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THEME

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FORWARD

The purpose of the Readings Book is to provide a unique international forum to facilitate the exchange of cutting-edge information through multidisciplinary presentations of new challenges in global business and technology strategies, policies and issues. Academicians, practitioners, and public policy makers at all levels throughout the world submitted original papers for publication in this Readings Book. The result of the double-blind peer reviewing process efforts produced 329 empirical, conceptual and methodological papers involving all functional areas of business education with a special focus on international aspects. Of the 243 papers accepted, 97 papers are published in this Readings Book.

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N. Delener, Ph.D.
President, GBATA

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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN E-WASTE AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIA: A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSITIONS

Kingsley Dafe and Hong Shi
University of Gloucestershire, UK

ABSTRACT

Electronic waste (e-waste) presents escalating environmental, health, and governance challenges, particularly in developing economies. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature, this study examines the effectiveness of e-waste awareness initiatives in relation to consumer purchasing behaviour and regulatory contexts, with a specific focus on Nigeria. Evidence indicates that information-based campaigns are insufficient in the absence of supportive regulatory frameworks, economic incentives, and institutional capacity. The analysis highlights the role of extended producer responsibility, economic instruments, and community-based engagement in strengthening public participation, while also acknowledging the dominance of informal recycling networks. The study contributes context-sensitive insights to inform more coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable e-waste management strategies in Nigeria and comparable settings.

Keywords: e-waste, consumer purchasing behaviour, extended producer responsibility, environmental governance, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic waste (e-waste) has become a critical environmental and socio-economic challenge in the contemporary digital economy. Rapid technological innovation, shortened product lifecycles, and changing consumer purchasing behaviour have significantly increased the volume of discarded electrical and electronic equipment worldwide. Although e-waste contains valuable recoverable materials, improper disposal practices pose substantial risks to environmental quality and public health, particularly in developing economies where regulatory capacity and formal recycling infrastructure remain limited (Hieronymi et al., 2012; Brindhadevi et al., 2023). In this context, consumer behaviour and awareness play a central role in shaping e-waste generation and disposal pathways. This paper examines the interaction between awareness initiatives, regulatory mechanisms, and purchasing practices, with specific attention to the Nigerian context, where informal recycling systems dominate and policy enforcement remains fragmented. The current study aims to address the following questions:

How do consumer awareness initiatives, regulatory mechanisms, and purchasing behaviours interact to shape e-waste generation and disposal practices in Nigeria?

What institutional, behavioural, and policy conditions are necessary to align consumer participation with sustainable e-waste management and circular economy objectives in developing economy contexts such as Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The effectiveness of e-waste awareness campaigns is strongly influenced by their design and implementation. Evidence from developed regions suggests that successful initiatives typically integrate public education with regulatory enforcement and economic incentives, rather than relying on information provision alone (Hieronymi et al., 2012). For example, extended producer responsibility (EPR) legislation in Switzerland has reduced financial barriers to consumer participation by shifting part of the recycling costs to manufacturers, thereby strengthening formal collection and recycling systems (Khetriwal et al., 2009). By contrast, Nigeria lacks a comparable regulatory framework to support the coordinated implementation of such policies, which results in fragmented

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and largely informal e-waste management practices (Osibanjo & Nnorom, 2007). Research further indicates that public participation in recycling initiatives is particularly low in contexts where there is mistrust in a government's capacity to implement and sustain such programmes effectively (Widanapathirana et al., 2023). Consequently, awareness campaigns in Nigeria must be context-specific and take into account local perceptions of waste disposal, prevailing economic constraints, and the dominant role of informal recycling networks (Masud et al., 2019). Studies show that more interactive approaches, such as community-based e-waste collection events, school-based educational programmes, and digital engagement initiatives, are more successful in generating public participation than passive strategies, including static advertisements or regulatory notices (Safdar et al., 2020).

Consumer purchasing behaviour also plays a critical role in shaping the volume and composition of e-waste. Accelerated technological development and the widespread adoption of planned obsolescence have contributed to shorter product lifespans and increased rates of device replacement (Bozkurt & Stowell, 2016; Ozuem et al 2024). In many developing countries, affordability constraints limit consumer choices to second-hand or refurbished electronics, which are often imported from developed economies and enter the market with limited remaining usability (Thapa et al., 2023). Nigeria is among the largest recipients of second-hand electronic equipment from Europe and North America; much of this equipment reaches end-of-life shortly after importation, thereby exacerbating domestic e-waste generation (Shittu et al., 2021). The absence of stringent import controls and end-of-life regulations allows outdated and unsafe electronic devices to circulate freely within the market, which further intensifies the e-waste burden (Nnorom & Osibanjo, 2008). Previous research suggests that promoting more sustainable purchasing practices, such as prioritising energy-efficient, durable, and repairable products, can significantly reduce e-waste generation at source (Ofori & Opoku Mensah, 2022). Developed e-waste management systems, particularly within the European Union, have strengthened consumer participation in recycling through structured take-back and collection schemes, thereby lowering environmental impacts and supporting circular economy objectives (Sundar et al., 2023).

Drawing on existing literature, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach to develop a conceptual framework that integrates e-waste management with consumer purchasing behaviour; it incorporates insights from environmental science, behavioural economics, and policy analysis (Gaur et al., 2024). Prior research indicates that circular economy models centred on repair, refurbishment, and reuse do not emerge organically, but instead require coordinated institutional and policy support (Hieronymi et al., 2012). In the Nigerian context, the implementation of circular economy models would necessitate strengthened regulatory oversight, the promotion of formal recycling systems, and the expansion of public awareness initiatives (Bimir, 2020). Policy instruments such as EPR have been shown to realign incentives by encouraging manufacturers to account for end-of-life management in product design and distribution (Khetriwal et al., 2009). Complementarily, consumer awareness programmes must be sensitive to cultural norms and economic constraints that shape everyday consumption and disposal practices (Oeztuerk, 2015).

Although awareness and regulatory interventions are necessary, evidence suggests that they are insufficient in the absence of supportive economic mechanisms (Sundar et al., 2023). Economic incentives, including deposit refund schemes and buy-back programmes, have demonstrated significant potential to increase consumer participation in e-waste recycling (Safdar et al., 2020). In Nigeria, where informal recycling networks dominate, integrating informal sector workers into formalised collection and recycling systems could simultaneously enhance economic opportunities and improve environmental outcomes (Attia et al., 2021). Furthermore, the use of digital platforms to coordinate e-waste collection has been shown to improve accessibility and participation rates (Kang et al., 2020). Long-term behavioural change may also be supported through the incorporation of environmental education into school curricula, which could foster sustainable disposal practices among future generations (Dias et al., 2018).

The urgency of addressing Nigeria's e-waste challenge stems not only from its environmental and public health impacts, but also from the lost economic opportunities associated with improper waste management (Brindhadevi et al., 2023). Despite global progress in e-waste governance, Nigeria continues to face persistent challenges related to policy enforcement, public engagement, and infrastructural development (Naeem et al., 2023). Consumer behaviour remains a critical determinant of e-waste outcomes, as purchasing habits directly influence waste generation volumes and disposal pathways (Ramzan et al., 2019). Accordingly, a comprehensive approach that integrates public education, economic incentives, and regulatory frameworks has the potential to significantly improve e-waste management and promote sustainable consumer behaviour in Nigeria (Gaur et al., 2024). However, the long-term effectiveness of such interventions depends on coordinated action among regulators, industry stakeholders, and consumers, thus underscoring the need for systemic and collaborative solutions.

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The introduction of e-waste management has emerged as a significant area of academic and policy concern due to its escalating environmental, economic, and public health implications (Bhaskar & Turaga, 2018; Brindhadevi et al., 2023). Rapid technological advancement and increasing consumer demand for electronic devices have accelerated consumption patterns, shortened product lifespans, and consequently intensified the generation of e-waste (Bhaskar & Turaga, 2018). Although e-waste contains valuable recoverable materials, including gold, silver, and palladium, it also comprises hazardous substances such as lead, mercury, and cadmium, which pose serious environmental and health risks when improperly managed (Brindhadevi et al., 2023). To mitigate these risks and enable resource recovery through sustainable recycling practices, effective e-waste management strategies are essential (Shittu et al., 2021). However, significant challenges persist globally, particularly in developing economies, where inadequate infrastructure, weak regulatory frameworks, and low levels of consumer awareness hinder responsible e-waste disposal (Ofori & Opoku Mensah, 2022). Addressing these gaps is critical to the development of sustainable waste management systems that align with broader environmental objectives and circular economy principles (Sundar et al., 2023).

This study is important because it seeks to inform both policy and practice by examining the structural and behavioural challenges that undermine effective e-waste management, while also identifying contextually relevant solutions. Stringent regulatory mechanisms that require manufacturers to assume responsibility for end-of-life product management, such as EPR, have been successfully implemented in many developed countries (Khetriwal et al., 2009). These mechanisms have contributed to improved recovery rates and the diversion of e-waste from landfills to organised recycling programmes (Bhaskar & Turaga, 2018). By contrast, many developing regions rely heavily on informal recycling systems, where e-waste is dismantled under unsafe conditions that expose workers and nearby communities to toxic substances and heavy metal contamination (Nnorom & Osibanjo, 2008). This disparity highlights the need for research that evaluates the applicability of existing e-waste policies across diverse socio-economic contexts, while also exploring alternative models suited to developing countries (Thapa et al., 2023).

A major concern within the e-waste sector relates to the methods used in dismantling and processing e-waste. Informal and unregulated practices contribute to soil contamination, water pollution, and air quality degradation, with long-term consequences for ecosystems and human health (Rautela et al., 2021). Many electronic devices contain flame retardants and persistent organic pollutants that leach into the environment; this leads to chronic exposure risks and ecological disruption (Brindhadevi et al., 2023). As international awareness of the adverse effects of e-waste continues to grow, there is an increasing emphasis on the need for sustainable management practices and robust legal frameworks to regulate disposal and recycling activities (Osibanjo & Nnorom, 2007). Given the complexity of e-waste-related environmental impacts, advancing knowledge in this area is essential for informing policy interventions that prioritise pollution control, enforce safe disposal standards, and support environmentally sound recycling systems (Gaur et al., 2024). Furthermore, such research can contribute to the development of innovative recycling technologies that enhance resource recovery while minimising ecological harm, thereby supporting long-term sustainability and circular economy objectives (Hieronymi et al., 2012).

E-waste represents one of the most pressing environmental challenges of the contemporary digital age, with far-reaching economic implications, particularly within the context of resource efficiency and circular economy transitions (Sundar et al., 2023). Beyond its environmental burden, e-waste presents significant opportunities for resource recovery, as discarded electronic devices contain valuable precious metals and rare earth elements that can be reintegrated into manufacturing supply chains, thereby reducing reliance on virgin material extraction (Dias et al., 2018). Despite this potential, many regions continue to experience inefficient and ineffective recycling systems, which are compounded by limited investment in advanced processing technologies and formal recovery infrastructure (Ofori & Opoku Mensah, 2022). Research suggests that the development of efficient and scalable recycling approaches could address these gaps while simultaneously unlocking economic value through material recovery (Bhaskar, 2015). Moreover, studies on EPR policies highlight their capacity to enhance manufacturer accountability for end-of-life product management, thereby encouraging more sustainable production and disposal practices (Thapa et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of e-waste management strategies is, however, strongly shaped by consumer behaviour. Levels of awareness and participation in sustainable disposal practices remain low across many regions, thus they limit the success of formal recycling initiatives (Ramzan et al., 2019). This challenge is exacerbated by limited consumer knowledge regarding the environmental impacts of discarded electronics and a lack of awareness of available formal recycling options (Attia et al., 2021). Accordingly, this research contributes to the understanding of consumer e-waste disposal behaviour and supports the development of communication strategies aimed at motivating public engagement in sustainable waste management (Kariwala et al., 2023). Although previous studies have emphasised the role of digital awareness campaigns, economic incentives, and

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community-based recycling initiatives, their effectiveness varies considerably across cultural and economic contexts; this outcome warrants further empirical evaluation (Newaz & Appolloni, 2024). An additional dimension of this research concerns the integration of e-waste management within sustainable business models and broader circular economy frameworks (Sundar et al., 2023). Although many organisations have adopted take-back schemes and designed products for recyclability, such initiatives often suffer from limited scale and restricted impact (Bozkurt & Stowell, 2016). Consequently, the role of businesses in advancing sustainable e-waste management, and the conditions under which circular economy principles can be effectively embedded into corporate sustainability strategies, remains insufficiently explored (Alblooshi et al., 2022). Further research in this area has the potential to inform industry regulation, stimulate private sector investment in waste management solutions, and strengthen cross-sector collaboration among manufacturers, policymakers, and recycling firms (Khetriwal et al., 2009).

The significance of this research is further heightened by the substantial health risks associated with improper e-waste management. In many developing countries, informal e-waste recyclers are routinely exposed to hazardous substances released during the manual dismantling and open burning of electrical and electronic equipment; this exposure leads to severe occupational health risks (Nnorom & Osibanjo, 2008). Empirical studies have linked e-waste exposure to respiratory illnesses, neurological disorders, and developmental impairments, particularly among children living in affected communities (Brindhadevi et al., 2023). Addressing these risks requires an in-depth examination of informal recycling practices alongside the promotion of safer, regulated recycling systems (Osibanjo & Nnorom, 2007). Findings from this research can therefore inform health and safety standards and support the formalisation of e-waste recycling operations (Gaur et al., 2024).

Policy and governance constitute another critical area within the e-waste literature. Although legislative frameworks exist in some countries, enforcement remains inconsistent due to weak governance structures and fragile regulatory systems (Bhaskar & Turaga, 2018; Shittu et al., 2021). Greater insight into regulatory barriers can inform policy recommendations aimed at strengthening enforcement mechanisms, improving compliance, and enhancing coordination between national and international e-waste governance regimes (Thapa et al., 2023). In this regard, the present study seeks to identify policy gaps and propose reforms aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and global best practices in waste management (Nnorom & Osibanjo, 2008). Emerging digital technologies also present new opportunities to improve e-waste management systems. Innovations such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things offer potential for improving traceability, transparency, and efficiency across waste collection and recycling processes (Kang et al., 2020; Safdar et al., 2020; Ozuem & Willis, 2025). Data-driven solutions can optimise collection routes, monitor regulatory compliance, and track materials throughout the supply chain, thereby contributing to more effective and sustainable waste management systems (Latha et al., 2022). As these technologies mature, they are expected to play a transformative role in enhancing the economic and environmental performance of e-waste management practices (Newaz & Appolloni, 2024).

Finally, this research recognises that e-waste management extends beyond environmental and economic considerations to encompass issues of social equity and environmental justice (Thapa et al., 2023). Low-income and marginalised communities are disproportionately affected by e-waste pollution, as hazardous waste sites are frequently located in close proximity to vulnerable populations (Osibanjo & Nnorom, 2007). Addressing these inequities requires a critical examination of waste flows, responsibility allocation, and community participation, alongside human-centred solutions that disrupt harmful disposal pipelines (Bimir, 2020). Emphasising the ethical dimensions of e-waste governance can therefore support the development of policies that promote both environmental justice and equitable access to sustainable waste management services (Ofori & Opoku Mensah, 2022). The accelerating global e-waste crisis necessitates urgent investigation into effective management strategies that account for its environmental, economic, and social dimensions. This research is significant in that it contributes knowledge capable of informing policy development, advancing recycling technologies, and strengthening consumer awareness, while also mitigating the health and environmental risks associated with improper e-waste disposal. Furthermore, the study offers important implications for circular economy transitions by providing insights that can support the refinement of existing principles and stimulate innovation in sustainable waste management practices. By addressing persistent governance challenges surrounding e-waste, this research contributes to broader efforts aimed at fostering resource efficiency, institutional accountability, and long-term sustainability.

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METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a conceptual research design grounded in an integrative review of existing literature on e-waste management, consumer behaviour, and circular economy frameworks. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and authoritative institutional publications were systematically examined to identify dominant themes, theoretical perspectives (Newaz & Appolloni, 2024; Ozuem et al 2025), and empirical insights relevant to e-waste awareness, regulatory instruments, and purchasing behaviour. The literature was analysed using a thematic synthesis approach that enabled the comparison of developed and developing economy contexts, with particular attention paid to Nigeria (Alblooshi et al., 2022). Concepts drawn from environmental science, behavioural economics, and policy analysis were iteratively integrated to develop a coherent conceptual framework. This framework elucidates the interrelationships between consumer awareness, economic incentives, regulatory structures, and informal recycling systems; it provides a theoretically grounded basis for future empirical investigation and policy development.

DISCUSSION

Building on an analysis of systemic constraints, this study identifies several pathways through which Nigeria's e-waste management system could be repositioned towards more sustainable outcomes (Widanapathirana et al., 2023). A primary and immediate opportunity lies in the structured integration of the informal sector. Informal recyclers already perform a critical function in the collection and recovery of e-waste, albeit under unregulated and hazardous conditions. Consistent with prior research, collaboration between formal and informal actors has been shown to improve collection efficiency and environmental performance when supported by appropriate governance mechanisms (Hieronymi et al., 2012; Dias et al., 2018). Incorporating informal workers into EPR schemes or local authority programmes could therefore enhance system coverage while addressing deficits in technical knowledge, occupational safety, and regulatory oversight.

A second pathway concerns the alignment of consumer behaviour with institutional objectives through contextually appropriate regulatory and economic incentives. Existing studies demonstrate that financial and quasi-financial incentives can substantially increase participation in e-waste recycling when embedded within traceable and transparent systems (Safdar et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2020). In urban contexts such as Lagos, digital and mobile-based incentive mechanisms offer a scalable means of engagement. From a theoretical perspective, such approaches operationalise principles of compliance and social influence, while also addressing material constraints that limit pro-environmental behaviour. The integration of economic nudges with accessible collection infrastructure may therefore serve as a catalyst for behavioural change.

Institutional credibility and visibility emerge as a third critical determinant of public engagement. Rebuilding trust requires demonstrable institutional presence through transparent reporting, consistent monitoring, and collaboration with community leaders. As Bhaskar and Turaga (2018) argued, decentralised enforcement models, in which local governments assume responsibility for awareness and collection activities, foster proximity, ownership, and responsiveness. When aligned with national sustainability strategies, these arrangements can achieve both top-down coherence and bottom-up legitimacy, thereby narrowing the governance distance perceived by citizens. The findings indicate that behavioural and institutional shortcomings in Nigeria's e-waste system are deeply interconnected. Cognitive factors, such as risk perception and knowledge gaps, interact with relational and institutional dimensions, including policy disillusionment and governance distance. These dynamics help explain the persistence of informal recycling systems despite their environmental and health costs, alongside the limited uptake of formal recycling channels. Addressing e-waste challenges in Nigeria therefore requires systemic interventions that simultaneously engage consumers, strengthen institutions, and formalise existing informal practices, rather than isolated awareness or regulatory efforts.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This study advances understanding of e-waste management in Nigeria by highlighting the interdependence between consumer behaviour, institutional capacity, and governance structures. Drawing on an interdisciplinary conceptual approach, the paper demonstrates that awareness initiatives alone are insufficient to change disposal practices in contexts characterised by weak regulation, limited public trust, and economic constraints. Instead, sustainable progress depends on coordinated interventions that integrate informal recycling actors, align consumer incentives with institutional objectives, and strengthen regulatory visibility and accountability. The proposed conceptual framework contributes to existing literature by situating behavioural drivers within broader structural and policy environments; it offers a context-sensitive lens through which e-waste challenges in developing

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economies can be interpreted. By emphasising the role of economic incentives, decentralised governance, and formal–informal collaboration, the study provides actionable insights for policymakers seeking to promote circular economy transitions and environmentally responsible consumption in Nigeria. Notwithstanding these contributions, the study is subject to several limitations. As a conceptual paper, the analysis relies primarily on existing literature and illustrative qualitative insights, rather than large-scale empirical data. In addition, the study does not differentiate systematically between rural and urban contexts, where access to infrastructure, digital tools, and recycling services may vary considerably. Finally, while the paper acknowledges the growing role of digital technologies in e-waste management, it does not empirically assess their feasibility or adoption barriers within low-income or marginalised communities. Future research could address these limitations through mixed methods designs, comparative cross-country analyses, and longitudinal studies examining behavioural change over time.

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