



Empirical study on the influence of a brand's social justice and environmental stance on Gen Z purchasing habits

Dr. K Prashanthi

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce S.F, Thiruvalluvar College, Papanasam, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

The purchasing behaviour of Generation Z is increasingly discussed in relation to environmental sustainability, social responsibility and ethical consumption. Brands are no longer evaluated only on the basis of product quality, price and convenience; their public positions on environmental protection, social justice and responsible business practices may also influence how younger consumers perceive and evaluate them. Against this background, the present study examines the influence of a brand's social justice and environmental stance on the purchasing habits of Generation Z consumers. The study is designed as an empirical, quantitative investigation based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. The proposed framework examines environmental stance, social justice stance, brand trust, perceived authenticity, social influence and purchase intention/behaviour. The study is theoretically grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and Cognitive Dissonance Reduction, while also drawing on research concerning green trust, green brand image, corporate social responsibility and sustainable consumption. Earlier empirical literature indicates that environmental consciousness is associated with environmentally responsible purchasing and that green brand image and green trust can strengthen consumer responses. Recent literature further suggests that sustainability communication, green brand equity and credible environmental commitments can influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. The present study extends this body of research by considering environmental and social justice positioning together and focusing specifically on Gen Z consumers. The study is expected to provide insights for marketers, brand managers and researchers concerning the relationship between corporate responsibility and the purchasing behaviour of younger consumers.

Keywords: Generation Z, social justice, environmental sustainability, brand stance, consumer behaviour, purchase intention, green marketing, brand trust, ethical consumption

Introduction

Consumer behaviour has undergone considerable transformation in recent years. Traditionally, consumers evaluated products largely on the basis of price, quality, functionality, availability and brand reputation. Although these factors continue to influence purchasing decisions, contemporary consumers are increasingly exposed to information about how companies operate, what they stand for and how they respond to environmental and social issues.

The growing visibility of climate change, environmental degradation, labour practices, inequality, diversity, inclusion and corporate responsibility has encouraged consumers to pay greater attention to the wider consequences of their consumption. Brands consequently operate in an environment in which corporate behaviour can become part of the consumer decision-making process.

This development is particularly relevant to Generation Z. As digital-native consumers, members of Gen Z encounter brand communication not only through conventional advertising but also through social media, influencers, online reviews, digital campaigns and user-generated content. A brand's position on an environmental or social issue can therefore become visible to consumers within a short period of time.

The relationship between corporate responsibility and consumer purchasing, however, is not straightforward. Consumers may express strong support for sustainable or socially responsible brands but may not necessarily purchase their products. The literature supplied for the

present study repeatedly identifies this attitude-behaviour gap. Jaiswal and Kant, for example, found that environmental knowledge, consumer attitudes and trust influence green purchase intention while also identifying a gap between intention and actual behaviour. Sharma's review similarly highlights the difference between favourable attitudes toward green marketing and actual purchasing behaviour.

The issue becomes more complicated when environmental and social justice positions are considered simultaneously. A consumer may appreciate a company's environmental practices but disagree with its social policies. Another consumer may strongly support a brand's social justice initiatives but be less concerned about its environmental practices. Therefore, understanding the combined influence of these dimensions can provide a more comprehensive picture of contemporary consumer behaviour.

The present research focuses on this intersection by examining whether and how a brand's environmental and social justice stance influences Gen Z purchasing habits.

Background of the Study

Environmental responsibility has become an important dimension of contemporary marketing. Green products, sustainable packaging, eco-labels, responsible sourcing and environmentally conscious production are increasingly incorporated into brand communication.

Schlegelmilch, Bohlen and Diamantopoulos found that environmental consciousness was closely associated with environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour, although

the strength of the relationship varied across consumer groups and product categories.

Similarly, Chen's research established the importance of green brand image, green satisfaction and green trust in the development of green brand equity.

Social responsibility adds another dimension. Corporate social responsibility initiatives can influence how consumers evaluate a brand, particularly when such activities appear consistent with the identity and behaviour of the organisation. The literature provided for this study reports that both environmental and social responsibility activities can improve brand evaluation when they are aligned with corporate identity.

More recent research has also examined the relationship between environmental corporate social responsibility and green purchase intention, including the role of brand commitment and loyalty.

These developments suggest that consumers may interpret corporate responsibility as part of brand meaning rather than as a separate corporate activity.

Statement of the Problem

Brands increasingly communicate their environmental commitments and social values to consumers. Campaigns relating to sustainability, climate responsibility, ethical sourcing, diversity, equality, inclusion and social justice have become visible components of contemporary brand communication.

However, the existence of a responsible corporate message does not necessarily guarantee consumer support.

A brand may publicly support environmental protection, yet consumers may question whether its claims are genuine. Similarly, a company may communicate a strong social justice position, but consumers may perceive the communication as promotional rather than authentic.

The problem is therefore not simply whether Gen Z consumers care about environmental and social issues. The more important question is whether such concerns actually influence their purchasing behaviour.

Existing research has established relationships between environmental consciousness and green purchasing, green trust and brand equity, and sustainability advertising and brand attitudes. The literature supplied for the present study also indicates that consumers often support socially responsible products but may fail to purchase them when reliable information about corporate practices is unavailable. A further gap concerns the combined examination of environmental and social justice positioning. Much of the existing literature concentrates predominantly on green consumption or environmental responsibility. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the influence of both dimensions on Gen Z purchasing habits.

Need for the Study

The study is necessary for several reasons.

First, Gen Z represents an increasingly important consumer group. Understanding the factors that shape its purchasing behaviour can help brands develop more effective and responsible marketing strategies.

Second, environmental and social responsibility are increasingly incorporated into corporate communication. It is therefore important to determine whether such communication translates into consumer behaviour.

Third, existing research identifies an attitude-behaviour gap. Consumers may express environmental or social concerns without consistently translating these concerns into purchasing decisions.

Fourth, brand trust and authenticity appear to be important mechanisms through which sustainability communication influences consumers. Recent literature similarly indicates that sustainability-oriented marketing is more effective when consumers trust the claims and perceive genuine environmental commitment.

Finally, examining environmental and social justice positioning together provides a broader understanding of ethical consumption than examining either dimension independently.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the awareness of Gen Z consumers regarding brands' environmental and social justice practices.
2. To assess the influence of a brand's environmental stance on Gen Z purchasing habits.
3. To examine the influence of a brand's social justice stance on Gen Z purchasing habits.
4. To analyse the relationship between brand trust and Gen Z purchasing behaviour.
5. To examine whether perceived authenticity influences the relationship between corporate responsibility and purchase intention.
6. To identify the role of social influence in shaping Gen Z purchasing decisions.
7. To examine the relationship between purchase intention and actual purchasing behaviour.
8. To identify the major factors influencing Gen Z consumers when choosing socially and environmentally responsible brands.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent are Gen Z consumers aware of brands' environmental practices?
2. To what extent are they aware of brands' social justice practices?
3. Does a brand's environmental stance influence Gen Z purchase intention?
4. Does a brand's social justice stance influence Gen Z purchase intention?
5. Does brand trust influence the relationship between responsible brand positioning and purchase behaviour?
6. Does perceived authenticity influence consumer responses to environmental and social justice claims?
7. Is there a difference between Gen Z consumers stated ethical preferences and their actual purchasing habits?
8. Which factors most strongly influence their purchasing decisions?

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing.

H01: There is no significant relationship between a brand's environmental stance and Gen Z purchase intention.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between a brand's environmental stance and Gen Z purchase intention.

H02: There is no significant relationship between a brand's social justice stance and Gen Z purchase intention.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between a brand's social justice stance and Gen Z purchase intention.

H03: There is no significant relationship between brand trust and Gen Z purchase intention.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between brand trust and Gen Z purchase intention.

H04: There is no significant relationship between perceived authenticity of corporate responsibility claims and Gen Z purchase intention.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived authenticity and Gen Z purchase intention.

H05: Environmental stance, social justice stance, brand trust and perceived authenticity do not significantly predict Gen Z purchasing behaviour.

H5: Environmental stance, social justice stance, brand trust and perceived authenticity significantly predict Gen Z purchasing behaviour.

Review of Literature

1. Environmental Consciousness and Purchasing Behaviour

Schlegelmilch, Bohlen and Diamantopoulos examined the relationship between environmental consciousness and green purchasing decisions. Their study used data from marketing students and members of the UK general public and found that environmental consciousness was closely related to environmentally responsible purchasing, although relationships differed according to consumer group and product category.

This study provides an important foundation for the present research because it establishes environmental consciousness as a relevant factor in consumer purchasing behaviour.

2. Green Brand Image and Green Trust

Chen (2010) ^[1] examined green brand image, green satisfaction, green trust and green brand equity. The study demonstrated the importance of these constructs in understanding consumers' responses to green products and brands.

The concept of green trust is particularly relevant to the present study. Consumers may support environmental claims only when they believe that the claims are credible.

3. Environmental Knowledge, Attitudes and Trust

Jaiswal and Kant (2018) ^[2] found that environmental knowledge, consumer attitudes and trust influence green purchase intention. Importantly, the study also identified a difference between purchase intention and actual purchase behaviour.

This finding directly supports the present study's decision to examine both purchase intention and purchasing habits rather than relying exclusively on stated intentions.

4. Corporate Social Responsibility

Research on corporate social responsibility suggests that consumers respond positively when corporate social responsibility activities are consistent with the identity of the organisation. The literature supplied for the study reports that both environmental and social responsibility activities

can improve brand evaluation and consumer attitudes when they are aligned with organisational identity.

This is relevant to social justice positioning because consumers may evaluate not only the content of a corporate statement but also whether it appears consistent with the brand's wider behaviour.

5. Sustainability Advertising

Sander *et al.* (2021) ^[3] compared environmental and social sustainability advertising. Their online survey found that environmental sustainability advertising had a stronger influence than social sustainability advertising on the examined brand-related outcomes.

The finding is significant for the present study because it raises the question of whether Gen Z responds differently to environmental and social justice messaging.

6. Green Marketing and the Attitude–Behaviour Gap

Sharma's review identified the positive relationship between green marketing and consumer behaviour but also highlighted the attitude–behaviour gap.

This gap is central to the present research. A consumer may claim that sustainability is important while still choosing a cheaper, more convenient or more familiar product.

7. Social Influence and Green Consumption

White, Habib and Hardisty identified green trust, perceived value and social influence as important factors encouraging consumers to select environmentally friendly products.

For Gen Z, social influence may be especially relevant because purchasing information is frequently exchanged through social media and digital communities.

8. Green Purchasing and Social Influence

Yusoff, Alias and Ismail identified people, marketing activities, environmental knowledge and social influence as important factors affecting green purchasing behaviour.

The finding supports the inclusion of social influence as a variable in the present study.

9. Recent Developments in Green Brand Equity

Recent literature has continued to investigate green brand equity, green brand image, green trust, green loyalty and purchase intention. A 2025 literature review identifies green brand equity as an important area of research and points to continuing interest in relationships among green brand positioning, trust, loyalty and purchase intention.

A 2025 empirical study of environmental corporate social responsibility in the Vietnamese agri-food sector similarly examined green purchase intention and the mediating roles of affective brand commitment and brand loyalty.

10. Eco-Labels and Green Brand Knowledge

The literature provided for this study reports that green brand knowledge, eco-labels, consumer attitudes and environmental knowledge significantly contribute to green purchase intention.

This suggests that consumers require information in order to evaluate environmental claims.

11. Information Credibility

The most recent literature included in the supplied review points toward the importance of trustworthy sustainability communication. Consumers may support responsible

products but fail to purchase them when they lack reliable information about environmental and social practices. This observation strengthens the rationale for including brand trust and perceived authenticity in the proposed empirical model.

Research Gap

The literature reviewed for the study reveals several gaps.

Gap 1: Separate treatment of environmental and social responsibility

A considerable proportion of previous research concentrates on green marketing, environmental consciousness or sustainable consumption. The combined influence of environmental and social justice positioning requires further empirical examination.

Gap 2: Intention versus actual behaviour

Previous studies repeatedly identify an attitude–behaviour gap. The present study therefore considers both purchase intention and purchasing behaviour.

Gap 3: Gen Z-specific evidence

Much of the established green consumer research involves general consumer populations. A focused investigation of Gen Z can provide a more specific understanding of younger consumers.

Gap 4: Role of authenticity and trust

Environmental and social claims may influence consumers differently depending on whether they perceive them as credible and authentic.

Gap 5: Combined brand positioning

The present study integrates:

Environmental Stance + Social Justice Stance + Brand Trust + Perceived Authenticity + Social Influence → Purchase Intention → Purchasing Behaviour

This integrated framework addresses the research gap identified in the supplied literature, which explicitly calls for more empirical research on the combined effect of social justice and environmental positioning on actual purchasing behaviour.

Theoretical Framework

1. Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides one of the principal theoretical foundations of the study.

According to the theory, behavioural intention is influenced by

- attitude,
- subjective norms,
- perceived behavioural control.

In the context of ethical consumption, a Gen Z consumer may develop a favourable attitude toward a responsible brand. Friends, social-media communities and wider social expectations may create subjective norms supporting responsible consumption.

Perceived control may include factors such as

- price,
- product availability,
- accessibility,

- purchasing power.

Thus, even if a consumer supports sustainable products, limited financial resources may prevent actual purchase.

The supplied literature identifies the application of TPB to environmental and social justice issues and notes the role of subjective social norms and moral obligations in green purchase intention.

Cognitive Dissonance Reduction

The second theoretical perspective is Cognitive Dissonance Reduction.

Consumers may experience psychological discomfort when their values conflict with their behaviour.

For example

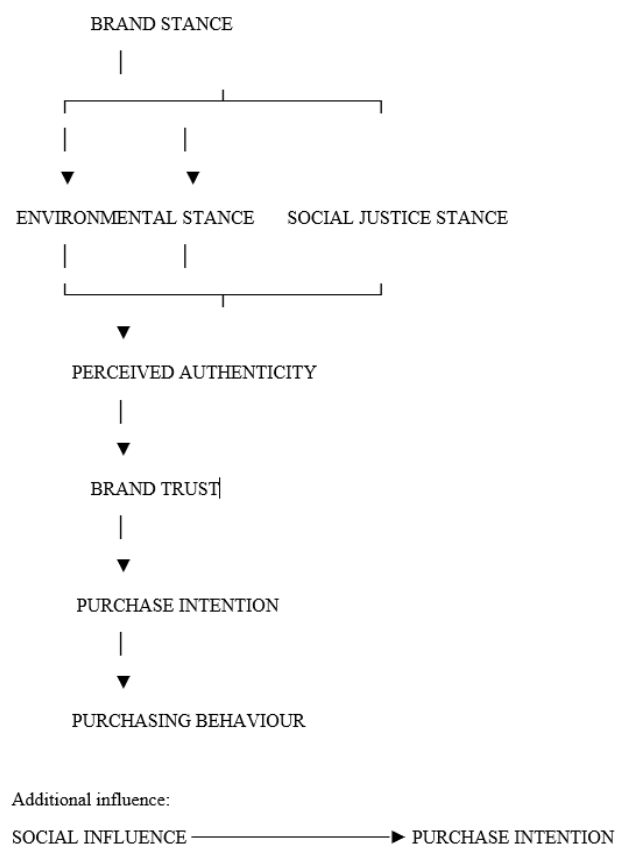
A consumer may believe strongly in environmental protection but repeatedly purchase products from brands perceived as environmentally harmful.

Such inconsistency can create cognitive tension.

One possible response is to modify behaviour so that consumption becomes more consistent with personal values. The supplied literature identifies cognitive dissonance reduction as a relevant framework because consumers may align purchasing habits with ethical corporate positions to reduce psychological discomfort associated with social or ecological harm.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual model is:



The framework proposes that consumers' perceptions of a brand's environmental and social justice stance may influence their purchasing through trust and perceived authenticity.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive and analytical research design.

A structured questionnaire is proposed as the primary instrument for collecting data from Gen Z consumers.

This approach is consistent with the empirical orientation of the research because it permits the measurement of attitudes, perceptions, intentions and reported purchasing behaviour using numerical data.

2. Population of the Study

The population consists of Generation Z consumers who actively purchase consumer products or services.

For practical purposes, the study can focus on Gen Z respondents within the age range selected by the researcher, preferably adult respondents capable of making independent purchasing decisions.

3. Sampling Method

A suitable approach would be convenience sampling with purposive screening.

The screening criteria should include

1. Respondent belongs to the selected Gen Z age group.
2. Respondent has made at least one personal purchase within the selected period.
3. Respondent is familiar with brands that communicate environmental or social responsibility.

If your actual survey has a different sample size or sampling procedure, that information should be inserted here.

4. Sample Size

Do not insert an invented number here.

Write:

"The final sample size was determined based on the number of valid responses received through the structured questionnaire. Only responses satisfying the predefined screening criteria were included in the final analysis."

Once you give me your Excel/CSV data, I can calculate the exact valid sample size and write this section properly.

Sources of Data

The study uses both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data

Primary data are collected from Gen Z consumers through a structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data

Secondary information is drawn from:

- books,
- peer-reviewed journal articles,
- research reports,
- academic databases,
- institutional publications,
- relevant websites.

The literature review supplied by the researcher forms the principal foundation for the secondary research component.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire can be divided into six sections.

Section A – Demographic Information

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Educational qualification
4. Occupation/student status
5. Monthly personal income
6. Frequency of online purchasing
7. Frequency of brand purchases

Section B – Environmental Stance

Respondents rate statements such as:

1. I prefer brands that demonstrate concern for environmental protection.
2. I consider a brand's environmental practices when purchasing products.
3. I prefer products with environmentally responsible packaging.
4. I am willing to support brands that reduce environmental damage.
5. A company's environmental record affects my perception of its brand.
6. I pay attention to sustainability claims made by brands.

Section C – Social Justice Stance

1. I prefer brands that support social equality.
2. I consider a company's treatment of workers when evaluating a brand.
3. I appreciate brands that support diversity and inclusion.
4. Social justice initiatives influence my perception of a brand.
5. I am more interested in brands that demonstrate responsible social behaviour.
6. I consider a brand's social values when making purchasing decisions.

Section D – Brand Trust and Authenticity

1. I trust brands that provide clear evidence for their sustainability claims.
2. I believe brands should demonstrate their social commitments through actual actions.
3. I can distinguish genuine sustainability efforts from promotional claims.
4. I am more likely to trust a brand when its actions match its public statements.
5. I avoid brands whose social or environmental claims appear misleading.

Section E – Purchase Intention

1. I intend to purchase products from socially responsible brands.
2. I would consider switching brands because of environmental responsibility.
3. I would recommend a responsible brand to others.
4. I am willing to purchase from a brand that demonstrates genuine social responsibility.
5. I intend to choose environmentally responsible brands in the future.

Section F – Purchasing Behaviour

1. I have previously purchased a product because of its environmental credentials.
2. I have purchased from a brand because of its social responsibility.

- I have changed my preferred brand because of its environmental practices.
- I have avoided a brand because of its social or environmental behaviour.
- I am willing to pay somewhat more for products from responsible brands.
- Environmental or social considerations have influenced at least one of my recent purchases.

A five-point Likert scale may be used

Scale	Response
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

Variables of the Study

Variable	Role
Environmental Stance	Independent Variable
Social Justice Stance	Independent Variable
Perceived Authenticity	Mediating/Explanatory Variable
Brand Trust	Mediating/Explanatory Variable
Social Influence	Additional Predictor
Purchase Intention	Dependent/Intermediate Variable
Purchasing Behaviour	Primary Dependent Variable

Statistical Tools

Depending on the actual dataset, the following statistical techniques are appropriate:

1. Percentage Analysis

Used to describe demographic characteristics.

2. Mean and Standard Deviation

Used to understand the average response and variation for each construct.

3. Cronbach's Alpha

Used to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales.

4. Pearson Correlation

Used to determine relationships between:

- environmental stance,
- social justice stance,
- brand trust,
- authenticity,
- purchase intention,
- purchasing behaviour.

5. Independent-Samples t-Test

Can be used to compare two demographic groups where appropriate.

6. ANOVA

Can be used where purchasing behaviour is compared across three or more demographic groups.

7. Multiple Regression

This is particularly important.

The following model can be tested

Purchasing Behaviour = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ Environmental Stance + β_2 Social Justice Stance + β_3 Brand Trust + β_4 Authenticity + β_5 Social Influence + ε

This will allow the researcher to determine which factors significantly predict purchasing behaviour.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Important

The following tables are ready-to-fill tables, not fabricated findings.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	_____	_____	_____
Gender	Male	_____	_____
	Female	_____	_____
	Other/Prefer not to say	_____	_____
Education	UG	_____	_____
	PG	_____	_____
Occupation	Student	_____	_____
	Employed	_____	_____

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Environmental Stance	6	_____
Social Justice Stance	6	_____
Brand Trust	5	_____
Perceived Authenticity	5	_____
Purchase Intention	5	_____
Purchasing Behaviour	6	_____

Interpretation

The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The values obtained for the individual constructs are presented in Table 2. The results indicate the internal consistency of the measurement items and establish whether the scales are suitable for subsequent statistical analysis.

The numerical interpretation should only be written after calculating the actual values.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variables	ES	SJS	BT	PA	PI	PB
Environmental Stance (ES)	1					
Social Justice Stance (SJS)		1				
Brand Trust (BT)			1			
Perceived Authenticity (PA)				1		
Purchase Intention (PI)					1	
Purchasing Behaviour (PB)						1

Where

ES = Environmental Stance

SJS = Social Justice Stance

BT = Brand Trust

PA = Perceived Authenticity

PI = Purchase Intention

PB = Purchasing Behaviour

Regression Analysis

Table 4: Multiple Regression Predicting Purchasing Behaviour

Predictor	Beta	t-value	p-value
Environmental Stance	_____	_____	_____
Social Justice Stance	_____	_____	_____
Brand Trust	_____	_____	_____
Perceived Authenticity	_____	_____	_____
Social Influence	_____	_____	_____

R² = _____

Adjusted R² = _____

F = _____

p = _____

Interpretation

The regression analysis should determine whether environmental stance, social justice stance, brand trust, perceived authenticity and social influence significantly explain variation in Gen Z purchasing behaviour.

The actual interpretation will depend on the obtained coefficients and significance values.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	P-value	Decision
H1: Environmental stance → Purchase intention	Correlation/Regression	____	____
H2: Social justice stance → Purchase intention	Correlation/Regression	____	____
H3: Brand trust → Purchase intention	Correlation/Regression	____	____
H4: Authenticity → Purchase intention	Correlation/Regression	____	____
H5: Combined predictors → Purchasing behaviour	Multiple Regression	____	____

The final paper should state "Rejected" or "Not Rejected" based on the actual statistical evidence rather than predetermined expectations.

Proposed Findings Framework

Once the data are collected, the findings should be discussed under the following themes.

1. Environmental Positioning

The analysis will establish whether Gen Z consumers who report stronger concern for environmental issues also report stronger intentions to purchase from environmentally responsible brands.

2. Social Justice Positioning

The analysis will determine whether social justice positioning contributes independently to consumer purchase intention.

3. Brand Trust

The study will examine whether consumers are more likely to purchase from brands when they believe environmental and social claims are credible.

4. Authenticity

The research will determine whether perceived authenticity contributes to consumer responses.

5. Attitude–Behaviour Gap

One of the most important findings may be whether respondents express strong support for ethical consumption while reporting comparatively weaker actual purchasing behaviour.

This would correspond with the gap identified in earlier literature.

Discussion

The proposed study extends previous research by bringing environmental and social justice considerations together within a single consumer behaviour framework.

Previous research has demonstrated that environmental consciousness can be associated with green purchasing behaviour. Research on green brand equity has also emphasised the importance of brand image and trust.

The present study moves beyond environmental concern alone by asking whether Gen Z consumers also consider a brand's social justice position when making purchasing decisions.

This is particularly relevant because contemporary brand identity increasingly extends beyond functional product characteristics. Consumers encounter brands as social actors through advertising, social media and corporate communication.

However, corporate responsibility communication may produce different outcomes depending on its credibility. The literature supplied for the study emphasises that green marketing is more effective when consumers trust sustainability claims and perceive genuine environmental commitment.

Therefore, a brand's position alone may not be sufficient.

Consumers may also evaluate whether the position is

- authentic,
- consistent,
- transparent,
- supported by evidence,
- compatible with actual corporate behaviour.

This distinction is important for understanding Gen Z purchasing habits.

Managerial Implications

The findings of the completed empirical analysis will have implications for brand managers.

1. Authenticity over symbolic communication

Brands should ensure that environmental and social claims correspond with measurable actions.

2. Transparent communication

Consumers should be given accessible information about:

- sourcing,
- production,
- labour practices,
- environmental impact,
- packaging,
- sustainability targets.

3. Avoiding unsupported claims

Unsubstantiated environmental or social claims may undermine trust.

4. Integrating social and environmental responsibility

Rather than treating environmental sustainability and social responsibility as completely separate communication themes, brands can develop broader responsible-business strategies.

5. Understanding Gen Z as an active evaluator

Gen Z consumers should not be treated merely as recipients of advertising. They can compare information, access alternative sources and publicly discuss brand behaviour.

Implications for Marketers

The study can contribute to marketing practice in several ways.

First, brands can use sustainability communication to strengthen consumer relationships, but communication should be supported by genuine corporate practices.

Second, environmental messaging and social justice messaging should be designed carefully because consumers may respond differently to the two dimensions. Sander *et al.*'s research, for example, found differences between environmental and social sustainability advertising in their examined brand outcomes.

Third, marketers should recognise the distinction between purchase intention and actual purchasing behaviour.

Fourth, brands should consider affordability and accessibility. Ethical preferences may not translate into purchasing behaviour if responsible products are substantially more expensive or difficult to obtain.

Limitations of the Study

The study may have the following limitations:

1. The use of convenience sampling may restrict generalisability.
2. The study relies partly on self-reported consumer behaviour.
3. Respondents may report socially desirable attitudes toward environmental and social issues.
4. The study examines purchasing behaviour at a particular point in time.
5. Brand responses may differ across product categories.
6. Gen Z is not a completely homogeneous consumer group.
7. Perceptions of social justice and environmental responsibility may vary according to cultural and socioeconomic background.
8. Reported purchasing behaviour may not always correspond exactly with actual transaction records.

Scope for Future Research

Future research can extend the present study in several directions.

1. Comparative Generation Studies

Researchers can compare:

- Gen Z,
- Millennials,
- Gen X.

2. Product Categories

Future studies can examine whether the influence differs across:

- fashion,
- cosmetics,
- food,
- electronics,
- automobiles,
- personal care.

3. Social Media Influence

Future studies can incorporate:

- influencers,
- Instagram,
- YouTube,
- short-form video,
- online reviews.

4. Greenwashing

Future research could examine whether perceptions of greenwashing weaken the relationship between environmental positioning and purchase intention.

5. Political and Social Controversies

Future studies may examine how consumers respond when brands take explicit positions on controversial social issues.

6. Willingness to Pay

Researchers could examine whether Gen Z consumers are willing to pay a premium for responsible products.

Conclusion

The relationship between corporate responsibility and consumer behaviour is becoming increasingly important in contemporary marketing. The present study focuses on Generation Z and examines how a brand's environmental and social justice stance may influence purchasing intention and purchasing behaviour.

Existing research provides substantial evidence that environmental consciousness, green brand image, green trust, social influence and sustainability communication are associated with consumer responses. The literature supplied for this study similarly establishes relationships among environmental responsibility, social justice initiatives, CSR, green trust, eco-labels and green purchasing behaviour. At the same time, it identifies an important gap concerning the combined influence of social justice and environmental positioning on actual purchasing behaviour.

The proposed empirical framework addresses this gap by bringing environmental stance, social justice stance, perceived authenticity, brand trust, social influence, purchase intention and purchasing behaviour into a single analytical framework.

The study also recognises that responsible consumption is not determined by values alone. Price, availability, convenience, trust and social influence may affect whether positive attitudes translate into actual purchases. The attitude-behaviour gap therefore remains an important issue. Ultimately, the significance of a brand's environmental or social justice stance depends not only on what the brand communicates but also on whether consumers perceive those commitments as credible, authentic and meaningful. For Gen Z consumers, corporate responsibility may increasingly form part of the broader relationship between brand identity and consumer identity.

The empirical investigation proposed in this paper can therefore contribute to a better understanding of how younger consumers evaluate responsible brands and whether ethical brand positioning actually influences their purchasing decisions.

References

1. Chen YS. The drivers of green brand equity: Green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2010;93(2):307–319. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0223-9>
2. Jaiswal D, Kant R. Green purchasing behaviour: A conceptual framework and empirical investigation of Indian consumers. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2018;41:60–69.
3. Sander F, Föhl U, Walter N, Demmer V. Green or social? An analysis of environmental and social sustainability advertising and its impact on brand personality, credibility and attitude. *Journal of Brand Management*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-021-00236-8>
4. Schlegelmilch BB, Bohlen GM, Diamantopoulos A. The link between green purchasing decisions and measures of environmental consciousness. *European Journal of Marketing*, 1996;30(5):35–55.

https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569610118740?utm_source=chatgpt.com

5. Sharma A. Green marketing and consumer purchase behaviour: A review of the literature, 2021.
6. White K, Habib R, Hardisty DJ. How to SHIFT consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: A literature review and guiding framework. *Journal of Marketing*, 2021;85(3):22–49.
7. Yusoff YM, Alias N, Ismail M. Factors influencing green purchasing behaviour: Environmental knowledge, marketing activities and social influence, 2023.
8. Trinh AK. The role of environmental corporate social responsibility in promoting green consumerism: Evidence from the Vietnamese agri-food sector. *Business Strategy & Development*, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.70189>
9. Trinh HTT, Hue TT, Luu TMN, *et al.* A literature review on green brand equity and future research directions. *Discover Sustainability*, 2025;6:1338. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-02237-y?utm_source=chatgpt.com