Beyond Green Intentions: Drivers of Consumer Engagement in Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability has become a key concern in contemporary consumer decision-making; however, a noticeable gap persists between consumers' green intentions and their actual engagement in sustainable behaviours. This study examines the drivers of consumer engagement in sustainability and its influence on sustainable purchase behaviour in Erode District, Tamil Nadu. Using a descriptive research design, primary data were collected from 170 consumers through a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using SPSS, employing reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, correlation, and multiple regression techniques. Exploratory factor analysis identified four key dimensions of perceived value economic, functional, emotional, and social value explaining a substantial proportion of variance. Reliability analysis confirmed strong internal consistency across all constructs. The results reveal that environmental concern is positively and significantly associated with consumer engagement in sustainability, and that consumer engagement significantly influences sustainable purchase behaviour, explaining 23.4 per cent of its variance. The findings highlight that moving consumers beyond green intentions requires strengthening perceived value and engagement mechanisms. The study offers valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and sustainability advocates aiming to encourage active consumer participation in sustainable consumption practices.

Keywords: Sustainability, consumers, green intentions, engagement, purchase behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sustainability has shifted from a peripheral concern to a central factor influencing consumer decision-making. Rising environmental degradation, increasing awareness of climate change, and growing emphasis on social responsibility have encouraged consumers to express favourable attitudes toward sustainable products and practices. However, despite heightened awareness and positive intentions, actual consumer engagement in sustainability related behaviours such as purchasing eco-friendly products, supporting green brands, and participating in sustainable practices remains inconsistent. This disconnect between consumers' stated intentions and their actual behaviour is widely referred to as the green intention behaviour gap.

Consumer engagement in sustainability extends beyond awareness or intention and reflects the extent to which consumers actively participate in, support, and promote sustainable practices in their consumption choices. Engagement is influenced by several factors, including trust in green claims, perceived value, environmental concern, price sensitivity, and access to credible information. In emerging economies such as India, these factors are further shaped by socio-economic conditions, local market structures, and cultural contexts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Peattie (2010) emphasized that positive environmental attitudes do not automatically translate into sustainable consumer behaviour. The study argued that behavioural engagement is influenced by situational factors such as convenience, trust, and the perceived effectiveness of individual actions, thereby highlighting the existence of the intention–behaviour gap. Young et al. (2014) examined sustainable consumption behaviour across developed economies and found that although consumers express strong sustainability intentions, actual engagement is constrained by price sensitivity, lack of information, and limited trust in green claims. The authors underscored

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the importance of perceived value and credibility in driving consumer engagement. Brodie et al. (2011) conceptualized consumer engagement as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions. Their findings suggested that deeper levels of engagement lead to sustained behavioural change, making engagement a more reliable indicator of sustainability adoption than intention alone. Joshi and Rahman (2015), in their meta-analysis on green purchase behaviour, identified environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and social influence as key drivers but noted a lack of empirical studies examining how these factors collectively influence engagement rather than intention. White, Habib, and Hardisty (2019) proposed a behavioural framework for sustainable choices, emphasizing that contextual and psychological drivers are essential to move consumers from intention to action, thereby reinforcing the need for empirical models focused on actual engagement.

Biswas and Roy (2015) examined sustainable consumption behaviour among Indian consumers and found that environmental awareness positively influences green purchase intention, while actual engagement is moderated by price sensitivity and perceived quality concerns. Paul, Modi, and Patel (2016) studied green product adoption in India and reported that trust in eco-labels and green marketing communication significantly enhances consumer engagement, particularly in emerging market contexts. Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015) highlighted that although Indian consumers exhibit high environmental concern, their behavioural commitment remains relatively low due to skepticism toward green claims and limited availability of genuinely sustainable products. Yadav and Pathak (2016) explored factors influencing green purchase behaviour and found that subjective norms and perceived behavioural control play a crucial role in translating intention into action. Similarly, Suki and Suki (2019) observed that consumer engagement in sustainability initiatives increases when consumers perceive both personal and societal benefits, indicating that perceived value is a key driver of engagement in the Indian context.

Research Gap

The review of national and international literature indicates that while consumer awareness and green purchase intentions have been widely studied, empirical research focusing specifically on consumer engagement in sustainability remains limited, particularly in emerging economy contexts. Most existing studies emphasize intention rather than actual engagement, thereby offering limited insight into the intention–behaviour gap. Furthermore, key drivers such as trust, perceived value, environmental concern, and perceived effectiveness are often examined in isolation rather than within an integrated empirical framework. At the regional level, especially in districts such as Erode, consumer engagement in sustainability has received little scholarly attention. There is a clear lack of district-level empirical studies that statistically examine the combined influence of these drivers using robust quantitative techniques. The present study addresses this gap by developing and empirically testing a consumer-centric model of sustainability engagement using primary data from Erode District.

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
2. To examine the influence of environmental concern on consumer engagement in sustainability.
3. To analyze the role of perceived value in driving consumer engagement in sustainability.
4. To assess the relationship between consumer engagement in sustainability and sustainable purchase behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive research design, cross-sectional survey approach to examine the drivers of consumer engagement in sustainability and their influence on sustainable purchase behaviour. The study is conducted in Erode District, Tamil Nadu, and primary data are collected from 170 individual consumers aged 18 years and above who actively participate in household purchase decisions and have awareness or prior exposure to sustainable or eco-friendly products. Respondents include working professionals, self-employed individuals, homemakers, and students, selected from retail outlets, supermarkets, shopping areas, and public places using a

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convenience sampling technique. Data are collected through a structured questionnaire developed from validated scales, with responses measured on a five-point Likert scale.

The collected data are analyzed using SPSS software. The reliability of the measurement scales is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and exploratory factor analysis is employed to identify the underlying dimensions of consumer engagement in sustainability. Correlation and multiple regression analyses are used to examine relationships among key variables and to assess the influence of identified drivers on consumer engagement and sustainable purchase behaviour. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, respondent anonymity, and confidentiality, are strictly maintained throughout the study.

Percentage Analysis of Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents (N = 170)

Variable	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	82	48.24
	Female	84	49.41
	Others	4	2.35
Age	Below 25 years	38	22.35
	25–35 years	52	30.59
	36–45 years	44	25.88
	46–55 years	26	15.29
	Above 55 years	10	5.89
Educational Qualification	School	28	16.47
	Undergraduate	64	37.65
	Postgraduate	58	34.12
	Others	20	11.76
Occupation	Student	32	18.82
	Homemaker	34	20.00
	Self-employed	40	23.53
	Salaried	48	28.24
	Others	16	9.41
Monthly Family Income	Below ₹20,000	36	21.18
	₹20,001–40,000	54	31.76
	₹40,001–60,000	46	27.06
	Above ₹60,000	34	20.00
Total		170	100.00

The socio-economic profile of respondents reveals a fairly balanced representation of male and female consumers. A majority of respondents fall within the economically active age group of 25–45 years, indicating strong purchasing involvement. Most respondents possess undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, suggesting adequate awareness of sustainability issues. Salaried and self-employed individuals constitute the major occupational groups, while income distribution shows representation across all income categories, supporting the suitability of the sample for consumer behaviour analysis.

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Mean Score of Environmental Concern

Variable	Mean Score
Concern about environmental pollution and climate change	4.28
Environmental problems affect personal and family well-being	4.15
Personal responsibility to protect the environment	4.22
Concern about long-term environmental impact on future generations	4.31
Disturbance over environmental degradation	4.05
Protecting the environment should be a priority	4.34
Environmental issues require immediate attention	4.26
Overall Environmental Concern (Mean of EC1–EC7)	4.23

The mean score analysis shows that consumers have a high level of environmental concern, as all statements have mean values above 4.00. The highest mean score is for the statement that protecting the environment should be a priority, indicating strong concern and responsibility toward environmental protection. Consumers also show high concern about the long-term effects of environmental damage on future generations and about pollution and climate change. Overall, the mean score of 4.23 indicates that respondents are highly aware of environmental issues and consider them important. This suggests that environmental concern is strong among consumers and can play a significant role in influencing their engagement in sustainable practices.

Exploratory Factor Analysis for Perceived Value of Sustainable Products

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Measure	Value
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) Measure	0.88
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 1856.42$
Df	136
Sig.	0.000

The KMO value of 0.88 indicates excellent sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the data are suitable for factor analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.92	34.82	34.82
2	3.41	20.06	54.88
3	2.18	12.82	67.70
4	1.41	8.29	75.99

Four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were extracted, collectively explaining 75.99% of the total variance, which is considered very strong in social science research.

Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax Rotation)

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
PV1	0.78			
PV2	0.81			
PV3	0.76			

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PV4	0.72			
PV5		0.84		
PV6		0.82		
PV7		0.79		
PV8		0.75		
PV9			0.83	
PV10			0.86	
PV11			0.81	
PV12			0.78	
PV13				0.84
PV14				0.82
PV15				0.79
PV16				0.77
PV17				0.75

Naming of Factors

Factor	Items	Factor Name
Factor 1	PV1–PV4	Economic Value
Factor 2	PV5–PV8	Functional Value
Factor 3	PV9–PV12	Emotional Value
Factor 4	PV13–PV17	Social Value

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha indicates good internal consistency for all the constructs in the study. The Economic Value scale showed high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Functional Value also demonstrated strong reliability with an alpha value of 0.89. The Emotional Value construct achieved very high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. Social Value recorded the highest reliability, with an alpha value of 0.91. Overall, all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming that the measurement scales are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Assess the relationship between consumer engagement in sustainability and sustainable purchase behaviour.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between consumer engagement in sustainability and sustainable purchase behaviour.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant relationship between consumer engagement in sustainability and sustainable purchase behaviour.

Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
1	0.483	0.234	0.229	0.325

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Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	2.202	—	8.077	0.000
Consumer Engagement in Sustainability	0.505	0.483	7.155	0.000

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between consumer engagement in sustainability and sustainable purchase behaviour. The model summary reveals a moderate and positive association between the two constructs ($R = 0.483$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.234$) indicates that consumer engagement in sustainability accounts for 23.4 per cent of the variance in sustainable purchase behaviour, demonstrating a meaningful explanatory power of the model.

The regression results further show that consumer engagement in sustainability has a statistically significant and positive influence on sustainable purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.483$, $t = 7.155$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that as consumers become more actively engaged in sustainability related practices and values, their likelihood of engaging in sustainable purchasing behaviour increases correspondingly. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, confirming the significant role of consumer engagement in promoting sustainable purchase behaviour.

Correlation analysis between Environmental Concern (EC) and Consumer Engagement in Sustainability (CE)

Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Environmental Concern (EC)	7	0.89
Consumer Engagement in Sustainability (CE)	5	0.86

The Cronbach's alpha values for both constructs exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency of the measurement scales.

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Environmental Concern (EC)	170	4.18	0.58	2.90	5.00
Consumer Engagement in Sustainability (CE)	170	4.02	0.63	2.70	5.00

The mean values indicate that respondents possess high environmental concern and strong engagement in sustainability-related behaviors. The standard deviation values suggest acceptable variability among respondents.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Environmental Concern (EC)	Consumer Engagement in Sustainability (CE)
Environmental Concern (EC)	1	0.571**
Consumer Engagement in Sustainability (CE)	0.571**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	0.000
N	170	170

Hypothesis Testing

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Environmental Concern and Consumer Engagement in Sustainability. It is Accepted, since $p < 0.01$.

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between Environmental Concern and Consumer Engagement in Sustainability among 170 respondents. The results indicate a moderate and positive relationship between Environmental Concern and Consumer Engagement in Sustainability ($r = 0.571$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that consumers with higher levels of environmental concern are more likely to engage actively in sustainable consumption practices. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is accepted.

Suggestions Based on the Findings

Marketers should highlight the functional performance and economic advantages of sustainable products in order to minimize consumer hesitation and address price sensitivity associated with green purchasing. Firms should adopt transparent and credible green communication strategies, including the use of certified eco-labels, to strengthen consumer trust and enhance sustained engagement in sustainability. Awareness and educational programmes should be designed to translate environmental concern into active engagement, with a particular focus on community-based initiatives and participatory sustainability practices. Policymakers and local authorities should facilitate consumer engagement by introducing supportive policy measures, such as financial incentives, subsidies, and improved availability of sustainable products in local markets. Brands should strengthen emotional and social value creation by integrating sustainability initiatives with broader social responsibility and community welfare programmes.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that consumer engagement in sustainability plays a crucial role in translating environmental concern into sustainable purchase behaviour. Although consumers exhibit high levels of environmental awareness, active engagement is significantly driven by perceived value and meaningful participation in sustainability-related practices. The empirical evidence confirms that stronger engagement leads to higher adoption of sustainable purchasing behaviours. By addressing the intention–behaviour gap, this study contributes to the growing body of sustainability research and provides practical guidance for promoting sustainable consumption in emerging economy contexts such as Erode District.

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