

DRIVERS OF SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING: CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING IN A QUALITY- CONSCIOUS ERA

Mr. Rajesh Singh

Assistant Professor,
Harcourt Butler Technical University, Kanpur, UP
Email: rajesh444008@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5060-7551>

Ms. Akriti Singh

Research Scholar,
Management Studies Department, MMMUT, Gorakhpur
Email: akritisingh448@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7891-8665>

Mr. Raunit Raj

Assistant Marketing Manager,
Solution Wagon, Zirakpur, Punjab
Email: raunitraj0391@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8660-2361>

Ms. Jaya Singh

Research Scholar,
Management Studies Department, MMMUT, Gorakhpur
Email: jayasingh.ut@gmail.com
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-8323-9544>

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to identify and analyze the key drivers influencing sustainable purchasing behavior among consumers in an increasingly quality-conscious era. It seeks to understand how factors such as environmental awareness, perceived product quality, social influence, and ethical considerations shape consumer decision-making. Design: The research adopts a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data from consumers. Relevant variables are identified through an extensive literature review, and analytical techniques such as multi-criteria decision-making (MCDM) are applied to evaluate and prioritize the drivers of sustainable purchasing. Findings: The results indicate that perceived quality, environmental concern, and trust in sustainable claims are among the most influential drivers of consumer choices. Social norms and awareness also play a significant role, while price sensitivity continues to act as a moderating factor in sustainable purchasing decisions. Policy Implications: The findings suggest that policymakers and businesses should focus on promoting transparency, improving product quality, and

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enhancing consumer awareness to encourage sustainable consumption. Effective labeling and awareness campaigns can further strengthen consumer trust and adoption. Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature by integrating quality consciousness with sustainability perspectives and applying advanced decision-making techniques to prioritize influencing factors in consumer behavior.

Keywords: Sustainable purchasing, consumer behavior, quality consciousness, environmental awareness, decision-making

INTRODUCTION

The consumption pattern of the 21st-century consumers is more inclined towards traditional product qualities and emerging qualities that are of a related nature when it comes to sustainability (Santos et al., 2024, p. 17) (Jisha et al., 2026) traditional product qualities and new qualities that relate to sustainability (Saes et al., 2025, p. 4).

People no longer peruse the price and functionality of products when they are buying a good. They also test whether the good is an ecologically friendly good or one that is ethically produced (Kim & Kim, 2025). Sustainable purchasing determinants have become more and more necessary to know as consumer landscape is changing. The interest of consumers is focusing more on the quality of products with more emphasis on the green components (Liang, 2024, p. 205). Economic growth has invariably resulted into increased consumption and resource drainage. More and more individuals are beginning to discover that buying behaviour, which is oriented on green buying, and consumptive in less damaging manners, can lessen the adverse impacts (Milichovsky and Koudelkova, 2025, p. 132).

Change of environmental awareness, perceived quality of green products, income, (Lu, 2024, p. 272) cause the changes in the sense of sustainable consumption. Csorba et al., 2023 (p. 31) report that positive attitude towards the environment and the knowledge about the ecological issues are positively correlated with the purchase intention of green products. However, it has been observed that there is the existence of an attitude-behavior gap whereby consumers will not buy the items with green attributes, even when they have a positive attitude towards the same. This will occur either by a perceived trade-off between high price and low convenience or uncertainty about the effectiveness of green claims (Zencir & Korkmaz, 2024, p. 4). To bridge this gap, it would help to view the factors that relate intention with action in an overall perspective. It is relevant to find out the connection between the aspects of a product, its perception of quality and value of sustainability it has (Suh & Yoo, 2024). The research paper will examine the variables of consumer attitude, perceived quality, environmental consciousness and cost implicated in sustainable purchasing in the context of quality consciousness of the world (Islam and Khan, 2024).

The paper explores the effects of perceived quality features and sustainability interaction to consumer liking and the degree to which consumers can pay a premium to purchase sustainable products. It is within this paper that the moderating effect of both subjective norms and the environmental concern on the relationship between perceived quality and consumption of green products will also be explored. (Narassima et al 2025) It is not clear what it is referring to. Please give additional information or in case this is the only text, please give additional texts. Additionally, the study will determine the effects of social economic and individual psychological attributes on sustainable consumption behavior. Further information on biobased products will give an understanding on consumer intention towards a sustainable consumption. The aim is to provide understanding on how consumers balance their vision of quality and their demand towards environmental friendliness. Ultimately this can open business and policy action opportunities that could promote a more sustainable consumption. There can be a green attitude of consumers. However, it does not mean that they purchase sustainable products. Such discrepancy between reaction is referred to as the green attitude-behavior gap (Margariti et al., 2024; Zhuo et al., 2022).

As consumers often choose between attribute price, quality and sustainability. There exists one gap that individuals are either not aware or have various assumptions to which of the 3 attributes should be prioritized. This occurs when they consider numerous features. This difference occurs since the products are considered inferior or can simply get disappearance in the shelves of the stores. Moreover, clients are isometric to conventional items and do not think about purchasing SE items (Gleim & Lawson, 2014; Rodrigo & Mendis, 2023, p. 136). (Reppmann et al, 2024, pp. 3; Ross & Milne, 2020). The limitations to green consumption such as quality and efficiency of green products perception, marketing of green products needs to be established to fill the gap and promote green consumption. This analysis on consumer decision making process of green perceived quality and price sensitivity is critical to comprehending what has contributed to the intentions to purchase green product in the circular economy (Lopes et al., 2024 p.866; Tan et al., 2025) which can help jump-start the process of green transition toward future sustainable production and consumption (Finger et al., 2020).

Yang et al. (2024, p. 3) explain that in a circular economy, there is a preference towards long-lasting and reusable products, but now that term is being exposed as somewhat paradoxical to the average shopper due to the seeming contradiction of sustainability and quality. The

study examines the manner in which consumers incorporate these words. The study will look into consumer behaviour and behaviour towards the circular economy, and what level of awareness and interest consumers have in purchasing durable, repairable or second-hand goods. The research will examine the role played by aesthetic and material views of green products in increasing consumer value perceptions and increasing their intention to buy. To drive mass adoption, ethical argument is insufficient. Firstly, we should examine the literature available to us so as to have a rudimentary idea of the psychological, social and economic aspects that lead consumers to sustainable products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proposed research will collect the data provided by the existing research on the attitudes of consumers towards sustainability, attitudes towards perceived product quality and resistance/adoption of greener substitutes. This will also assist in the missing studies identification. It will focus on the unique barriers to green consumption and why consumers fail to use options that are sustainable even when they claim to be concerned about the environment (Szaban et al., 2025, p. 2). Nicolau and Petcu (2025) suggest that the perceived value of the consumer regarding sustainable products and its intended purchase give more weightage to its aesthetic and material attributes as opposed to the ethical attributes of the products. Furthermore, how various external factors such as policies, commercial marketing, cultural factors and others influence favouring pro-environmental behaviour and adopting a circular economy product will be examined in this review as well (Duarte et al., 2024, p. 7).

The text will then explore how consumers can also play a role in the development of a circular economy through the lens of the individual consumer, their consumer behaviour, and their direct interactions with a circular packaging and product circularity (Bucur, 2023, p. 38; Steenis et al., 2018). It looks at the impact that the notion of sustainable packaging has on consumer choice in the example of the cosmetic and hygiene sector (Kaestner et al, 2023, p. 3266). Due to the notoriously existing attitude/behaviour gap in sustainability research, the review will also comment on the methods employed by the circular economy consumer behaviour studies.

The short-comings of solely relying on the given intention or awareness (Hobson et al. 2021, p. 128970; Keshavarz et al. 2025) are evident. Consequently, opinions of behavioural economics as well as an empirical study of actual purchasing behaviour will be involved in this analysis to demonstrate more strong outcomes as to the participation in the circular economy of consumers (Khan and Bisaria, 2025; Vidal-Ayuso et al., 2023).

This is a systematic review that aims at offering an integrated interpretation of consumer reactions in regards to circular products. It achieves this by identifying the most prevalent driver and barrier of consumer responses and categorizing them on the consumer journey (Pasqualotto et al., 2023, p. 39; Serra & Alfinito, 2025). This study aims to resolve the gap in literature of the circular economy related to the absence of factors related to customers, which lead to adoption, and, therefore, offers certain guidelines on empirical research (Pasqualotto et al., 2023, p. 36). Further, the scope of the circular economy strategies analyzed in this review will be increased compared to former reviews, including recycling. It will also examine food packaging which is a product that is bought more often and is more perishable. As stated by Rietz & Kremel 2023.

It may increase knowledge of the effects of the consumer behaviour on the packaging product life cycle analysis. It might also indicate what behavioural determinants affect the refusal, reuse of the packaging product and recycling (Corona et al., 2023, p. 81). Expansive conceptualizations are valuable because earlier literature reviews could be restrictive in terms of circularity, which could easily overlook the past already knowledgeable research on the practice of recycling and reuse Rietz and Kremel (2023, p. 415). Moreover, the article will feature contributions of the behavioural and social sciences to enhance an improved perception of the obstacles and incentives to consumer adoption of circular packaging that are typically not prominently represented in the life cycle assessments (Corona et al 2023: 82).

The report helps in bridging the gap in consumer behaviour and its influence on environmental evaluation of packaging and requests a broader spectrum of variability in consumer behaviour in life cycle studies (Corona et al., 2022, p. 82). It introduces a new framework that demonstrates how consumer behaviour may lead to the successful adoption of circular economy policies, namely in product development and waste management, via the consumer journey (Pasqualotto et al., 2023, p. 37). This perspective acknowledges that efficient transfers towards a circular economy is a matter in which consumers play a significant role and are involved in circular practices. It was not the typical view in earlier literature since the researcher emphasis has been process producer oriented (Rietz & Kremel, 2023, p. 414; Serra & Alfinito, 2025).

It is therefore a personal request to see how decisions and actions can be learnt to interact with system level interventions to either aid or hinder the transition to a more circular economy that is consumer journey-focused (Pasqualotto et al., 2023, p. 37). The study will finally be able to identify the gaps of interventions that can be instituted in marketing, policy development, design innovation etc to enhance consumer involvement in the consumption circle. This research focuses on how consumers behave regarding packaging of food in a circular way. Rietz, Kremel (2023, p. 414) also point out, that our food products should have more eco-friendly and biodegradable packaging as per

the consequences of climate change. Moreover, it will also analyze the highly influential but mostly neglected post-consumption actions of consumers that impact the entire life cycle evaluation of circular packaging systems, including storage, cleaning, and transportation (Rietz and Kremel, 2023, p. 429). This comprehensive synthesis will also make reference to the scanty research on consumer behavior with respect to circulatory packaging in a third world country. There is variability in cultures and waste management infrastructure in the world (Rietz and Kremel, 2023, p. 413).

The research aims to learn the role of socio-economic attributes and waste disposal regulations in these places in determining consumer interest in circular packaging. Further, the relevance of the need to comprehend the perception of consumers of cost-benefit trade-off of being a member of the circular economy as one of the significant yet least investigated dimensions shall be highlighted in the review (Pasqualotto et al., 2023, p. 46). The goal of the review, in the latter case, is to inform the businesses and policies towards a broader implementation of sustainable consumption within a quality-minded market. Since consumer acceptance is a necessary step to a circular organization, we will explore how communication and marketing can generate consumer acceptance towards the circular products (Gomes et al., 2023, p. 1406).

This implies making inquiries on how the mental constructs and systemic views that people have towards consumers can impede or promote the intended circular behaviours (Corona et al., 2023, p. 91). It will also observe the progression of different circular business models (e.g. product-as-a-service or refill) by consumers based on their environmental awareness or cost benefit. The writers mention Lopez and Legardeur (2024, p. 1417); Rietz and Kremel (2023, p. 429). Types of incentive systems to be studied in this research will include deposit-refund systems to help in motivating the consumers to use circular packaging. The group will also critically examine the feasibility as well as the environmental disadvantages of these systems. (Rietz & Kremel, 2023, p. 430).

Circular products can be analyzed in terms of the consumers. Among them can be a thorough examination of consumer decisions on products. Also, explain why other products are not as attractive. Finally, the systematic study will highlight a critical gap in the current body of literature about consumer behaviour in the circular economy and therefore will create a robust research agenda in the future (Rietz & Kremel, 2023).

Another missing area is that no research is done on various population segments engaging in the solutions of the circular economy, especially in lower/middle-income countries where the socio-economic factors play a crucial role in behaviour intention. It involves examining what perceptions of quality, durability, aesthetics, and monetary incentives will result in consumer acceptance of loops in various products and segments (Eisenreich ET AL., 2022, p. 134382).

In addition, the review discusses how these forces, and novel digital technologies contribute to enhancing the transparency and traceability of circular supply chains along with the related consumer choice (Agarwal et al., 2025). The project will entail evaluating the consumer engagement strategies that have proved successful in shifting us to a circular economy and how we can harness pre-purchase decisions that is another intervention point though undoubtedly a critical one (Keshavarz et al, 2025). A number of factors define consumer involvement in the uptake of circular products. These are long life products and are reused in addition to being remanufactured. They include consumer awareness, perceived risk, trade-offs in finance and perceived product quality. Communicating the environmental benefits, which is also important, is necessary (Serra & Alfinito, 2025).

We have to thoroughly understand the psychological and sociological motivation behind pro-environmental behaviour. This would assist professionals to minimise the intention-behaviour gap in sustainable consumption (Benton and Stasch, 2024, p. 587). The review will integrate the existing literature on the role of social dimensions, values and norms on consumer behavioural intention in connection to the circle products/services to give a more comprehensive picture of pro-circular consumption (Birgovan et al., 2024, p. 17).

A major weakness of existing studies lies with the minimal insight into intrinsic behavioural variables, in all their forms and types such as espoused dispositions and mindsets; as well as cultural norms and practices that are supplementary in the formation of consumer behaviour in relation to the presence of circular economy endeavors beyond perceptions and intentions (Milios, 2022, p. 2). The influences of culture on the consumer decision-making process to the circular economy should be analyzed in the future, as the awareness of the environment and the level of infrastructure varies around the globe (Ubaidillah & Zulkarnain, 2025, p. 107).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This systematic review research paper concerning consumer behaviour will concern itself with drivers of sustainable consumption as perceived in literature of a market that is quality conscious. The analysis which will be adopted by the paper will be rigorous and will identify the patterns, the discrepancies and the gaps in research. PRISMA methodology will be used in the selection process to guarantee the transparency of the selection, screening, evaluation of eligibility and inclusion of peer-reviewed articles and reports (Keshavarz et al., 2025).

The study will also include many searches in Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed using a multitude of keywords pertinent to sustainable purchasing, consumer behaviour, circular economy and quality perception, etc to ensure the optimal amount of capture. Keywords such as sustainable consumption, green purchase, circle consumption, eco-labeling, consumer attitude, perceived quality, purchase intention etc will be utilised in order to achieve the most optimal amount of capture. We also conducted the snowballing method, a method that enriches an early root search strategy, to scan through the reference list of the highly cited articles and review papers to identify other additional literature that are of interest to the study but were not identified in the search of key words (Corsini et al., 2024, p. 1962).

The search will be geographically constrained only to Europe studies having a great influence on the mindset of consumers to sustain uniformity in the cultural and socio-economic context of consumers. We will however consider a number of studies conducted in other regions as long as they have a unique theoretical contribution or when they adopt a different methodology approach not found in Europe (Lopez & Legardeur, 2024, p. 1418). The model will be in two phases. The initial phase will consist of a comprehensive literature review, which will outline some crucial concepts and theories of the circular economy consumption. The analysis of some articles as a sample to identify the results of the literature and consumption behaviour (Bucur, 2023 p. 40). End-to-end approach and methodology as per (Yusoff et al., 2023) and (Cecchini et al., 2018, p. 555).

Experimental economics has demonstrated the tendency of consumers towards sustainable goods. In doing so, a methodical approach will be established that will enable recognising, choosing, reviewing and generalising all applicable empirical evidence objectively to render the current level of knowledge transparent and reproducible (Birgovan et al, 2024, p. 18). Literature chosen by researchers should be methodologically coherent, and its themes (Teixeira, 2025). Of some criteria will be selected. A systematic review practice (Pasqualotto et al., 2023, p. 39; Piras et al., 2023, p. 586) implies that the search mechanisms will include a combination of words (with the use of logical operators and wildcards).

The steps include titles screening and full text reviews of articles selected as relevant through the use of exclusion and inclusion criteria so that only the most qualitative and relevant studies will be selected (Dada et al), 2024 page 207. In a nutshell, it can be stated that such a systematic framework is directed at establishing a framework of understanding the determinants of sustainable purchasing behaviours in a quality-driven market, which may guide future research and interventions (Komyshev et al., 2024; Marinelli, 2025). Our results will be thematically synthesized in a new analysis. A qualitative content analysis could also be used in the classification of the interpretations of the results. Additionally, it will aid in exposing the motivators and impediments of sustainable purchase choices (Simpa et al., 2024, p. 145).

This thematic synthesis integrates the various viewpoints and comes up with a unified conceptual framework to describe the actions of consumer values, perceived quality and sustainable purchasing in collaboration (Pandikar et al., 2024, p. 191). With the help of this analysis, the review will be able to determine which are significant factors but also how they correlate to consumer decision making in a market that has a growing range of sustainable products (Kleisiari et al., 2026). It will help discover continuous outlines, theories and dependencies between ideas. Taking a meta- thematic synthesis approach to integrate the results of multiple reviews (Ajzen, 1991). The data extraction will put the findings, themes and evidences of the selected studies into order (Salam et al., 2024, p. 55; Yunus and Nanda, 2024, p. 7).

This methodical data retrieval will assist in synthesising the literature in a strong way who will identify the hole and contradictions in literature and will also aid in future research possibilities in sustainable consumption (García-Rodríguez et al., 2025). The methodical approach to the extraction of data that reflects the focus on data distillation characteristic of the green drilling research will be the extraction of key concepts, frameworks, and findings (Olurin et al., 2023, p. 193) The expected outcomes of such an approach include a more significant insight into sustainable purchasing behaviour due to the selection of data that examines regularities, anomalies and relationships in the Thematically, selections of data then yielded clustering of groups that gave hints on drivers of sustainable purchasing which were attitudinal, behavioural and contextual.

A review of the previous studies that were carried out in the area of marketing that identified the key predictors as they were consumer environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness and personal norms. Shafi et al. (2024, p. 978) determined that purchase decision is moderated by context (product availability, eco-labeling and pricing) and influenced by eco-friendly consumption behaviour and habit formation as well as social influence. Moreover, attitudes, perception, and emotion are also influential over the purchase intentions towards sustainable products in line with other theories such as Value-Belief-Norm Theory and Theory of Planned Behaviour (Zamil et al., 2024, p. 1458).

RESULTS

Research on these factors shows that they are often complex; for example, often people's strong pro-environmental attitudes will not override issues of cost or availability. This suggests that the positive attitude and behavior gap is persistent and may not result in sustainable purchasing behavior due. Mediation factors may be due. For example, green purchasing is positively influenced by knowledge and use of

environmental advertising and labeling. However, no support is found for direct relationships between labeling and knowledge. This gap indicates that, apart from the Theory of Planned Behaviour, there is a need for more complete models to explain green purchasing.

Other psychologies like perceived effectiveness and personal values may be included in these models. A meta-analytic approach can make better establishing the relationship of environmental knowledge and subjective norms, with the green purchase intentions, as some analysis have shown their inconsistent effect on green purchase behaviour. There is indeed a recent meta-analysis that showed consumers' green food purchase behaviour is significantly positively related to the green purchasing motivation of environmental awareness, green attitude, and perceived behavioural control.

The most significant predictor influencing the consumer disposition to purchase sustainable products in a personality of a consumer has been the personal attitude. contextual factors and product-specific characteristics often soften the effects of individual characteristics such as attitudes and beliefs. Consequently, the complex reality cannot be fully captured by the theory.

The intricacies of the problem call for an investigation into the internal hierarchy of consumer preferences along with the relationships between intrinsic motivations and extrinsic stimuli with regard to the purchase of sustainable products. Theoretical frameworks, particularly the Theory of Planned Behavior, has shown to frequently fail in explaining the value-action gap in the context of green consumption. More specifically, a positive attitude does not lead to a purchase. As the TPB has only performed an assessment on conscious behaviour, a gap exists. Moreover, this might not take into account automatic behaviour. Therefore, adding extra variables like perceived value, moral obligation and ethical beliefs to the TPB model increases its predictive power of sustainable buying intentions. Based on this integration, it means that besides attitude and perceived behavioural control, it also means that our environmental knowledge and moral obligation also affect our intention.

Hence, the recent studies have provided a call for digital factors in predicting green buying behaviour. This could entail adjusting the existing TPB frameworks or adopting a custom approach that is more flexible to culture and local context. Incorporating such extended frameworks also include constructs like environmental consciousness that have strong impact on attitude towards green products and positively enhance consumers' perceived behavioural control. In addition, extending the TPB framework with psychological factors like environmental awareness and personal values help close intention-behavior gaps in sustainable behavior. This provides a more complete understanding of consumer choice.

DISCUSSION

The implication issues will be taken up next, specifically; to achieve a comprehensive grasp of sustainable consumption one needs to use integrated theory. This proposed approach should therefore examine how psychological variables are influenced by the social-psychological variables in determining consumer choice including motivation, perception, and learning. This necessitates a paradigm that takes into account not only the rationality, but also the less rational process of emotional acting that causes consumer behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior considers the intention of a person to be one of the determinants of the actual behavior. Attitudes, subjective norms, and the perceived behavioral controls affect this intention. The sustainable consumption behavior is commonly explained using this theory. Studies have found out that green purchase attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control among others can influence green purchase intention. Sustainability awareness has been found to moderate the relationship between these factors and the intentions to make green purchases.

Moreover, a good predictor of human behaviour has been shown to be the theory of planned behaviour. It is one of the widely applied theories that explain the human behaviour under the broad situations and areas such as sustainable consumption.

However, critics have criticized the TPB on the grounds that it does not account some sustainable consumer behavior owing to the absence of cultural consideration as well as the broader socio-economic setting of people. This shortcoming underscores the importance of the other constructs that can represent diverse levels of environmental awareness, health consciousness, and perceived willingness to use sustainable products. Therefore, it is possible that adding other variables, such as personal standards and perceived accessibility of sustainable choices, might increase the predictive validity of a sustainable purchasing model over the original constructs of the TPB.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the complexity of sustainable purchasing choices requires a theoretical synthesis beyond the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The addition of constructs like environmental concern and green purchase intention in the theoretical framework will improve predictability of consumer behavior in buying eco-friendly products. A framework like this needs to take into account the moderating effect of external factors like the socio-cultural context that can influence the intention-behaviour relationship and its mediation effect. To better understand

sustainable consumer choice dynamics, future studies should be interdisciplinary, adding economic, psychological, sociological and other experts' perspectives to the models. This combined methodology would facilitate a more accurate pinpointing of potential intervention points in the emergence of sustainable consumption patterns, rather than more general assumptions. Grasping how personal values shape consumer behavior can help in the intentional formulation of marketing strategies and policies that connect with different segments of the public and work to address the intention-behavior gap.

Specifically, while the Theory of Planned Behavior provides understanding, it is often the case that when intentions are complex, integrating external variables is useful. Eco-literacy and green product perception are critical boundary conditions; they enable or constrain the translation of a positive attitude towards the environment into purchasing. The perceived consumer effectiveness should further enhance the predictive validity of the TPB. In specific cases, this serves to modulate the attitude-intention relationship, namely for those who believe their actions can significantly affect environmental outcomes.

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