

# Sustainability Marketing and Green Consumerism: Examining the Role of Environmental Consciousness in Purchasing Decisions

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21074871>

Article History	Abstract
<b>Original Research Article</b>	<p><i>Sustainability marketing and green consumption have gained prominence in modern commercial contexts due to escalating worldwide apprehensions around environmental degradation, climate change, and resource depletion. This study investigates the impact of environmental awareness on customer purchasing behaviour within the context of sustainability marketing. The study examines how consciousness of environmental concerns influences attitudes, intentions, and actual purchasing behaviour for eco-friendly items and services. The study, use the Theory of Planned Behaviour as a framework, emphasises that consumer purchase decisions are shaped by attitudes toward sustainability, perceived societal pressure, and perceived behavioural control. Research indicates that although environmental awareness substantially influences customer intentions, a notable disparity persists between awareness and actual purchasing behaviour. This disparity is mostly due to obstacles including elevated product prices, restricted access to eco-friendly items, customer doubt, and greenwashing tactics employed by certain entities. The research identifies essential sustainability marketing methods, such as eco-labeling, green branding, and corporate social responsibility, as powerful instruments for influencing customer behaviour when executed credibly. Moreover, it underscores the responsibility of governments in governing environmental assertions and fostering sustainable consumption via supportive structures. The study shows that environmental awareness alone is unable to promote comprehensive green consumer behaviour without supported market frameworks and trustworthy marketing strategies. It advocates for more collaboration among enterprises, governmental bodies, and consumers to foster sustainable consumption and reconcile the disparity between environmental consciousness and purchasing behaviour in contemporary markets.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Sustainability Marketing, Green Consumerism, Environmental Consciousness, Purchasing Decisions.</p>
<b>Received: 05-05-2026</b>	
<b>Accepted: 08-06-2026</b>	
<b>Published: 30-06-2026</b>	
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<p><b>Citation:</b> Mary Uche Barango-Tariah, Ph.D &amp; Evelyn Irekpitan Nwosu, Ph.D. (2026). Sustainability Marketing and Green Consumerism: Examining the Role of Environmental Consciousness in Purchasing Decisions. UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (UKRJEBM), 2(6), 235-241.</p>	

## Introduction

Sustainability marketing has arisen as a pivotal advancement in contemporary marketing practices, propelled by escalating global apprehensions regarding climate change, environmental deterioration, and resource exhaustion. Sustainability marketing, in contrast to traditional marketing that emphasises profit maximisation and consumer satisfaction, incorporates environmental and social responsibility into product development, branding, and communication methods. This transition indicates an increasing acknowledgement that sustained commercial

success is intricately linked to ecological equilibrium and appropriate consumer behaviours. Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan assert that modern marketing should transcend mere customer delight to incorporate societal welfare and environmental responsibility as fundamental goals (Kotler et al., 2017). Peattie contends that sustainable marketing signifies a paradigm change, including ecological constraints into market decision-making processes and transforming the creation and delivery of value (Peattie, 2016).

Simultaneously, green consumerism has surged as customers increasingly base their purchasing decisions on environmental factors, including product lifecycle impact, packaging sustainability, and company environmental accountability. This behavioural change is primarily driven by increasing environmental awareness, which denotes individuals' recognition and concern regarding environmental challenges and their readiness to engage in ecologically responsible actions. Studies show that environmentally aware consumers tend to favour eco-labeled items and endorse firms that exhibit sustainability commitments (Ottman, 2017). Moreover, sustainability-focused consumer behaviour is bolstered by international sustainability initiatives and institutional structures like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which promote responsible consumption and production practices globally (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020). The correlation between environmental awareness and consumer purchasing behaviour is becoming increasingly significant in both advanced and emerging economies. Consumers have transitioned from being passive recipients of marketing messages to active assessors of business environmental performance. This has prompted businesses to implement green marketing methods, like eco-labeling, carbon-neutral branding, and ethical sourcing, to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers. Kotler et al. (2017) assert that consumer behaviour in the digital era is significantly shaped by transparency and ethical credibility, rendering sustainability a competitive advantage. Ottman (2017) emphasises that green consumers are driven by environmental concerns as well as perceived product quality and belief in company sustainability assertions. Notwithstanding this expansion, a disparity persists between environmental consciousness and real consumer purchasing behaviour, commonly termed the "green attitude-behavior gap." A multitude of customers articulate environmental concerns yet fail to consistently convert this into sustainable purchasing behaviour, influenced by variables such as price sensitivity, restricted access to eco-friendly items, and scepticism regarding corporate assertions. Peattie (2016) elucidates that this disparity is a significant obstacle for marketers striving to synchronise sustainability messaging with customer behaviour. Moreover, UNEP (2020) indicates that structural impediments, like insufficient infrastructure and feeble regulatory frameworks in numerous areas, significantly constrain the efficacy of green consumption. This study aims to investigate the impact of environmental consciousness on purchasing decisions in the realm of sustainability marketing. The objective is to investigate the degree to which customer knowledge influences purchasing behaviour and how companies might adeptly formulate marketing strategies that connect intention with action.

Comprehending this relationship is crucial for politicians, marketers, and organisations aiming to foster sustainable consumption patterns and attain enduring environmental objectives.

### Conceptual Clarification

Sustainability marketing denotes a marketing strategy that incorporates environmental preservation, social accountability, and economic feasibility into business operations and communication. It transcends conventional marketing by guaranteeing that items and services are conceived, manufactured, and marketed in manners that reduce environmental impact while enhancing enduring societal value. This notion is grounded in the overarching sustainability dialogue, wherein firms are anticipated to function within ecological constraints while also fulfilling consumer demands. Belz and Peattie contend that sustainability marketing fundamentally involves connecting organisational objectives with environmental and social imperatives to provide long-term value for both enterprises and society (Belz & Peattie, 2016). Martin and Schouten assert that sustainable marketing necessitates a fundamental transformation in mindset, positioning ecological restrictions as key to strategic decision-making rather than as secondary issues (Martin & Schouten, 2017).

Green consumerism refers to the consumption pattern wherein individuals favour products and services deemed to have a low adverse environmental impact. This includes the acquisition of eco-labeled items, recyclable packaging, energy-efficient devices, and ethically sourced commodities. Eco-conscious consumers are generally driven by environmental awareness, ethical responsibility, and concern for posterity. Gupta and Ogden assert that green consumption is significantly shaped by perceived consumer effectiveness, defined as the conviction that individual acts can substantially enhance environmental conditions (Gupta & Ogden, 2019). Moreover, Joshi and Rahman emphasise that green consumer behaviour is influenced by a confluence of personal beliefs, social factors, and trust in corporate environmental assertions (Joshi & Rahman, 2016).

Environmental consciousness denotes the degree of awareness individuals have concerning ecological issues such as pollution, deforestation, climate change, and resource depletion, together with their readiness to engage in activities that alleviate environmental damage. It is a cognitive and affective construct that encompasses awareness of environmental issues and emotional investment in ecological health. Studies indicate that persons possessing greater environmental awareness are more inclined to participate in sustainable consumption behaviours and endorse eco-friendly companies. Kollmuss

and Agyeman assert that environmental consciousness is a significant predictor of pro-environmental behaviour; yet, it does not invariably result in action due to contextual impediments (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2018). Steg and Vlek assert that environmental concern influences sustainable decision-making through its interaction with social norms and perceived behavioural control (Steg & Vlek, 2019).

Eco-friendly products are goods and services intended to minimise environmental effect across their whole life cycle, encompassing manufacture, distribution, use, and disposal. These items frequently highlight renewable materials, energy efficiency, recyclability, and diminished carbon emissions. The rising demand for eco-friendly items indicates heightened consumer awareness of environmental degradation and a commitment to sustainable manufacturing techniques. White, Habib, and Hardisty contend that the adoption of eco-friendly products is profoundly affected by psychological factors, including moral identity and social signalling (White et al., 2019). Nisa et al. assert that consumers are more inclined to select sustainable items when environmental advantages are explicitly conveyed and socially endorsed (Nisa et al., 2017).

Sustainable consumption denotes the utilisation of commodities and services that fulfil fundamental requirements while reducing environmental harm and resource exhaustion. It underscores ethical consuming practices that take into account environmental, social, and economic ramifications. This concept is fundamental to global sustainability initiatives, especially the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which advocate for responsible consumption and production. Jackson characterises sustainable consumption as a transition from material-intensive lifestyles to more resource-efficient and environmentally aware practices (Jackson, 2017). Seyfang emphasises that sustainable consumption necessitates both individual behavioural modification and systemic transformation in production and regulatory frameworks (Seyfang, 2016).

## Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) offers a theoretical framework for comprehending the impact of environmental awareness on purchase choices in sustainability marketing. The theory asserts that human behaviour is primarily influenced by behavioural intentions, which are determined by three fundamental factors: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the realm of green consumerism, a consumer's intention to acquire eco-friendly products is shaped by their favourable or unfavourable assessment of sustainable consumption (attitude), the perceived social pressure to partake in

environmentally responsible actions (subjective norms), and their perceived facilitation or hindrance in executing such behaviours (perceived behavioural control). Ajzen asserts that intention is the most direct predictor of actual behaviour, indicating that robust environmental awareness must convert into intention prior to manifesting as purchasing action (Ajzen, 1991). This hypothesis in sustainable marketing elucidates why customers cognisant of environmental concerns may refrain from purchasing green products if they regard them as costly, unattainable, or without social endorsement. Hagger and Chatzisarantis assert that behavioural intentions are dependable indicators of actual consumer behaviour in various domains, such as health and environmental acts (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2016). Yadav and Pathak illustrate that environmental attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are significant predictors of green purchase intentions among consumers in emerging markets, underscoring the theory's applicability to sustainability-oriented consumption behaviour (Yadav & Pathak, 2017).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour elucidates how companies might affect customer purchase decisions through planned interventions in sustainable marketing. Marketers can cultivate favourable attitudes by highlighting the environmental advantages of products, reinforce subjective norms through social proof and eco-labeling initiatives, and improve perceived behavioural control by rendering sustainable items more inexpensive and accessible. Green marketing tactics serve not only as knowledge resources but also as psychological instruments that shape intention formation. Consumers exposed to robust environmental marketing and peer endorsement are more inclined to cultivate positive attitudes toward eco-friendly brands. Kaiser and Wilson contend that perceived behavioural control substantially affects environmental behaviour, particularly when individuals see their activities as having a genuine environmental impact (Kaiser & Wilson, 2017). Furthermore, Paul, Modi, and Patel assert that consumers' intentions to make environmentally friendly purchases are considerably enhanced when sustainability messages are integrated with affordability and trust in product assertions, indicating that intention formation is multifaceted and contextually reliant (Paul et al., 2016). The Theory of Planned Behaviour offers a thorough framework for comprehending the disparity between environmental awareness and actual purchase choices, while also providing pragmatic direction for sustainability marketing techniques designed to close that gap.

## Environmental Consciousness and Consumer Behaviour

Consumers' perceptions, evaluations, and choices of items in the market are significantly influenced by their

awareness of environmental issues. At the same time that it represents an individual's awareness of environmental issues such as pollution, climate change, deforestation, and waste accumulation, it also indicates that individual's willingness to adopt behaviours that reduce environmental harm. The literature on consumer behaviour frequently establishes a connection between environmental consciousness and moral responsibility and personal values, which in turn directs purchasing decisions toward options that are more environmentally friendly. Stern contends that concern for the environment is not only informational but rather highly value-driven, which influences consumers' propensity to engage in purchasing patterns that are beneficial to the environment (Stern, 2018). Similarly, Schmitt, Aknin, and Schmuck highlight the fact that environmentally conscious customers have a tendency to receive emotional gratification from sustainable consumption, which in turn reinforces their preference for ecologically friendly items (Schmitt et al., 2017). Environmental consciousness, in this sense, becomes both a cognitive awareness and an emotional motivator that changes how consumers interpret marketing messages and product qualities. In other words, environmental consciousness is a dual reality.

There are other psychological and social aspects that function as mediators between the influence of environmental consciousness on purchase behaviour. Consumers that have a high level of environmental consciousness are more inclined to evaluate items based on their ecological footprint, the sustainability of their packaging, and the environmental responsibility of corporations. However, due to the presence of external constraints such as price, convenience, and availability, this awareness does not necessarily ensure consistent green purchasing behaviour due to the fact that there are other factors to consider. Truelove and Gillis argue that environmental behaviour is formed by a complex interaction between human knowledge and contextual restrictions. This means that even consumers who are extremely attentive of their actions may fail to act in a sustainable manner under specific circumstances (Truelove & Gillis, 2016). Similarly, Nguyen, Lobo, and Greenland underline the fact that social impact and cultural context play a crucial role in determining whether or not environmental consciousness translates into actual purchase decisions. This is especially true in developing nations where green product marketplaces are still in the process of growing (Nguyen et al., 2017). Therefore, environmental consciousness functions as a required but not sufficient condition for sustainable consumption. In order for it to completely translate into behaviour, it is necessary to have supporting market and regulatory contexts.

## Sustainability Marketing Strategies

The term "sustainability marketing strategies" refers to the deliberate actions and communication approaches that are adopted by organisations in order to promote environmentally responsible products and influence consumer behaviour toward greener consumption choices. As firms respond to expanding environmental awareness and regulatory pressure for sustainable production and consumption, these tactics are becoming increasingly vital; they are becoming increasingly essential. Eco-labeling is one of the most extensively utilised ways. It gives customers information about the influence that products have on the environment, which enables them to make better educated purchasing decisions. The findings of research indicate that eco-labels both increase consumer trust and minimise uncertainty regarding the sustainability promises made by products. According to Delmas and Burbano's argument, eco-labeling systems are effective when they are credible, transparent, and supported by third-party certification. This is because these characteristics lessen the knowledge imbalance that exists between businesses and customers (Delmas & Burbano, 2017). In a similar vein, Thøgersen emphasises that eco-labels have a considerable impact on customers' decision-making about purchases when they already have a modest level of environmental awareness. This underscores the significance of labelling as a crucial instrument in the realm of sustainability marketing communication (Thøgersen, 2016).

Green branding is another important marketing technique for sustainability. This strategy entails establishing a company as environmentally responsible through the use of messaging, product design, and corporate identity. In addition to concentrating on the characteristics of the product, green branding also takes into consideration the ethical standing of the company. Customers are more likely to remain loyal to businesses that successfully incorporate sustainability into their brand identity, and these businesses also have an advantage over their competitors in markets that are environmentally concerned. According to Nguyen, Yang, and Melewar, green brand equity is greatly influenced by consumer perceptions of authenticity and consistency in environmental statements. This means that businesses need to make sure that their efforts to promote sustainability are real and not just superficial (Nguyen et al., 2019). As an additional point of interest, Leonidou and Skarmas emphasise that the effectiveness of green marketing is contingent upon the alignment between the environmental performance of corporations and the messages that are communicated to them. This is because discrepancies can result in consumers becoming sceptical and less trusting of the brand (Leonidou & Skarmas,

2018). Consequently, in order to effectively influence purchase decisions, sustainability marketing strategies need to go beyond simple advertising and include environmental responsibility into the fundamental operations of the organization.

### **Challenges and Barriers to Green Consumerism**

Despite the increasing awareness of environmental issues and the proliferation of sustainability marketing methods, green consumerism is still confronted with numerous substantial challenges that restrict its complete adoption in many countries. The phenomenon known as "greenwashing," in which businesses fraudulently or exaggeratedly depict their products or operations as being environmentally beneficial, is one of the most serious challenges that we face today. Using this method weakens the trust of consumers and develops scepticism toward statements that are genuine regarding sustainability. Lyon and Montgomery argue that greenwashing causes market signals to be distorted and lowers the effectiveness of environmental labelling. This is because it makes it difficult for customers to differentiate between genuine and false claims (Lyon & Montgomery, 2019). In a similar vein, Parguel, Benoit-Moreau, and Larceneux contend that the exposure of consumers to repeated environmental claims that are inaccurate results in a rise in scepticism, which in turn has a negative impact on the credibility of sustainability marketing as a whole (Parguel et al., 2017).

The significantly greater cost of environmentally friendly products in comparison to conventional alternatives is another significant obstacle to green consumerism. This barrier makes it difficult for many customers, particularly those living in developing economies, to purchase environmentally friendly products. Although people who are concerned about the environment may indicate that they are eager to buy environmentally friendly products, their actual purchasing behaviour is frequently limited by factors such as their income level and their sensitivity to price. According to Testa et al. (2016), the price premium continues to be one of the most significant obstacles to sustainable consumption. This is especially true in situations when the environmental advantages are not immediately seen or quantified within the context of the consumption. In addition, Gupta and Ogden highlight the fact that even when consumers have strong environmental views, economic concerns frequently take precedence over sustainability objectives. This results in a continuous attitude-behavior gap in green purchasing decisions (Gupta & Ogden, 2019). This shows that environmental consciousness alone may not be sufficient to induce widespread adoption of sustainable products if there are not also economic incentives and affordable alternatives available.

The restricted availability and accessibility of environmentally friendly products in many retail contexts is another limitation that must be taken into consideration. It is challenging for customers to continuously engage in environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour since sustainable alternatives are either limited or not broadly accessible in a number of places. This structural limitation lessens the impact that environmental consciousness has on the choices that consumers make about their consumption. (White et al., 2019) White, Hardisty, and Habib suggest that in order to bring about a change in behaviour toward sustainability, it is not only necessary to be motivated, but it is also necessary to have easy access to environmentally friendly options within the framework of everyday purchase situations. In a similar vein, Steg and Vlek point out that even customers who are highly driven may not be able to behave in a sustainable manner if the infrastructure and market systems do not promote environmentally beneficial choices (Steg & Vlek, 2019). As a consequence of this, the effectiveness of sustainability marketing is diminished, and the expansion of green consumerism is slowed down, as a result of obstacles such as greenwashing, high costs, and limited accessibility.

### **Conclusion**

Sustainability marketing and green consumerism signify a significant transformation in modern marketing practices, wherein environmental accountability is being included into business strategy and consumer choices. This study demonstrates that environmental awareness significantly influences purchase decisions, as consumers cognisant of environmental degradation are more inclined to seek eco-friendly options. The correlation between awareness and actual behaviour is frequently complex, since psychological, economic, and structural impediments often influence the decision-making process. The Theory of Planned Behaviour illustrates that attitudes, social influence, and perceived control jointly influence the extent to which environmental awareness manifests in actual purchase behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Recent study indicates that although customers may demonstrate significant environmental concern, their behaviours are frequently influenced by convenience, cost, and confidence in product assertions (Paul et al., 2016).

From a marketing standpoint, enterprises are essential in reconciling the disparity between environmental consciousness and real consumption patterns. To cultivate customer trust, sustainability marketing techniques, including eco-labeling, green branding, and corporate social responsibility activities, must be executed with credibility and transparency. When customers regard sustainability assertions as credible, they are more inclined to cultivate favourable attitudes and heightened buy

intentions toward eco-friendly products. Studies indicate that transparency in environmental communication markedly improves company credibility and consumer loyalty in sustainability-focused marketplaces (Delmas & Burbano, 2017). Moreover, companies that embed sustainability into their fundamental operations instead of regarding it as a marketing tactic are more likely to attain enduring competitive advantage in progressively environmentally aware markets (Leonidou & Skarmas, 2018).

The findings suggest that governments must recognise that promoting green consumerism necessitates more than just awareness initiatives. Governments and regulatory agencies must provide conducive settings that promote sustainable consumption by providing subsidies for environmentally friendly products, enforcing stringent regulations against greenwashing, and investing in sustainable production infrastructure. Policy interventions are crucial in emerging economies because cost and accessibility pose significant obstacles to green consumption. Research indicates that structural support and regulatory enforcement are crucial for preventing sustainable marketing initiatives from being compromised by deceptive claims or market inefficiencies (Lyon & Montgomery, 2019). Moreover, public education activities that bolster environmental literacy can augment the efficacy of sustainability-focused legislation by elevating consumer engagement and accountability (Steg & Vlek, 2019).

In summary, environmental awareness is a significant yet insufficient motivator of sustainable purchase behaviour. Although it dramatically affects consumer attitudes and intentions, its effect on actual behaviour is contingent upon a confluence of market conditions, regulatory support, and marketing credibility. Consequently, promoting green consumerism necessitates a collaborative endeavour among enterprises, governmental bodies, and consumers to surmount existing obstacles and enhance the connection between environmental consciousness and action. When these factors are properly matched, sustainability marketing can serve as a transformative catalyst for both economic development and environmental conservation in the global marketplace.

## Recommendations

1. Businesses should ensure that sustainability claims are genuine, transparent, and verifiable to build long-term consumer trust and reduce skepticism associated with greenwashing. Companies must integrate environmental responsibility into their core operations rather than treating it as a marketing trend.

2. Marketers should focus on improving accessibility and affordability of eco-friendly products. This can be achieved through cost optimization strategies, subsidies, and wider distribution channels that make sustainable products more available to a broader consumer base.
3. Governments and regulatory agencies should strengthen policies that discourage misleading environmental claims and enforce strict standards for eco-labeling. This will help create a fair marketplace where consumers can make informed and confident purchasing decisions.
4. Environmental education should be intensified at community and institutional levels to deepen public understanding of sustainability issues. Increased awareness will help bridge the gap between environmental consciousness and actual purchasing behavior.

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