitimacy of material needs, but it reframes consumption through moderation, restraint, and wise reflection. Bodhi (1994) explains that craving is central to the production of suffering, while Rahula (1978) emphasizes that contentment is not passive resignation but an active discipline that reduces attachment and restlessness. De Silva (1998) similarly argues that Buddhist moderation provides a moral basis for ecological responsibility, and the Dalai Lama (2012) stresses that stable happiness depends more on mental cultivation than on accumulation. In this sense, contentment functions as an inner corrective to the logic of endless consumption.

The comparison between Buddhist ethics and contemporary sustainability discourse also reveals an important theoretical contribution. Much of the literature on sustainable consumption emphasizes external mechanisms such as policy reform, consumer regulation, and technological innovation (Jackson, 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019; United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). Degrowth approaches likewise criticize excessive consumption and call for a reorientation of economic life toward ecological balance (Latouche, 2010). These approaches are valuable, but they often remain focused on institutional structures or behavioral outcomes. By contrast, the Buddhist concept of contentment addresses the motivational roots of overconsumption by regulating desire itself. In this respect, the present findings resonate with arguments for mindful consumption and with Brown's (2017) claim that sustainable economies must integrate ethics, human well-being, and restraint into economic life (Brown, 2017; Sheth et al., 2011).

The principal contribution of this study lies in proposing a management process for contentment to support sustainable consumption in contemporary Vietnamese society. The proposed model integrates four mutually reinforcing dimensions: individual ethical discipline, economic ethics, community

responsibility, and state governance. This structure is consistent with Buddhist thought, in which mindfulness supports self-regulation (Nyanaponika Thera, 1962), Right Livelihood provides moral direction for economic action (Narada Maha Thera, 1992), and Buddhist economics emphasizes the responsible use of wealth rather than the unlimited acquisition of wealth (Payutto, 1994). The model also reflects the broader social role of Buddhism in Vietnam, where religious values can contribute to ethical development and public well-being (Thanh et al., 2023). Taken together, the findings suggest that sustainable consumption in Vietnam requires both inner transformation and supportive institutions. The principle of *santuṭṭhi* therefore offers not only a critique of consumerism, but also a practical ethical foundation for culturally grounded sustainability.

Knowledge from Research

Based on the three research objectives, this research synthesizes a body of knowledge to clarify the challenges of consumerism in contemporary Vietnamese society, examine Buddhist perspectives on contentment (*santuṭṭhi*), and propose a management framework for sustainable consumption.

1. Consumerism Issues in Vietnamese Contemporary Society:

The research demonstrates that consumerism in Vietnam is not merely an economic phenomenon but also a cultural and ethical challenge. The expansion of consumer culture has contributed to various social problems, including materialism, increasing household debt, environmental degradation, and the erosion of traditional values. These findings suggest that consumerism should be understood as a multidimensional issue involving economic behavior, cultural identity, and social ethics.

2. Buddhist Perspective on Contentment:

Buddhist teachings offer an alternative ethical framework for addressing consumerism through the principle of contentment (*santuṭṭhi*). Contentment encourages individuals to cultivate sufficiency, moderation, and mindfulness in daily life. The study identifies three types of contentment: *yathālābha-santosa* (contentment with what is obtained), *yathābala-santosa* (contentment according to one's capacity), and *yathāsāruppa-santosa* (contentment according to appropriateness), which guide both monastic and lay practitioners in maintaining balanced consumption habits.

In addition, Buddhist teachings emphasize supportive practices such as moderation in eating and living, as well as the avoidance of the five sensual pleasures and the three mental poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion. These teachings highlight the psychological roots of consumerism and demonstrate how ethical self-discipline can reduce excessive desire.

3. Management Process of Contentment for Sustainable Consumption

The main contribution of this research is the formulation of a management process for contentment (*santutṭhi*) for sustainable consumption in contemporary Vietnamese society. The proposed model integrates four interconnected dimensions:

- (i) Individual Ethical Discipline: mindfulness, moderation, and observance of the Five Precepts to regulate desire and consumption habits.
- (ii) Economic Ethics: responsible earning and spending guided by Right Livelihood and financial discipline.
- (iii) Community Responsibility: social support and ethical guidance through spiritual friendship and communal values.
- (iv) State Governance: policy frameworks and institutional support that promote sustainable consumption and environmental protection.

These four dimensions function together as a holistic system that links personal transformation with social institutions. By integrating ethical cultivation with economic and policy frameworks, the management process of contentment provides a practical pathway to address consumerism and promote sustainable consumption in contemporary Vietnamese society.

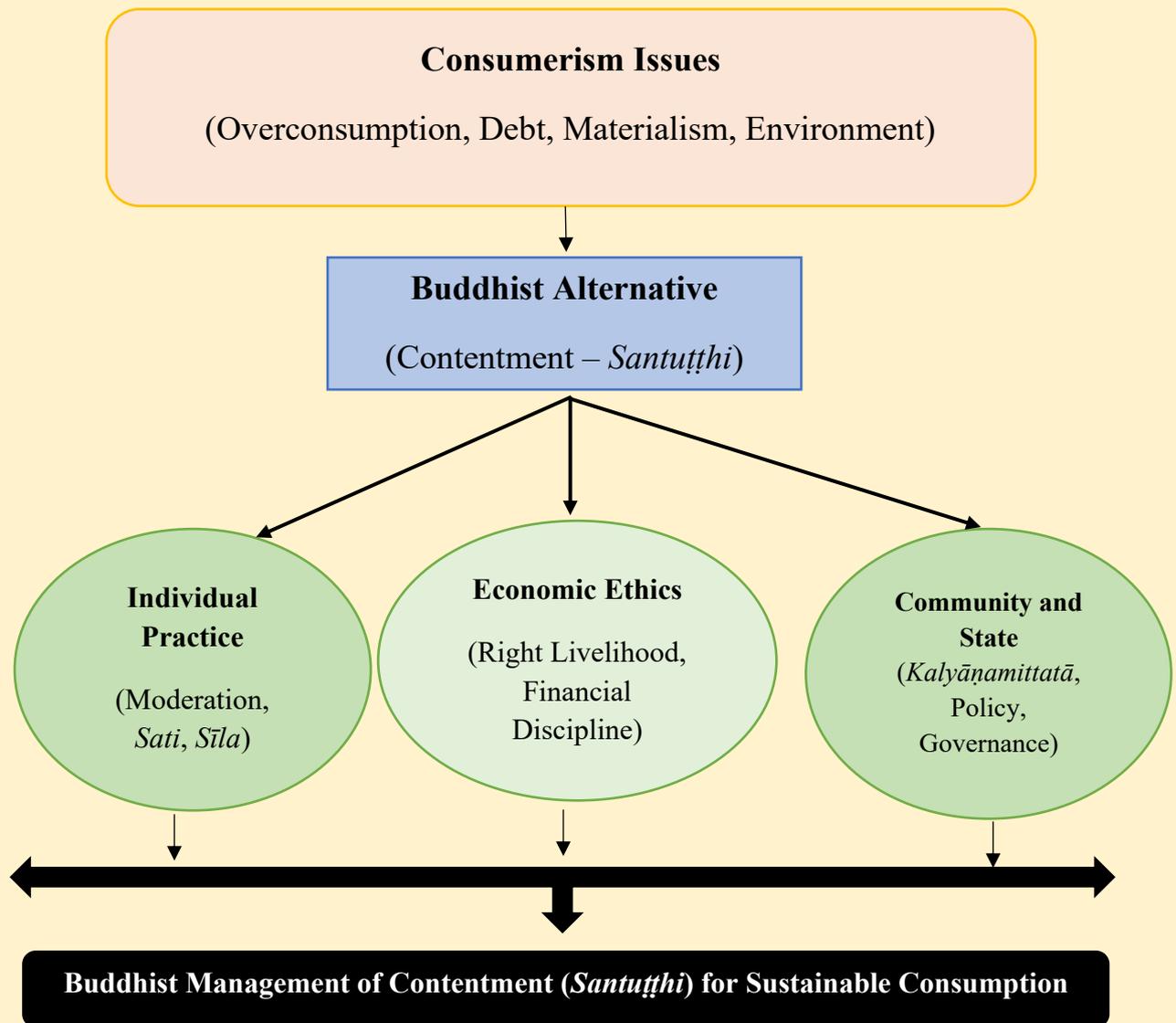


Figure 2: The model addresses the challenges of consumerism by integrating spiritual wisdom with socio-economic and policy dimensions.

The results of this research can be expanded and applied in multiple domains:

- 1. Academia:** The findings enrich Buddhist Studies, Sustainable Development Studies, and Social Ethics by introducing *santuṭṭhi* as an interdisciplinary framework. Future researchers may empirically test its effectiveness through case studies in Vietnamese communities.
- 2. Communities:** Monasteries, temples, and lay Buddhist groups can integrate the principles of contentment into training, sermons, and youth education, encouraging mindful consumption as part of daily practice.

3. **Society:** Social organizations and NGOs can adopt the contentment framework to promote lifestyle changes, sustainable consumer habits, and environmental awareness programs, especially among young consumers.
4. **Economy:** Businesses may utilize the model of “ethical livelihood” to develop fair-trade, environmentally friendly, and socially responsible enterprises, aligning profitability with sustainability.
5. **Policy Proposals:** The state can incorporate Buddhist ethical perspectives into sustainable development strategies, environmental regulations, and consumer protection policies. For example, incorporating *santutṭhi* into educational curricula or community campaigns can foster a cultural shift toward moderation.

In sum, the knowledge gained shows that consumerism in Vietnam, though deeply rooted in globalization and modernization, can be balanced through Buddhist principles of contentment. By transferring this knowledge into education, community practice, business ethics, and governance, the research offers an innovative pathway to align spiritual values with sustainable consumption.

Conclusion

This study has examined consumerism in contemporary Vietnamese society through the Buddhist principle of contentment (*santutṭhi*) and proposed a management process for sustainable consumption. The findings indicate that consumerism in Vietnam should not be understood merely as an economic phenomenon driven by purchasing power and market expansion. Rather, it is a broader cultural, social, and ethical condition shaped by globalization, urbanization, digital media, status competition, and greater access to consumer credit. Although these forces may stimulate economic growth, they also contribute to indebtedness, dissatisfaction, ecological pressure, and the weakening of restraint in everyday life. For this reason, the issue of consumption must be approached not only from an economic perspective but also from moral, social, and spiritual standpoints.

The study further demonstrates that Buddhist teachings offer a meaningful framework for reinterpreting consumption in a more sustainable direction. In this context, contentment does not imply passivity or rejection of material well-being. Instead, it signifies sufficiency, moderation, and freedom from compulsive desire. On this basis, the proposed management process reframes consumption through four interconnected dimensions: personal ethical

cultivation, economic responsibility, community participation, and supportive public governance. This integrated approach is important because it connects inner transformation with broader institutional and social structures.

The article's main contribution lies in showing that sustainable consumption requires more than regulation, technological innovation, or behavioral adjustment alone. Long-term change also depends on the transformation of values, desires, and lifestyles. In the Vietnamese context, where Buddhism continues to function as a living moral and cultural resource, the principle of contentment offers a practical and culturally grounded path toward more mindful, equitable, and environmentally responsible consumption. Thus, *santutṭhi* may be understood as both a personal virtue and a social ethic that can support sustainable consumption in contemporary Vietnam.

Suggestions

This research has found that consumerism in Vietnamese society creates serious economic, social, and environmental challenges, and that Buddhist perspectives on contentment (*santutṭhi*) provide both personal and collective solutions for sustainable consumption. The important thing is that these insights can be applied to education, community practices, economic ethics, and policymaking. Therefore, the following suggestions are proposed:

- 1. Community Education and Awareness:** Incorporate Buddhist values of moderation and contentment into school curricula, university programs, and community workshops to build awareness of mindful and sustainable consumption.
- 2. Integration into Daily Life:** Promote practices such as meditation, mindful eating, vegetarianism, and simple living as lifestyle choices that reduce craving (*taṇhā*) and enhance individual and collective well-being.
- 3. Ethical Economic Engagement:** Encourage businesses to adopt Buddhist principles of Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*) by developing fair, sustainable, and socially responsible products and services.
- 4. Policy Development and Governance:** Policymakers should prioritize sustainability by integrating Buddhist ethics into national strategies on consumer protection, environmental conservation, and sustainable development.
- 5. Future Research Directions:** For the next research issue, studies should be done on measuring the practical impact of *santutṭhi* in

reducing ecological footprints, transforming consumer behavior, and testing community-based Buddhist interventions.

These suggestions highlight that *santutṭhi* is not merely a personal virtue but a comprehensive framework. By transferring this knowledge into education, community, economy, and governance, Vietnam can cultivate sustainable consumption rooted in both cultural identity and Buddhist wisdom. At the same time, future research can further validate and expand these applications.

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