
SUSTAINABLE MARKETING PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The growing awareness of environmental degradation and social responsibility has transformed consumer behavior and marketing strategies worldwide. This study examines the relationship between sustainable marketing practices and consumer purchase intentions, exploring how eco-friendly branding, green product positioning, and corporate social responsibility initiatives influence buying decisions. Through a comprehensive literature review and conceptual framework development, this research identifies key factors that mediate the relationship between sustainability communication and consumer response. The study reveals that transparency, authenticity, and consistent green messaging significantly enhance consumer trust and purchase likelihood. Environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and social influence emerge as critical moderating variables. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of green brand image and perceived quality in converting environmental attitudes into actual purchase behavior. The findings suggest that companies must integrate sustainability deeply into their value propositions rather than treating it as a peripheral marketing tactic. This research contributes to understanding how businesses can leverage sustainable marketing practices to create competitive advantage while meeting evolving consumer expectations for environmental and social accountability.

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented shift in consumer consciousness regarding environmental sustainability and corporate responsibility. Climate change, resource

depletion, pollution, and social inequality have become pressing concerns that influence not only policy decisions but also individual consumption patterns. As consumers become increasingly aware of the environmental and social impacts of their purchasing choices, businesses face mounting pressure to adopt sustainable practices and communicate these efforts transparently. This paradigm shift has given rise to sustainable marketing, an approach that integrates environmental and social considerations into all aspects of marketing strategy, from product development to promotional campaigns.

Sustainable marketing represents more than a trend; it reflects a fundamental transformation in how businesses engage with stakeholders and create value. Traditional marketing focused primarily on satisfying consumer needs while maximizing profits, often with little regard for long-term environmental or social consequences. In contrast, sustainable marketing seeks to balance economic objectives with ecological preservation and social welfare. This approach encompasses various practices including green product development, eco-labeling, cause-related marketing, transparent supply chain communication, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Companies across industries—from fashion and food to technology and transportation—are reimagining their business models to align with sustainability principles.

Consumer purchase intentions, defined as the subjective probability that an individual will buy a particular product or service, serve as a crucial predictor of actual buying behavior. Understanding what drives these intentions in the context of sustainable products and marketing is essential for both academic researchers and marketing practitioners. While numerous studies suggest that consumers express positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly products, a notable gap often exists between stated environmental concern and actual purchase behavior—a phenomenon known as the attitude-behavior gap. Factors such as price sensitivity, perceived product quality, convenience, and skepticism about green claims can inhibit the translation of pro-environmental attitudes into sustainable purchasing actions.

The relationship between sustainable marketing practices and consumer purchase intentions is complex and multifaceted, mediated by various psychological, social, and contextual factors. Trust emerges as a particularly critical element, as consumers must believe that companies genuinely commit to sustainability rather than engaging in greenwashing—the practice of making misleading environmental claims. Additionally, individual differences in environmental values, knowledge, and perceived consumer effectiveness influence how

marketing messages are received and processed. Social norms and peer influence also play significant roles, as consumers increasingly seek products that reflect their identities and allow them to signal their values to others.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive examination of how sustainable marketing practices influence consumer purchase intentions, identifying key mechanisms and boundary conditions that explain this relationship. By synthesizing existing literature and developing an integrated conceptual framework, this study seeks to offer practical insights for marketers seeking to develop effective sustainability strategies while contributing to theoretical understanding of green consumer behavior. The findings will help bridge the gap between environmental concern and sustainable consumption, enabling businesses to create marketing approaches that resonate authentically with environmentally conscious consumers while driving positive environmental and social outcomes.

Review of Literature

Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017) examined green marketing strategies and their effectiveness in influencing consumer behavior across different product categories and market contexts. Their research revealed that green product innovation, eco-labeling, and transparent communication create competitive advantages when aligned with target market values. The study emphasized that successful green marketing requires substantive environmental improvements rather than superficial claims, as consumers increasingly scrutinize corporate environmental commitments. They found that authenticity and third-party certifications significantly enhance credibility and consumer trust. Their work underscores the importance of integrating sustainability throughout the entire marketing mix rather than treating it as an isolated promotional element.

Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015) investigated the factors influencing green purchase behavior and the role of environmental consciousness in shaping consumer decisions. Their findings demonstrated that environmental knowledge, perceived consumer effectiveness, and altruistic values positively correlate with green purchase intentions. The research identified attitude toward green products, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as significant predictors of intention, supporting the Theory of Planned Behavior framework. They also found that demographic variables such as education level and income influence green purchasing patterns. The study highlighted that while environmental concern is widespread,

translating this concern into action requires reducing barriers such as higher prices and limited availability.

Chen and Chang (2012) explored green brand equity and its relationship to consumer purchase intentions, developing a comprehensive model that linked green brand image, satisfaction, and trust. Their research revealed that green brand image directly influences both green satisfaction and green trust, which subsequently affect purchase intentions. The study demonstrated that companies with strong environmental reputations enjoy greater consumer loyalty and willingness to pay premium prices. They found that perceived quality and environmental associations form critical components of green brand equity. Their work emphasized that building green brand equity requires consistent long-term commitment rather than short-term marketing campaigns.

Biswas and Roy (2015) examined the phenomenon of green consumerism and the factors that facilitate or inhibit sustainable consumption behaviors in emerging markets. Their research identified perceived value, environmental attitude, and social influence as key determinants of green purchase intentions. The study revealed that consumers in emerging economies face unique challenges including limited product availability, higher costs, and skepticism about environmental claims due to weak regulatory enforcement. They found that peer influence and social visibility significantly impact green consumption in collectivist cultures. Their findings suggested that education campaigns and government policies play crucial roles in promoting sustainable consumption in developing countries.

Leonidou and Leonidou (2011) conducted a comprehensive examination of corporate social responsibility and consumer behavior, analyzing how CSR initiatives influence brand attitudes and purchase decisions. Their research demonstrated that consumers respond positively to companies that demonstrate genuine commitment to social and environmental causes beyond legal requirements. The study found that CSR activities enhance corporate reputation, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, particularly when aligned with core business operations. They identified stakeholder engagement and transparent reporting as essential elements of effective CSR communication. Their work highlighted that CSR should be integrated strategically rather than implemented as peripheral philanthropic activities.

Ottman (2017) explored the evolution of green marketing from niche strategy to mainstream business imperative, examining successful and failed initiatives. Her analysis revealed that

effective green marketing requires understanding consumer motivations beyond environmental concern, including health, safety, performance, and status considerations. The research emphasized the importance of making sustainable choices easy and desirable rather than emphasizing sacrifice or guilt. She found that product quality and functionality must meet or exceed conventional alternatives to achieve market success. Her work provided practical frameworks for developing green marketing strategies that balance environmental authenticity with consumer appeal.

White, Habib, and Hardisty (2019) investigated psychological barriers to sustainable consumption and strategies for overcoming the attitude-behavior gap in environmental decision-making. Their research identified several obstacles including high costs, inconvenience, lack of information, and doubt about efficacy that prevent environmentally concerned consumers from acting on their values. The study demonstrated that interventions such as social norms messaging, default options, and immediate benefits framing can effectively promote sustainable behaviors. They found that emphasizing personal benefits alongside environmental advantages increases green product adoption. Their work provided evidence-based recommendations for designing choice architectures that facilitate sustainable consumption.

Moser (2015) examined the role of trust and credibility in green marketing communication, analyzing how consumers evaluate environmental claims and corporate authenticity. His research revealed that skepticism about greenwashing has increased substantially, making third-party certifications and verifiable data essential for credibility. The study found that transparency about both achievements and challenges enhances trust more than exclusively positive messaging. He identified consistency across communication channels and alignment between words and actions as critical trust determinants. His findings emphasized that rebuilding trust after greenwashing accusations requires substantial time and demonstrated commitment.

Peattie and Belz (2010) analyzed the challenges of implementing sustainable marketing in practice, examining organizational barriers and market constraints that limit adoption. Their research revealed that short-term financial pressures, misaligned incentive structures, and departmental silos often undermine sustainability initiatives. The study emphasized that sustainable marketing requires fundamental business model innovation rather than incremental changes to conventional marketing practices. They found that industry-wide

collaboration and regulatory frameworks facilitate more rapid progress than individual company efforts alone. Their work highlighted the need for marketing education that integrates sustainability principles rather than treating them as specialized topics.

Johnstone and Tan (2015) investigated the effectiveness of green advertising appeals and message framing strategies in promoting pro-environmental consumer behavior. Their research demonstrated that rational appeals emphasizing functional benefits outperform emotional appeals for high-involvement green products. The study found that gain-framed messages highlighting positive outcomes prove more effective than loss-framed messages emphasizing negative consequences. They discovered that concrete, specific claims generate stronger purchase intentions than abstract environmental benefits. Their findings suggested that matching message type to product category and consumer involvement level optimizes green marketing effectiveness.

Lin and Chang (2012) examined the antecedents and consequences of corporate green innovation and its impact on competitive advantage and consumer loyalty. Their research revealed that green innovation capability positively influences both environmental and financial performance through enhanced brand image and customer satisfaction. The study demonstrated that proactive environmental strategies create barriers to imitation and sustainable competitive advantages. They found that consumer support for green innovation depends on perceived authenticity and tangible environmental benefits. Their work emphasized that green innovation should focus on creating superior value propositions rather than merely reducing environmental harm.

Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell (2010) explored the attitude-behavior gap in ethical consumption, investigating why consumers fail to translate environmental values into consistent purchase behavior. Their research identified situational factors, competing priorities, and implementation barriers that disrupt the intention-behavior relationship. The study found that habitual behavior, temporal distance, and immediate gratification bias often override environmental considerations at the point of purchase. They demonstrated that simplifying sustainable choices and integrating them into existing routines increases behavioral follow-through. Their findings highlighted the importance of understanding actual decision-making contexts rather than relying solely on stated preferences.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between sustainable marketing practices and consumer purchase intentions across different product categories.
2. To identify the key dimensions of sustainable marketing that most significantly influence consumer buying behavior.
3. To analyze the mediating role of green brand image and consumer trust in the relationship between sustainable marketing and purchase intentions.
4. To investigate the moderating effects of environmental concern and demographic variables on consumer responses to green marketing initiatives.
5. To explore the attitude-behavior gap in sustainable consumption and identify factors that facilitate or inhibit the translation of environmental values into actual purchases.

Justification of Objectives

The first objective is essential because sustainable marketing practices vary considerably across industries and product types, requiring category-specific understanding. Fast-moving consumer goods, durable products, and services present different sustainability challenges and consumer evaluation criteria. By examining multiple product categories, this research can identify generalizable principles while recognizing context-dependent nuances. This comprehensive approach enables marketers to develop tailored strategies that resonate with consumers in specific markets. Understanding category differences also helps prioritize sustainability initiatives where they will have the greatest environmental impact and business value.

The second objective addresses the need to prioritize among various sustainable marketing practices given limited resources and attention. Companies cannot implement all possible sustainability initiatives simultaneously and must identify which practices yield the strongest consumer response and business outcomes. By determining which dimensions—such as eco-labeling, supply chain transparency, carbon neutrality claims, or social responsibility programs—most powerfully influence purchase intentions, this research provides actionable guidance. This prioritization helps organizations allocate resources efficiently while maximizing both environmental impact and marketing effectiveness. Understanding relative importance also helps prevent spreading efforts too thinly across initiatives that may not resonate with target consumers.

The third objective recognizes that sustainable marketing practices do not directly translate into purchase behavior but operate through psychological mechanisms. Green brand image represents the consumer's perception of a brand's environmental commitment and forms a crucial component of brand equity. Trust serves as an essential prerequisite for consumer acceptance of environmental claims, particularly given widespread concerns about greenwashing. By examining these mediating variables, this research illuminates the process through which marketing inputs transform into behavioral outcomes. Understanding these mechanisms enables marketers to design communications that build brand image and trust effectively rather than simply broadcasting environmental attributes.

The fourth objective acknowledges that consumers are heterogeneous and respond differently to sustainable marketing based on individual characteristics and contextual factors. Environmental concern varies substantially across populations, with some consumers highly committed to sustainability while others remain indifferent or skeptical. Demographic variables such as age, education, income, and cultural background also influence green consumption patterns. By identifying moderating effects, this research enables market segmentation and targeting strategies that reach the most receptive audiences. Understanding boundary conditions also prevents overgeneralization and helps explain why sustainable marketing succeeds in some contexts but fails in others.

The fifth objective addresses one of the most persistent challenges in green marketing: the gap between stated environmental values and actual purchase behavior. Many consumers express concern about environmental issues and claim willingness to buy sustainable products, yet actual market share for green products often remains disappointingly low. This discrepancy suggests that intention formation differs from behavior execution, with various barriers intervening. By exploring factors that bridge or widen this gap—such as price differentials, availability, convenience, quality perceptions, and situational constraints—this research provides insights for reducing barriers and facilitating sustainable consumption. Understanding this gap is crucial for realistic strategy development that accounts for real-world purchasing contexts rather than idealized scenarios.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates multiple theoretical perspectives to explain how sustainable marketing practices influence consumer purchase intentions. At the foundation lies the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that intentions are determined

by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of sustainable consumption, attitude toward green products reflects consumers' evaluation of environmental and functional benefits, subjective norms capture social pressure and expectations regarding sustainable purchasing, and perceived behavioral control encompasses both actual and perceived barriers to green buying. Sustainable marketing practices influence all three components by shaping product attitudes through information provision, leveraging social norms through visible consumption cues, and reducing perceived barriers through availability and ease of purchase.

The framework incorporates green brand image and consumer trust as key mediating variables that transmit the effects of sustainable marketing practices to purchase intentions. Green brand image represents the associations consumers form regarding a company's environmental performance and commitment, constructed through consistent marketing communications, third-party certifications, and observable corporate actions. Strong green brand image enhances product evaluation and creates differentiation in crowded markets. Consumer trust in environmental claims serves as a prerequisite for these associations to influence behavior, as skepticism about greenwashing has increased substantially. Trust develops through transparency, third-party verification, consistency between promises and actions, and track record over time. Both mediators operate sequentially, with sustainable marketing first building brand image, which then generates trust, ultimately influencing purchase intentions.

The framework also recognizes several moderating variables that strengthen or weaken the relationships between constructs. Environmental concern represents the degree to which individuals perceive environmental problems as serious and worthy of personal action, with highly concerned consumers more responsive to sustainable marketing. Perceived consumer effectiveness—the belief that individual actions can make a meaningful difference—moderates the translation of concern into intention, as consumers who feel efficacious are more likely to act. Demographic factors including education, income, age, and cultural values shape both baseline environmental attitudes and resource availability for premium-priced green products. Product category involvement and perceived risk also moderate relationships, as high-involvement purchases trigger more extensive information processing and evaluation. By incorporating these moderators, the framework accounts for the heterogeneity in

consumer responses and provides a comprehensive understanding of when and why sustainable marketing succeeds in driving purchase intentions.

Findings

Research findings demonstrate that sustainable marketing practices significantly influence consumer purchase intentions, though the strength of this relationship varies across contexts and consumer segments. Green product innovation and eco-labeling emerge as the most influential sustainable marketing dimensions, directly affecting both green brand image and purchase intentions. Consumers respond particularly positively to substantive environmental improvements such as reduced packaging, renewable materials, and energy efficiency rather than abstract sustainability claims. Third-party certifications substantially enhance credibility and trust, with standardized labels like Fair Trade, USDA Organic, and Energy Star providing legitimacy that corporate self-declarations cannot match. Transparency regarding supply chain practices, carbon footprint, and social impact strengthens brand image, even when companies acknowledge ongoing challenges rather than claiming perfection.

The mediating roles of green brand image and consumer trust prove crucial in explaining how sustainable marketing influences behavior. Companies with strong green brand equity enjoy significant advantages including consumer loyalty, willingness to pay price premiums, and word-of-mouth advocacy. However, brand image alone proves insufficient without trust, as skepticism about greenwashing remains widespread. The findings reveal that trust develops slowly through consistent actions over time but can erode rapidly following inconsistencies or exposed false claims. Integration of sustainability into core business strategy rather than peripheral marketing campaigns generates stronger consumer perceptions of authenticity. The sequential process—sustainable practices building brand image, which generates trust, which drives intentions—emphasizes the importance of long-term commitment rather than short-term promotional tactics.

Moderating effects reveal important boundary conditions for sustainable marketing effectiveness. Environmental concern strongly moderates relationships, with highly concerned consumers showing much greater sensitivity to green marketing messages and sustainability attributes. Perceived consumer effectiveness also plays a crucial role, as individuals who believe their choices matter demonstrate stronger intention-behavior consistency. Demographic analyses indicate that younger, more educated, and higher-income consumers typically express stronger green purchase intentions, though actual behavior gaps

exist across all segments. Product category significantly moderates effects, with sustainability attributes more influential for frequently purchased, low-risk products than for expensive durables where functional performance dominates. Cultural context matters substantially, with collectivist societies showing stronger responses to social norm appeals while individualist cultures respond better to personal benefit framing.

The attitude-behavior gap remains a persistent challenge, with numerous consumers expressing environmental concern and positive attitudes toward green products yet failing to follow through with purchases. Price sensitivity emerges as the primary barrier, with many consumers unwilling to pay premiums for sustainable attributes despite stated preferences. Availability and convenience also significantly constrain behavior, as consumers default to conventional products when green alternatives require extra effort or are unavailable in preferred shopping channels. Quality perceptions sometimes inhibit green purchases, particularly for product categories where consumers doubt eco-friendly formulations will perform adequately. Habitual purchasing behavior and brand loyalty override environmental considerations for many consumers, highlighting the power of defaults and routines.

Several strategies effectively narrow the attitude-behavior gap and facilitate sustainable consumption. Making green options the default choice rather than requiring active selection significantly increases adoption. Emphasizing personal benefits—health, safety, cost savings, performance—alongside environmental advantages strengthens appeal beyond the environmentally committed segment. Social visibility and norm messaging leverage identity expression and conformity motivations to promote sustainable choices. Reducing price premiums through economies of scale and operational efficiency makes green products accessible to broader markets. Providing concrete information about environmental impact in understandable metrics helps consumers perceive meaningful differences between alternatives. Integrating sustainability into existing routines and purchase habits rather than requiring behavior change reduces friction.

Suggestions

Businesses should integrate sustainability authentically into their core value propositions and business models rather than treating it as a peripheral marketing tactic or public relations exercise. This requires embedding environmental and social considerations into product development, operations, supply chain management, and organizational culture from the outset. Companies must move beyond superficial green marketing claims to substantive

innovations that deliver genuine environmental improvements and tangible benefits consumers can experience. Investing in renewable materials, circular economy approaches, and reduced environmental footprints creates competitive differentiation while addressing planetary challenges. Leadership commitment and cross-functional collaboration ensure sustainability remains central to strategy rather than confined to marketing departments.

Marketers should prioritize transparency and third-party verification to build consumer trust and overcome widespread skepticism about greenwashing. Providing detailed, accessible information about environmental impacts, supply chain practices, and progress toward sustainability goals demonstrates accountability and authenticity. Pursuing credible certifications from recognized organizations lends external validation that self-proclaimed claims cannot achieve. Companies should acknowledge challenges and areas for improvement rather than presenting unrealistic perfection, as transparency about the sustainability journey often resonates more strongly than exclusively positive messaging. Regular reporting with measurable metrics allows consumers to assess progress and hold companies accountable over time.

Businesses must address the price barrier that prevents many environmentally conscious consumers from translating values into purchases. Strategies include achieving economies of scale through volume production, operational efficiencies that offset sustainability investments, and value engineering that reduces costs without compromising environmental attributes. Communicating total cost of ownership—including durability, energy savings, and health benefits—helps justify initial price premiums. Offering entry-level sustainable options at accessible price points attracts budget-conscious consumers while premium versions serve highly committed segments. Collaborating with retailers to ensure competitive pricing and prominent placement increases green product accessibility and visibility at the point of purchase.

Marketing communications should emphasize personal benefits alongside environmental advantages to broaden appeal beyond the environmentally committed niche. Health, safety, quality, performance, cost savings, and social status represent motivations that resonate across diverse consumer segments. Framing sustainable choices as smart, contemporary, and aspirational rather than sacrificial or moralizing avoids alienating mainstream consumers. Highlighting immediate, tangible benefits increases perceived value while long-term, abstract environmental claims often fail to motivate action. Testimonials and social proof demonstrate

that sustainable choices deliver satisfaction and fit seamlessly into consumers' lives without requiring major lifestyle changes.

Companies should leverage social influence through community building, user-generated content, and visible consumption opportunities that allow consumers to signal values. Creating brand communities where sustainable consumers connect and share experiences reinforces identity and commitment. Encouraging social sharing and word-of-mouth through referral programs and shareable content extends reach authentically. Designing products with visible sustainability cues enables consumers to communicate their values publicly, tapping into status motivations. Partnerships with influencers and thought leaders who genuinely embody sustainable values lend credibility while reaching engaged audiences. Social norm messaging that highlights the prevalence of sustainable behaviors can shift perceptions and encourage adoption.

Policymakers should implement regulatory frameworks and incentive structures that support sustainable consumption and level the playing field for responsible businesses. Standardized environmental labeling requirements reduce confusion and enable informed consumer choice. Penalties for greenwashing and misleading claims protect consumers and honest companies from unfair competition. Tax incentives, subsidies, and procurement preferences for sustainable products help overcome price barriers and stimulate market development. Infrastructure investments in recycling, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation facilitate consumer adoption of green lifestyles. Education campaigns raise awareness about environmental issues and sustainable alternatives while highlighting the connection between individual actions and collective outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive examination of sustainable marketing practices and consumer purchase intentions reveals a complex landscape where environmental concern increasingly shapes consumption patterns, yet significant gaps remain between values and behavior. Sustainable marketing has evolved from a niche strategy to a business imperative, driven by heightened consumer awareness, regulatory pressure, and growing recognition that environmental sustainability and business success need not conflict. The research demonstrates that authentic, substantive sustainability initiatives communicated transparently can significantly influence consumer purchase intentions and deliver competitive advantage. Green brand image and consumer trust emerge as critical mediators, highlighting that sustainable

marketing success depends not merely on what companies do but how effectively they communicate these efforts and maintain credibility over time. However, the persistent attitude-behavior gap underscores that good intentions alone do not guarantee sustainable consumption, with price, convenience, quality perceptions, and habitual behaviors often overriding environmental considerations. Moving forward, closing this gap requires collaborative efforts from businesses, consumers, policymakers, and civil society to create systems where sustainable choices become accessible, affordable, and appealing to mainstream markets rather than remaining confined to environmentally committed niches. Companies that integrate sustainability authentically into their core strategies while addressing practical barriers will be best positioned to meet evolving consumer expectations, build lasting competitive advantages, and contribute to the urgent environmental and social challenges facing our planet.

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