

# **SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AS A CATALYST FOR BEHAVIORAL TRANSFORMATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION**

## **OVERVIEW**

Ms.D.Yamuna

Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of Commerce,  
Dwaraka Doss Goverdhan Doss Vaishnav College, Chennai.

[Yamunadhanasekar23@gmail.com](mailto:Yamunadhanasekar23@gmail.com)

Dr.G.Yamuna

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Commerce,  
Dwaraka Doss Goverdhan Doss Vaishnav College, Chennai.

[yamunag@dgvaishnavcollege.edu.in](mailto:yamunag@dgvaishnavcollege.edu.in)

## **Abstract**

Escalating environmental challenges and resource constraints have intensified the call for transformative shifts in consumption patterns. Although public awareness of sustainability issues has increased substantially, consistent pro-environmental behaviour remains limited. This disparity between stated intention and actual conduct underscores the need for mechanisms that move beyond informational campaigns. This conceptual study argues that sustainable consumer engagement functions as a catalytic process that stimulates behavioural transformation. Integrating insights from engagement theory and behavioural change models, the paper proposes that drivers such as transparency, participatory digital interaction, value congruence, and community involvement operate through psychological mechanisms—namely trust, emotional commitment, and perceived consumer effectiveness—to generate responsible consumption outcomes. The framework contributes to sustainable marketing scholarship by linking engagement structures with measurable behavioural shifts and offers propositions for empirical validation.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Consumer Engagement; Behaviour Change; Responsible Consumption; Sustainable Marketing; Consumer Psychology

## **1. Introduction**

Sustainability has become central to contemporary marketing and policy discourse. Despite

increasing concern about environmental degradation, consumers frequently fail to translate positive attitudes into consistent sustainable actions (Carrington et al., 2010). This persistent intention-behavior gap represents a critical theoretical and managerial problem. Traditional sustainability communication strategies have largely focused on awareness generation rather than behavioral reinforcement (Peattie & Crane, 2005). Consequently, deeper relational and participatory approaches are required to foster durable behavioral shifts. This paper introduces sustainable consumer engagement as a catalyst, drawing on engagement theory (Brodie et al., 2011) and behavioral models to propose a novel framework.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Consumer engagement theory emphasizes interactive, emotional, and cognitive investment in brand-related initiatives (Hollebeek et al., 2019). When applied to sustainability contexts, engagement extends beyond transactional exchanges to collaborative value creation and shared responsibility (Freeman, 1984). Behavioral frameworks such as the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and social norm perspectives (Stern, 2000; Thøgersen, 2006) further explain how attitudes, perceived control, and collective expectations influence action. Integrating these perspectives enables a more comprehensive explanation of sustainable behavioral transformation, addressing gaps in green marketing (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Leonidou et al., 2013).

### **Drivers of Sustainable Consumer Engagement**

Engagement is strengthened when organizations demonstrate transparency in sustainability reporting, encourage meaningful digital participation, align corporate values with consumer ethics, and cultivate community-based initiatives. Transparency builds credibility by disclosing supply chain impacts (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Participatory digital tools, like co-creation platforms, foster involvement (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). Value congruence aligns brand ethics with consumer principles, reducing skepticism. Community initiatives create shared identity, amplifying collective action (Schultz, 2014). These drivers collectively reduce barriers to engagement.

### **Psychological Mediators**

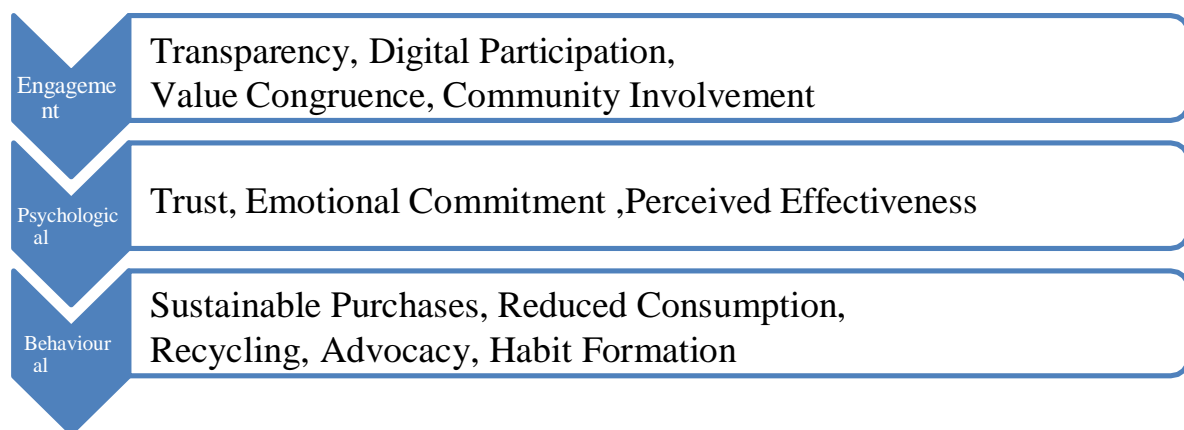
The relationship between engagement and behavior is mediated by psychological processes. Trust in organizational authenticity enhances receptivity to sustainability initiatives (Ellen et al., 1991). Emotional commitment fosters long-term attachment to responsible practices, turning sporadic actions into habits (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Perceived consumer effectiveness reinforces the belief

that individual actions contribute to broader environmental outcomes (Ellen et al., 1991). These mediators bridge engagement drivers with tangible change.

### Behavioral Outcomes

Effective engagement strategies ultimately translate into observable behavioral outcomes, including sustainable purchasing decisions, reduced material consumption, recycling practices, and advocacy for environmentally responsible brands (Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Sustained engagement also encourages habit formation, increasing the likelihood of long-term behavioral consistency (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Outcomes extend to advocacy, where engaged consumers influence peers (Ottman, 2017).

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**



### Research Propositions

P1: Engagement drivers positively influence trust in sustainability initiatives. P2: Trust enhances perceived consumer effectiveness.

P3: Perceived consumer effectiveness mediates the relationship between engagement and sustainable purchase behavior.

P4: Emotional commitment strengthens long-term responsible consumption. P5: Community participation amplifies sustainability advocacy.

### **Managerial Implications**

Organizations should design participatory sustainability ecosystems rather than isolated promotional campaigns. Providing measurable feedback regarding environmental impact can reinforce perceived effectiveness. Policymakers may complement such efforts through regulatory frameworks that discourage misleading environmental claims and incentivize responsible consumption.

### **Conclusion**

Sustainable consumer engagement represents a strategic pathway for bridging the intention–behaviour gap. By embedding transparency, trust-building, and participatory mechanisms into marketing strategy, organizations can stimulate meaningful behavioural transformation. The proposed conceptual model offers a foundation for future empirical investigation across industries and cultural contexts.

### **References**

- [1.] Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
- [2.] Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252–271.
- [3.] Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A., & Whitwell, G. J. (2010). Why ethical consumers don't walk their talk: Towards a framework for understanding the gap between ethical purchase intentions and actual buying behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 97(1), 139–158.
- [4.] Ellen, P. S., Wiener, J. L., & Cobb-Walgren, C. (1991). The role of perceived consumer effectiveness in motivating environmentally conscious behaviors. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 10(2), 102–117.
- [5.] Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman.
- [6.] Hollebeek, L. D., Srivastava, R. K., & Chen, T. (2019). SD logic–informed customer engagement: Integrative framework, revised fundamental propositions, and application to CRM. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 47(1), 161–185.
- [7.] Joshi, Y., & Rahman, Z. (2015). Factors affecting green purchase behaviour and future research directions. *International Strategic Management Review*, 3(1–2), 128–143.
- [8.] Leonidou, C. N., Katsikeas, C. S., & Morgan, N. A. (2013). “Greening” the marketing mix: Do firms do it and does it pay off? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), 151–170. McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2011). *Fostering sustainable*

- behavior: An introduction to community-based social marketing* (3rd ed.). New Society Publishers.
- [9.] Ottman, J. A. (2017). *The new rules of green marketing*. Routledge.
- [10.] Peattie, K., & Crane, A. (2005). Green marketing: Legend, myth, farce or prophesy? *Qualitative Market Research*, 8(4), 357–370.
- [11.] Peattie, K., & Peattie, S. (2009). Social marketing: A pathway to consumption reduction?
- [12.] *Journal of Business Research*, 62(2), 260–268.
- [13.] Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). Creating shared value. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1–2), 62–77.
- [14.] Schultz, P. W. (2014). Strategies for promoting proenvironmental behavior. *European Psychologist*, 19(2), 107–117.
- [15.] Stern, P. C. (2000). Toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behavior. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3), 407–424.
- [16.] Thøgersen, J. (2006). Norms for environmentally responsible behaviour: An extended taxonomy.
- [17.] *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 26(4), 247–261.