



## Consumer Response to Sustainable Production Messages on Social Media: A Study in Sri Lanka's FMCG Sector

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The main objectives of this study are to investigate dependency on social media influences the relationship between consumer attitudes toward sustainable FMCG products, their knowledge of social media, and their subsequent purchasing behaviour.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative approach was adopted, using a structured questionnaire distributed to 426 respondents in Sri Lanka. Statistical methods, including regression and mediation analysis, were employed to evaluate the relationships between consumer attitudes, knowledge of social media, dependency on social media, and sustainable purchase behaviours.

**Findings:** The results reveal that dependency on social media is critical as both a direct influencer and a mediator. Positive consumer attitudes and advanced social media knowledge significantly correlate with higher dependency on social media, which in turn drives sustainable purchasing behaviour. Among these, dependency on social media demonstrated the strongest influence, highlighting the platform's role as a catalyst for sustainability-focused decision-making.

**Originality:** This study presents how Sri Lankan consumers respond to sustainable production messages shared on social media within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. While global research has explored sustainability communication in various markets, there is a noticeable gap in understanding its impact in the context of developing countries like Sri Lanka. This research uniquely addresses that gap by focusing on consumer attitudes and knowledge shaped by social media platforms in a culturally specific and under-researched environment.

**Implications:** This research provides practical insights for FMCG businesses, policymakers, and educators. Enhancing digital literacy and building trust in social media is important to improve consumer engagement with sustainability-related content. Policymakers should consider incorporating sustainability messaging into digital platforms, while businesses can utilize targeted social media campaigns to raise awareness and influence purchasing decisions.

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## Introduction

Sustainability has gained significant importance across industries worldwide due to escalating environmental risks. It emphasizes balancing environmental, social, and economic needs to meet present demands without compromising future generations' ability to satisfy theirs (Daniel, 2023). Although sustainability initially focused on environmental concerns, it now extends to various sectors, including supermarkets, universities, and corporate offices, aiming to prevent resource depletion and ensure long-term resource availability (UN Environment Programme, 2020). At its core, sustainability seeks to foster harmony among people, nature, and the planet (Folke, 2020).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12, emphasize responsible production, consumption, and waste management (United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987). Sri Lanka has committed to ambitious sustainability targets for 2030, including achieving 70% renewable electricity, expanding forest coverage, and promoting organic farming (Gooneratne, 2019). However, Sri Lanka currently ranks 83rd out of 166 countries on the 2023 Global SDGs Index, indicating the need for accelerated progress (Lahiru, 2023).

In Sri Lanka, sustainability is increasingly emphasized within the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector, which includes essential, high-turnover products such as milk, fruits, vegetables, and over-the-counter medications (Chiou et al., 2017). Leading local FMCG brands such as Raththi, Anchor, and Sunlight are integrating sustainability initiatives into their operations (Kantar, 2019). Consumer awareness about sustainability is also growing, with many actively seeking eco-friendly products and supporting companies that demonstrate sustainable practices (Ruiz, 2023).

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are playing a critical role in this shift by enabling brands to communicate their sustainability efforts directly to consumers. Global web searches for sustainable products have increased by 71% over the past five years, reflecting rising consumer interest and engagement (Kepios, 2024). In Sri Lanka, brands are leveraging social media to promote sustainable products, educate consumers on responsible consumption, and build communities centered around eco-conscious behaviors (Saeed et al, 2019). The FMCG sector, heavily influenced by social media trends, is now focusing on long-term sustainability as a key strategy for building consumer loyalty and maintaining regulatory compliance. Companies like Coca-Cola, Nestlé, and Unilever globally, and brands like Raththi and Anchor locally, are leading this transition by adopting eco-friendly packaging, renewable energy, and responsible sourcing practices (Wilkinson, 2017; Kantar, 2019).

A Unilever survey found that 75% of participants are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors after being exposed to sustainability content on social media (Unilever Team, 2023). In Sri Lanka's FMCG sector, social media is not just a marketing tool but a vital channel for influencing consumer attitudes and driving sustainable consumption.

In conclusion, while global sustainability efforts provide important context, Sri Lanka's unique challenges and opportunities highlight the critical role of the FMCG sector and social media in advancing sustainable practices (EV, 2022). As the nation strives toward its 2030 sustainability goals, social media continues to empower brands and consumers to collectively foster responsible consumption and long-term environmental stewardship (Emmanuel, 2023).

### ***Problem Statement***

Sustainability has become a global priority in response to pressing environmental challenges such as pollution, climate change, and resource depletion (Zuniga, 2023). Globally, consumers are increasingly aware of sustainability, with 74% considering environmental and social responsibility in their purchasing decisions (World Economic Forum, 2023). This trend is particularly strong in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector, where 64% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, presenting significant opportunities for businesses (Sequeira, 2023).

However, Sri Lanka's FMCG sector has not fully aligned with this global shift toward sustainable consumption. Despite growing international demand, Sri Lanka faces a performance gap in sustainability adoption, influenced by financial instability, inflation, and weak regulatory frameworks (EV, 2022). The country's low ranking of 83rd out of 87 countries in the 2023 Global SDGs Index further reflects this lag (Lahiru, 2023).

Additionally, there is a clear research gap in Sri Lanka concerning the role of social media in promoting sustainable consumer behavior. While social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are proven globally to influence consumer decisions toward eco-friendly (Suraksha & Uthayasankar, 2020). Sri Lankan-specific studies in this area are scarce. Unlike other regions where social media engagement with sustainability messages has successfully driven demand for green products, Sri Lanka's FMCG sector has yet to fully leverage this potential (Azzurra et al., 2014).

This study aims to address these gaps by exploring how sustainability messages on social media influence consumer behavior in Sri Lanka's FMCG market. By examining the local context in comparison to global trends, this research seeks to offer actionable insights that can help Sri Lankan FMCG businesses align more closely with global sustainability movements and effectively utilize social media to promote sustainable consumption.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

#### ***Main Objective***

To investigate the impact of sustainable production information shared on social media on consumer behavior in Sri Lanka's FMCG sector.

### ***Specific Objectives***

- To examine the relationship between consumer attitudes toward sustainable FMCG products and their dependency on social media for related information.
- To assess the relationship between consumers' knowledge and proficiency in using social media and their dependency on these platforms for information about sustainable FMCG products.
- To analyze the relationship between consumer dependency on social media for sustainable FMCG information and their purchase behavior toward sustainable FMCG products.
- To evaluate the mediating role of social media dependency in the relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase behavior toward sustainable FMCG products.
- To evaluate the mediating role of social media dependency in the relationship between consumer social media knowledge and purchase behavior toward sustainable FMCG products

### ***Research Questions***

Under this research study, answering the following question, which relates to the FMCG Sector.

1. To what extent does consumer attitude toward sustainable FMCG products influence their dependency on social media for information?
2. How does consumer knowledge and proficiency in using social media platforms influence their dependency on these platforms for information about sustainable FMCG products?
3. What is the relationship between consumer dependency on social media for sustainable FMCG product information and their purchase behavior?
4. Does social media dependency mediate the relationship between consumer attitudes toward sustainable FMCG products and their purchase behavior?
5. Does social media dependency mediate the relationship between consumer social media knowledge and their purchase behavior toward sustainable FMCG products

### ***Significance of the Study***

The growing global focus on sustainability has made it crucial for businesses, particularly Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies, to effectively communicate their sustainable practices to consumers. However, in Sri Lanka, there is a significant lack of empirical research on how social media, a primary information source for Generation Z, influences consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding sustainable FMCG products. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how sustainability-related content on social media platforms affects consumer attitudes, intentions, and behaviors within the Sri Lankan FMCG sector.

From a practical perspective, this research offers valuable insights for FMCG brands to develop targeted social media strategies that foster sustainable purchasing habits. By understanding the dynamics of consumer engagement with sustainability messages on social platforms, companies can craft more effective marketing campaigns that align with both consumer expectations and broader sustainability goals. Policymakers and sustainability advocates can also benefit from the findings, using social media as a tool to promote responsible consumption and to support national and international sustainability agendas.

This study makes an important contribution to the limited knowledge about sustainability communication in emerging markets, specifically in Sri Lanka, where research on this topic is scarce. It enhances our understanding of consumer behavior by incorporating the role of social media into existing frameworks related to sustainability and consumer decision-making. This work provides a solid foundation for future research in this developing area.

In conclusion, this study fills an important research gap in the Sri Lankan FMCG sector by examining the role of social media in promoting sustainable consumption. It provides practical recommendations for FMCG marketers and policymakers on how to effectively use social media platforms to encourage sustainable consumer behaviors. Furthermore, the study contributes to the theoretical discussions on sustainability communication and consumer behavior, particularly offering insights relevant to Generation Z consumers, who are highly active on social media.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

However, the study is limited to Sri Lanka, making its applicability to other countries uncertain. Potential biases from self-reported survey data, such as recall and social desirability bias, further constrain its generalizability. A small sample size may also introduce sampling bias. Future research in diverse cultural contexts is necessary to enhance the study's robustness and broader applicability (Saeed et al, 2019).

## **Literature Review**

### ***Sustainability and Sustainable Consumption***

Sustainability is about achieving a balance among social, economic, and environmental factors to ensure long-term well-being for both present and future generations (Mensah, 2019). It stresses the fair use of resources while staying within the planet's ecological limits. As the global population increases and natural resources become more limited, sustainability has become a focal point in development agendas (Zhai, 2018). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to tackle these global challenges by promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns (Zhai, 2018; Wang, 2019).

In this context, sustainable consumption means that consumers make purchasing choices that reduce environmental damage and promote social equity. The rising focus on

sustainability in consumer markets has prompted businesses to adopt more environmentally friendly practices, especially in sectors with high consumption rates like Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) (Wang, 2019).

### ***Sustainable Products and Consumer Attitudes***

Sustainable products are developed with careful consideration of their social, economic, and environmental impacts throughout their entire lifecycle (Clicky, 2023). In recent years, consumer interest in these products has grown significantly, with global searches for sustainable options rising by 71% over the past five years (Martine, 2023). Consumers now anticipate that brands will provide environmentally friendly choices and communicate their sustainability initiatives transparently.

Consumer attitudes toward sustainable products can be quite complex. While positive attitudes are often driven by environmental awareness, ethical considerations, and social influences, these feelings do not always result in actual purchasing behavior. This is particularly true when sustainable products are perceived as being more expensive or less accessible (Abubakar, 2018). Research indicates that social media plays a significant role in shaping these attitudes by providing easy access to information about product sustainability and influencing consumer perceptions (Saeed et al, 2019).

Understanding consumer attitudes is crucial because they significantly influence sustainable purchasing decisions. Consumers who have a positive attitude toward sustainability are more likely to turn to social media for information, product details, and brand credibility related to sustainable practices (Gupta et al., 2020).

### ***The Role of Social Media in Sustainability Communication***

Social media has become an indispensable tool for both consumers and businesses. It provides a platform for exchanging information, sharing opinions, and promoting sustainability initiatives (Intergovernmental Panel Unilever, 2017). With over 5.2 billion users worldwide (The World Economic Forum , 2019). Social media significantly shapes consumer behavior by increasing access to sustainability-related content and fostering interactive engagement between brands and consumers (Saeed et al, 2019).

Social media platforms allow companies in the FMCG sector to promote sustainability, educate consumers, and build trust. Empirical studies indicate that exposure to sustainability content on social media positively influences consumer purchase intentions. However, the effectiveness of such content depends on factors like message credibility, platform characteristics, and consumer social media literacy (Zuniga, 2023).

### ***Theoretical Foundation: Media System Dependency Theory***

This study is based on Media System Dependency (MSD) Theory, which explains the relationship between individuals and media platforms, particularly how people rely on media for information, understanding, and decision-making (Rokeach, 1976). According to this theory, the more dependent consumers are on social media for information related

to sustainability, the more influential social media becomes in shaping their attitudes and behaviors.

Consumers who frequently turn to social media for sustainability content are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward sustainable products and be influenced in their purchasing decisions (Saeed et al., 2019). Additionally, individuals with a higher level of knowledge about social media, who can effectively navigate platforms and evaluate the quality of information, are more engaged with sustainability content and more likely to make sustainable purchasing choices (Ahmad et al., 2023).

MSD theory also supports the idea that social media dependency plays a mediating role. Specifically, it suggests that reliance on social media can explain how consumer attitudes and knowledge influence purchasing behavior.

### ***Hypothesis Development***

Based on the literature and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Attitude towards sustainable products positively impacts dependency on social media for sustainability information.*

*H2: Knowledge of social media positively impacts dependency on social media for sustainability information.*

*H3: Dependency on social media for sustainability information positively impacts consumer purchase behaviour.*

*H4: Dependency on social media for sustainability information mediates the relationship between attitude toward sustainable products and consumer purchase behaviour.*

*H5: Dependency on social media for sustainability information mediates the relationship between knowledge of using social media and consumer purchase behaviour.*

### ***Empirical Evidence on Social Media and Sustainable Consumer Behaviour***

Research shows that social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly concerning sustainable consumption in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector (U & Adrien Kirby, 2012). When consumers engage with sustainability-related content on social media, it increases their awareness, builds trust, and enhances their intentions to make purchases (Zhang & Zhong, 2020; Gupta & Chopra, 2020). Additionally, social media exposes consumers to sustainability initiatives, which helps reinforce brand credibility and influences their product choices.

Despite global advancements in research, there is a significant lack of empirical studies focused on the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in Sri Lanka. The unique cultural, economic, and social factors in the country may affect consumer responses differently from those seen internationally (Industry Research group, 2023).

Furthermore, aspects such as social media platform interactivity, content credibility, and consumers' proficiency in using social media have not been thoroughly examined in this context (Zuniga, 2023).

Addressing these research gaps is critical for providing practical insights to FMCG companies and policymakers in Sri Lanka aiming to promote sustainable consumption.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Approach***

This study uses a deductive approach and explanatory research design to explore how social media information on sustainable products affects consumer behavior in the FMCG sector. A quantitative method involving structured questionnaires is used to collect data from Generation Z in Sri Lanka, as they are the most tech-savvy group with a high reliance on social media for decision-making and a strong preference for eco-friendly products.

### ***Research Design***

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the impact of social media sustainability information on Generation Z consumers' purchasing behavior in Sri Lanka's FMCG sector. Generation Z was selected as the target population due to their strong digital engagement, heightened eco-consciousness, and significant influence on market trends (A Kara, 2023). As they account for approximately 25% of Sri Lanka's population (around 5.5 million people), they represent a critical consumer segment for this research.

The required sample size was determined using Morgan's (1970) sample size table, which identified 384 as the minimum necessary. To improve representativeness and reliability, a combination of simple random sampling and stratified random sampling was used. This approach ensured that key demographic groups within Generation Z social media users and FMCG consumers were adequately represented.

Primary data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising 21 items measured on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). The questionnaire was designed to capture information on consumer attitudes, social media dependency, and sustainable purchase behaviors. All measurement items were adapted from established scales used in prior research.



## Conceptual Framework

The research framework is as follows.

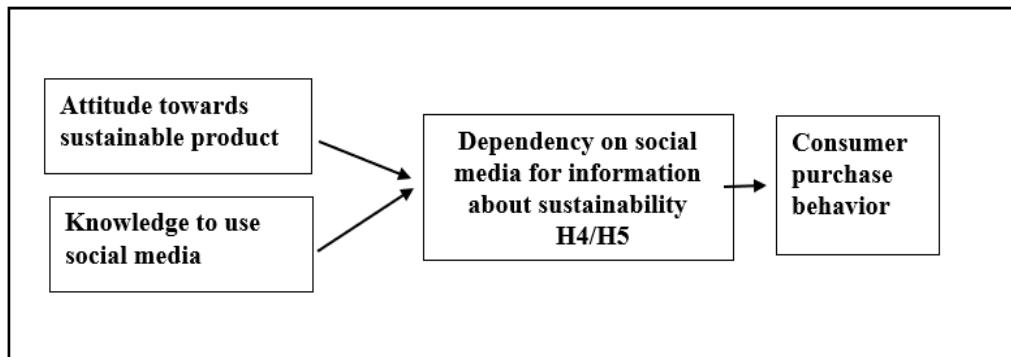


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## Hypotheses

In line with the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are developed.

*H1: Attitude towards sustainable products has a positive impact on dependency on social media for information about sustainability.*

*H2: Knowledge of social media has a positive impact on dependency on social media for information about sustainability.*

*H3: Dependency on social media for information about sustainability has a positive impact on consumer purchase behavior.*

*H4: Dependency on social media for information about sustainability mediates the relationship between Attitude towards sustainable products and Consumer purchase behavior.*

*H5: Dependency on social media for information about sustainability mediates the relationship between Knowledge of using social media and Consumer purchase behavior*

## Operationalization

The study's measurement items, used to test the hypotheses, are derived from established scales in the literature. These items for each variable are presented below, along with relevant references to prior research.

Attitude towards sustainable products was measured using five items adapted from (Suki, 2016). These items assessed the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of the environmental claims of sustainable products. In addition, the items captured whether sustainable products meet environmental expectations and fulfill their responsibilities for environmental protection.

Knowledge of social media usage was measured using five items adapted from Shah and Zahoor (2019). These items assessed participants' familiarity with social media platforms, frequency of use, number of platforms used, types of platforms engaged, and how often they experienced sustainability-related information in their social media feeds.

Dependency on social media for sustainability information was assessed using six items adapted from Saeed and Ammara Farooq et al. (2019). The focus was on the extent to which social media helped participants make purchasing decisions regarding sustainable products, identify which brands are sustainable, select the right sustainable products, and understand which sustainable products are viewed positively by others.

Purchase decision making was measured using six items adapted from Saeed et al. (2019). These items assessed participants' intention to purchase sustainable products, future purchase expectations, tendency to avoid unsustainable products, overall satisfaction with purchasing sustainable products, and preferences when choosing between sustainable and unsustainable options.

### ***Population and Sample***

The scope of this study includes Generation Z in Sri Lanka. Generation Z is identified as the most technologically savvy and the highest consideration for eco-friendly and sustainable product generation, and they are more likely to explore new experiences. Based on the Kantar study, Gen Z is roughly 25% of that number, which is about 5,486,270, and in the Morgan table, the sample size for the given target population is 384. Here, using a simple random sampling and stratified random sampling method ensures that the sample accurately reflects the diversity and characteristics of the broader population of social media users and FMCG consumers. This leads to more reliable and valid results that can be generalized to the entire population.

### ***Data Collection Method***

The study decided to utilize primary data sources to achieve its main objectives. A cross-sectional survey method will be employed to gather this primary data from the intended sample. Considering timeliness and cost-effectiveness, the survey method is the most efficient way to collect information from a large population. A structured questionnaire, consisting of 21 items, has been created. The items will be evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, which ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," with a neutral option available.

### ***Data Analysis Methods***

The initial step in data analysis is checking the data set for errors to prevent mistakes that may occur during data entry. Data analysis consists of three main steps: measuring the sample profile, evaluating the quality of the data, and testing hypotheses. The sample profile is assessed through frequency analysis. To evaluate data quality, we examine the validity and reliability of the measurement items. This evaluation includes testing for

discriminant validity, conducting factor analysis, assessing construct reliability, checking the average variance extracted, and calculating Cronbach's alpha values. Finally, multiple regression analysis is employed to test the hypotheses. The analysis is performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. In this study, multiple regression analysis is employed to ascertain whether social media information regarding sustainability products influences Z generation on FMCG purchase decisions.

## **Data Analysis and Findings**

### ***Response and Sample Profile***

The main survey was conducted with 429 consumers in the Sri Lankan FMCG sector, with 426 valid responses used for analysis, yielding a 100% response rate. The questionnaire collected demographic data (e.g., gender, age, income, employment, social media usage patterns, and respondents' engagement with sustainable products). It also explored preferred platforms, daily social media usage, and frequency of discussions on sustainable products, including the devices used to access social media.

### ***Sample Profile***

The majority of respondents in the survey were female, comprising 59.2% of the sample, while males made up 39.9%. Most participants (54.9%) were between the ages of 23 and 27, a demographic recognized for being active social media users and significant contributors to sustainable consumption trends. The sample was geographically diverse, with many respondents living in rural areas; however, a higher percentage of sustainable product consumers were located in suburban regions. Participants had various employment statuses, with part-time workers representing the largest group, followed by full-time employees and students, which reflects a broad range of consumer experience and financial engagement levels.

Sustainability has emerged as a key topic among respondents, with a significant majority frequently discussing sustainable products. Websites were identified as the main source of information on sustainability, while social media also played a significant role, highlighting its impact on consumer awareness and behavior in this area. A total of 409 valid responses were analyzed for this study.

### ***Factor Analysis***

Factor analysis was conducted to assess data suitability, with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure used as the benchmark. A KMO value of 0.60 or higher, as recommended by Vinayan et al. (2012), indicates adequacy for robust factor analysis. The results are summarized in Table 1,

Table 1  
Factor Analysis

Variables	Initial Items	KMO Value	Bartlett's Test Chi-Square	Total Variance Explained	AVE	Factor Loading	
Attitude	5	0.91144 1586	20320.320		0.863415083	<b>Pattern Matrix</b>	<b>Component 1</b>
						Attitude toward sustainable products	.891
						AT2	.795
						AT3	.998
						AT4	.861
						AT5	.751
Dependency	5				0.749910512	<b>Pattern Matrix</b>	<b>Component 3</b>
						Dependency on social media for sustainability information	.911
						DE2	.622
						DE3	.688
						DE4	.750
						DE5	.748
Knowledge	5				0.810797853	<b>Pattern Matrix</b>	<b>Component 2</b>
						Knowledge of using social media	.923
						KW2	.748
						KW4	.788
						KW5	.728
						KW6	.852
Purchasing behavior	6				0.787412322	<b>Pattern Matrix</b>	<b>Component 4</b>
						Purchasing behavior	.853
						PB2	.876
						PB3	.901
						PB4	.815
						PB5	.754
						PB6	.761

The study's factor analysis demonstrated strong validity. The KMO value was 0.991, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.60, and the total variance explained was over 50%, indicating the appropriateness of the measurement items. All items were extracted into single components of their respective variables, supporting the suitability of factor analysis. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), calculated by Raykov (1997a; 1997b). The AVE values, all above the recommended cutoff of 0.50, confirmed adequate validity, ensuring the data's suitability for further analysis.

### ***Reliability Analysis***

Table 2  
Reliability Analysis

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
Attitude toward sustainability	.936	5
Knowledge using social media	.957	5
Dependency on social media	.920	5
Purchasing Behavior	.899	6

Reliability analysis, which evaluates the consistency and accuracy of measurement instruments (beers, 2024), was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency. According to Hair et al. (2010), Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for ensuring scale reliability. As shown in Table 2, all measured variables exceeded this threshold, indicating that the items used were consistently capturing the intended constructions. This suggests that the survey instrument was both stable and dependable, providing a solid foundation for further analysis and interpretation of consumer behavior patterns in the context of sustainable FMCG products.

### ***Correlation Analysis***

According to (James, 2020) Correlation Analysis is a statistical process used to determine whether a relationship exists between two variables/datasets. Table 3 illustrates the correlations between the variables.

Table 3  
Correlation Analysis

	<b>AT</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>KW</b>	<b>PB</b>
AT	0.863415083i			
DE	.612**	0.749910512i		
KW	.721**	.739**	0.810797853i	
PB	0.041**	0.086**	0.022**	0.7874123i

Table 3 shows significant correlations among the study variables, providing valuable insights into the relationships that influence consumer behavior. The strongest

correlation was found between Attitude towards Sustainability (AT) and Knowledge (KW) ( $r = 0.721$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that higher consumer knowledge is closely associated with more favorable attitudes towards sustainable products. This finding aligns with existing literature that highlights knowledge as a key factor driving positive attitudes toward sustainability.

Additionally, a noteworthy correlation was identified between AT and Dependency on social media (DE) ( $r = 0.612$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that engagement with social media may significantly impact consumer attitudes toward sustainability. In contrast, the correlations involving Purchase Behavior (PB) were relatively weaker (ranging from 0.022 to 0.086). However, their statistical significance indicates that other mediating factors might affect how attitudes translate into actual purchasing decisions. This observation is consistent with common findings in consumer behavior research, which often highlight the attitude-behavior gap.

Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values confirmed both convergent and discriminant validity, reinforcing the reliability and conceptual distinctiveness of the measurement model (Raykov, 1997a, 1997b; Hair et al., 2010).

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

Fleith and Jose (2013) explain that multiple regression predicts a dependent variable using multiple independent variables. In this study, "Purchasing Behavior" is the dependent variable, influenced by "Attitude toward Sustainable Products" and "Knowledge of Using Social Media," with "Dependency on Social Media" acting as a mediating variable. The analysis explores how sustainability information on social media impacts purchasing behavior in Sri Lanka's FMCG sector, with findings presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4  
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.760a	.557	.559	.75058081	2.1704

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge, Attitude

b. Dependent Variable: Purchasing Behavior

The multiple regression analysis shows an R value of 0.760, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between the independent variables (Dependency, Attitude, and Knowledge) and the dependent variable (Purchasing Behavior). The  $R^2$  value of 0.577 suggests that 57.7% of the variation in purchasing behavior is explained by these factors, underscoring their collective importance in influencing consumer decisions. The adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.557, which provides a more conservative estimate (Bhandari, 2024), still reflects a substantial predictive capacity, suggesting the model is theoretically meaningful in explaining consumer behavior patterns in sustainability contexts. The Durbin-Watson statistic further confirms the model's reliability by showing no serious autocorrelation

issues among residuals (Kenton & Will, 2024), indicating that the assumptions of the regression are met.

Table 5  
ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	236.725	2	3.312	3.367	.019b
Residual	415.065	426	.974		
Total	425.000	424			

The ANOVA results presented in Table 5 reveal an F-statistic of 3.367 and a p-value less than 0.0005, confirming the overall statistical significance of the regression model. This indicates that the independent variables meaningfully predict variations in purchasing behavior. Specifically, Attitude and Knowledge significantly contribute to explaining consumer purchasing decisions (beers, 2024). This finding reinforces theoretical models in consumer research, which propose that both cognitive (knowledge) and affective (attitude) factors play central roles in shaping purchase intentions, especially regarding sustainability.

### ***Coefficients***

Table 6  
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	0.00	.048		.000	1.000		
Attitude	.160	.061	.160	2.635	.009	.625	1.600
Knowledge	.184	.061	.184	3.023	.003	.625	1.600

Table 6 shows that both Attitude (beta = 0.160) and Knowledge (beta = 0.184) have positive relationships with Purchasing Behavior. This suggests that individuals who possess stronger pro-sustainability attitudes and greater knowledge are more likely to purchase sustainable products. Although Knowledge has a slightly stronger influence, the similar beta values indicate that both cognitive awareness and attitudinal support are important drivers of sustainable purchasing behavior (Kenton & Will, 2024). This finding aligns with consumer behavior theory, which highlights that informed consumers are more likely to act in accordance with their sustainability values.

### ***Linear Regression Analysis***

Dependency on social media information about product sustainability mediates the impact on Attitudes toward sustainability and Knowledge of using social media.

Table 7  
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.813a	.661	.660		.58314440	1.854

a. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge, Attitude

b. Dependent Variable: Dependency

Table 8  
Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Toleranc e VIF
1	(Constant)	0.00	.028		.000	1.000	
	Attitude	.428	.036	.428	11.974	.000	.625 1.600
	Knowledge	.477	.036	.477	13.336	.000	.625 1.600

a. Dependent Variable: Dependency

Dependency on social media information about product sustainability mediates the impact on Purchasing behavior. (Linear Regression analysis)

Further regression analysis demonstrates that Attitude and Knowledge together explain 81.3% of the variation in Dependency on social media for sustainability information ( $R = 0.813$ ,  $R^2 = 0.662$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.660$ ), indicating a strong predictive relationship. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.854 confirms the absence of autocorrelation, strengthening the validity of the model. The coefficients for Attitude (0.428,  $p = 0.000$ ) and Knowledge (0.477,  $p = 0.000$ ) are significant, indicating that individuals with higher levels of pro-sustainability attitudes and knowledge are more likely to depend on social media for sustainability-related information (Kenton & Will, 2024). This suggests that social media plays a key role in reinforcing consumer engagement with sustainability topics, acting as both an information source and a behavioral influence mechanism.

Table 9  
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.777a	.604	.602	.83547553	2.012

a. Predictors: (Constant), Dependency

b. Dependent Variable: Purchasing Behavior



Table 10  
Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Sig. Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.491E-17	.048		.000	1.000		
	Dependency	.220	.049	.220	4.580	0.0001	1.000	1.000

The  $R^2$  value of 0.604 indicates that 60.4% of the variation in consumers' dependency on social media for sustainable product information is explained by their purchasing behavior. This significant proportion suggests that individuals who actively buy sustainable products are more likely to rely on social media as their primary source of information. The regression coefficient of 0.220 further confirms a positive relationship between these two variables, while the significance level of 0.0001 supports the statistical reliability of this finding.

The Durbin-Watson value of 2.0125 confirms the absence of autocorrelation, which ensures the reliability of the regression results and indicates no concerns regarding multicollinearity (Kenton & Will, 2024). Additionally, the relatively high combined  $R^2$  values across various analyses suggest a mediating effect, where dependency on social media enhances the connection between sustainability-related information and actual purchasing behavior. This underscores the theoretical importance of social media not merely as an information platform but as a critical mechanism that facilitates and reinforces sustainable consumer actions (Kenton & Will, 2024).

Table 11  
Summary of Mediating Effects

R2 Square value			
IV-DV	Direct model	0.557	0.557
IV-ME	Indirect model	0.662	1.266
ME-DV	Indirect model	0.604	

### ***Sobel Test***

The Sobel test indicates a statistically significant mediation effect, with p-values of 0.00001888 and 0.0000148. These values confirm that Dependency on social media information mediates the relationship between Attitudes toward sustainable products and Purchase Behavior, as well as between Knowledge of social media usage and Purchase Behavior, underscoring the importance of the mediation effect in consumer decision-making (Sobel, 1982).

Input:		Test statistic:	p-value:
$t_a$	11.974	Sobel test:	4.27775407
$t_b$	4.580	Aroian test:	4.26479925
		Goodman test:	4.29082768
Reset all		Calculate	

Figure 2. DE regarding product sustainability mediating between AT and PB

Input:		Test statistic:	p-value:
$t_a$	13.336	Sobel test:	4.33166883
$t_b$	4.580	Aroian test:	4.3208166
		Goodman test:	4.34260325
Reset all		Calculate	

Figure 3. DE mediating between KW and PB

## Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

Table 12  
Hypothesizes Results

Hypotheses	Result
H1: Attitude towards sustainable products has a positive impact on dependency on social media for information about sustainability.	Supported
H2: Knowledge of social media has a positive impact on dependency on social media for information about sustainability.	Supported
H3: Dependency on social media for information about sustainability has a positive impact on consumer purchase behavior.	Supported
H4: Dependency on social media for information about sustainability mediates the relationship between Attitude towards sustainable products and Consumer purchase behavior.	Supported
H5: Dependency on social media for information about sustainability mediates the relationship between Knowledge of using social media and Consumer purchase behavior.	Supported

## Discussion and Conclusion

The study highlights the significant role of social media in shaping consumer behavior towards sustainable products in Sri Lanka's FMCG sector. It identifies social media dependency as a key factor influencing purchasing behavior, with platforms providing trusted information to environmentally conscious consumers. Proficiency in social media use enhances the ability to make informed sustainability-related decisions. Positive attitudes toward sustainable products also influenced both social media dependency and

purchasing behavior. Social media is recognized as a mediator, strengthening the link between consumer attitudes and purchase behavior, thus promoting sustainable consumption.

### **Discussion**

This study applies the Media System Dependency (MSD) theory to assess how social media influences sustainable product purchases in Sri Lanka's Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. It specifically examines the relationships between attitude, knowledge, dependency, and consumer behavior, comparing findings with prior research.

*Hypothesis 01- Attitude towards sustainable products has a positive impact on dependency on social media for information about sustainability*

A possible explanation for this finding is that in the Sri Lankan context, social media serves as an accessible, immediate, and highly visual source of sustainability information, which particularly appeals to consumers who already value sustainable practices. Unlike traditional media, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube allow consumers to engage interactively with content, communities, and brands, thereby deepening their reliance on these sources for ongoing learning and updates.

While the finding aligns with previous studies (Ghadimi, 2019; Suki, 2016; Abubakar, 2018), this study highlights how social media may not only inform but actively reinforce sustainable attitudes by continuously exposing users to related content, trends, and social proof from peers. This creates a feedback loop where attitude and media dependency mutually strengthen each other.

However, it is important to consider potential construction overlaps. Consumer attitude and consumer knowledge may not be entirely distinct; individuals with strong, sustainable attitudes often proactively seek more information, potentially blending these constructions in practical terms. Future research should refine these measures or employ qualitative approaches to disentangle these closely related variables.

From a practical perspective, this finding suggests that marketers and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption should strategically leverage social media platforms, as consumers with favorable attitudes are already predisposed to seek and trust information from these channels. Furthermore, tailoring sustainability messages to visually rich, community-driven platforms may be especially effective in reinforcing these consumer dependencies.

*Hypothesis 02- Knowledge of social media has a positive impact on dependency on social media for information about sustainability*

The results indicate that consumers' understanding of social media platforms significantly enhances their reliance on these platforms for sustainability-related information. This relationship suggests that social media literacy empowers consumers to not only passively consume information but also actively seek, filter, and engage with

sustainability content. Those who are more adept at navigating social media are likely better prepared to identify credible sources, find sustainability-specific content, and connect with like-minded communities, which further deepens their reliance on these platforms.

One possible explanation is that greater familiarity with social media tools reduces the perceived effort required to access complex sustainability information. In the Sri Lankan context, where traditional media may not prioritize sustainability narratives, consumers who are savvy with social media may naturally gravitate towards digital platforms to meet their informational needs. This finding aligns with the work of Fleith & Jose (2013) and Wang (2019), who emphasized the role of digital literacy in shaping consumer information-seeking behavior. However, this study uniquely highlights this effect within the sustainability domain and among consumers of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) (Fleith & Jose, 2013).

Additionally, while previous research (e.g., Cerasi et al., 2024; Suki, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2023) has focused on how consumers process brand-driven sustainability messages, this study underscores the proactive role consumers play in sourcing content themselves, driven by their digital competence. The results support the idea that social media knowledge not only facilitates access but also increases dependency, making social media the most trusted and convenient channel for sustainability-related decision-making.

However, an important limitation to consider is the potential conceptual overlap between social media knowledge and dependency. It is possible that consumers who frequently use social media naturally develop greater knowledge, making it challenging to fully separate cause from effect. Future studies could address this by employing longitudinal designs to establish the temporal order of this relationship.

From a practical standpoint, these findings highlight the importance of enhancing digital literacy as a strategy to deepen consumer engagement with sustainability initiatives. Brands and policymakers should focus not only on disseminating sustainability messages but also on facilitating skill-building around social media use. This will ensure that more consumers can efficiently access, interpret, and trust sustainability information online

*Hypothesis 03-Dependency on social media for information about sustainability has a positive impact on consumer purchase behavior*

The results of this study confirm that consumers who depend on social media for sustainability information are more likely to engage in sustainable purchasing behavior. This finding aligns with Media System Dependency Theory (MSDT), which suggests that the more individuals rely on a media system to achieve their goals, the more that system influences their attitudes and behaviors (Saeed et al, 2019). In this case, consumers increasingly use social media as a primary source of credible, up-to-date sustainability information, which directly shapes their purchasing decisions.

A key reason for this relationship may be the high level of consumer trust in peer-generated content and real-time feedback available on social media platforms. Unlike traditional advertising, which can be perceived as biased, social media provides access to product reviews, sustainability certifications, user experiences, and brand transparency initiatives. This multidimensional, user-driven content helps consumers assess the environmental and ethical credentials of products with greater confidence, which enhances their likelihood of purchasing sustainable FMCG goods.

This study's findings resonate with previous work by Angella et al. (2015), Saeed et al. (2019), and Abner et al. (2019), who demonstrated that social media dependency can strengthen purchase intentions by increasing the credibility of sustainability claims. However, the current research adds depth by emphasizing that this effect is particularly pronounced in the Sri Lankan FMCG sector, where social media is rapidly overtaking traditional information channels. This suggests that social media has evolved beyond a promotional tool; it now serves as a key decision-making resource for sustainability-conscious consumers.

It is also important to consider that while social media enhances transparency, the potential for misinformation or greenwashing remains a limit. Consumers may depend heavily on the volume of social media content, but not always have the skills to critically evaluate its accuracy. Future research could explore how consumers distinguish between authentic and misleading sustainability messages on social media.

From a practical perspective, this finding highlights the importance for brands to consistently deliver credible, visually appealing, and socially validated sustainability content on social media platforms. Companies that ignore this dependency risk being sidelined in consumer decision-making processes. Marketers should leverage interactive features, transparent reporting, and consumer testimonials to build deeper trust and influence purchasing behavior.

*Hypothesis 04-Dependency on social media for information about sustainability mediates the relationship between Attitude towards sustainable products and Consumer purchase behavior.*

The results demonstrate that dependency on social media for sustainability information mediates the relationship between consumers' attitudes toward sustainable products and their purchasing behavior. This indicates that while a positive attitude toward sustainability is important, it is the active engagement with social media that translates those favorable attitudes into actual purchasing decisions.

This finding provides an important theoretical extension to both Media System Dependency Theory (MSDT) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). While prior research (Farid, 2024; Azzurra et al., 2014; Zuniga, 2023) has consistently shown that positive attitudes predict sustainable purchasing behavior, the current study reveals that attitudes alone may not be sufficient drivers of action in today's digital landscape.

Consumers with strong sustainable attitudes increasingly rely on social media as a platform to validate, reinforce, and operationalize their sustainability choices. Without this dependency on social media for information, the translation from positive attitude to actual purchase may weaken.

This mediation effect suggests that social media serves as a crucial bridge between internal consumer motivations and external purchasing behaviors. In the Sri Lankan FMCG context, where consumers face information gaps in traditional media, social media dependency appears to be an essential enabler of sustainable consumption.

While the result aligns with earlier studies (Chiou, 2018; Jung et al., 2020; Zhuang et al., 2021), this study uniquely emphasizes that the behavioral impact of consumer attitudes is significantly amplified when social media is the primary information source. This insight advances MSD Theory by highlighting that media dependency does not merely accompany consumer decision-making—it may activate behavioral outcomes, especially in sustainability contexts.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the mediation pathway may be influenced by unmeasured variables such as consumer trust in social media, exposure to greenwashing, or social influence within digital communities. Future research could investigate these moderating factors to further refine the understanding of how social media dependency shapes sustainable purchasing patterns.

Practically, this finding underscores the need for brands and policymakers to not only foster positive consumer attitudes toward sustainability but also ensure that social media ecosystems provide credible, accessible, and engaging sustainability content. Social media platforms, therefore, become not just communication channels but active facilitators of sustainable consumer behavior.

*Hypothesis 05-Dependency on social media for information about sustainability mediates the relationship between Knowledge of using social media and Consumer purchase behavior.*

The study confirms that dependency on social media for sustainability information mediates the relationship between consumers' knowledge of using social media and their sustainable purchasing behavior. This suggests that social media proficiency alone does not directly lead to sustainable purchases; rather, it is the development of active dependency on social media as an information source that drives purchasing decisions.

This mediation highlights an important behavioral pathway: consumers who are skilled at navigating social media are more likely to engage with sustainability content, which fosters a reliance on these platforms when making consumption choices. Without this dependency, the effect of social media knowledge on purchase behavior would likely be weaker or even insignificant.

While earlier research (Wang, 2019; Saeed et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2021) established that social media literacy enables consumers to access, assess, and interact with

sustainability-related information, this study extends those findings by demonstrating that social media dependency is the critical link that activates sustainable purchasing behavior. In other words, knowledge of social media provides the capability, but dependency provides the motivation and habit that translate into action.

This relationship may be particularly relevant in the Sri Lankan FMCG context, where consumers are increasingly turning to social media as their primary source of trustworthy, real-time sustainability information. The interactive nature of social media, through reviews, influencer endorsements, and community-driven content, makes it a highly influential space for sustainability-focused decision-making.

However, it is important to consider that this mediation effect may vary based on the quality of content, consumer exposure to greenwashing, or the presence of social influence within digital communities. Future research could explore these potential moderators to gain a more nuanced understanding of how social media knowledge and dependency interact.

From a practical perspective, this finding suggests that brands and policymakers should focus not only on disseminating sustainability information but also on improving consumers' digital literacy and encouraging habitual engagement with sustainability content. Creating accessible, interactive, and trustworthy social media environments will likely strengthen consumers' reliance on these platforms for sustainability-related decisions.

### ***Summary of Findings***

This study confirms that consumers' attitudes toward sustainable products and their knowledge of using social media both positively influence their dependency on social media for sustainability information. Social media dependency plays a key role in shaping sustainable purchasing behavior, as consumers increasingly trust the content, reviews, and peer recommendations they find on these platforms.

Importantly, the study identifies that social media dependency mediates both the relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase behavior, and between social media knowledge and purchase behavior. This means that social media dependency is essential in turning positive attitudes and digital skills into real, sustainable buying actions.

The findings emphasize that social media is not just an information source—it is a critical driver of sustainable consumer behavior. However, the study also notes possible overlaps between consumer attitudes and knowledge and highlights the risk of misinformation. Future research is recommended to explore these aspects in greater depth.

### ***Implications of the Study***

The study emphasizes the need for enhancing social media literacy, shaping consumer attitudes, and implementing strategic business and policy interventions to promote

sustainable consumer behavior in Sri Lanka. Social media knowledge significantly influences consumer reliance on digital platforms for sustainability information, highlighting the importance of educational initiatives to improve digital literacy, particularly in rural areas (Saeed et al, 2019). Workshops and awareness campaigns can help consumers identify credible sustainability information and engage with reliable sources.

Consumer attitudes play a crucial role in driving sustainable purchasing decisions. Businesses should focus on emotional engagement, storytelling, and demonstrating the environmental benefits of sustainable practices. Aligning sustainable products with consumer values can encourage a shift toward eco-friendly choices, even for premium-priced products (Farid et al., 2024).

Leveraging social media through influencer collaborations, transparent certifications, and interactive content can enhance consumer trust. Government support, such as accurate product labeling, financial incentives for eco-friendly businesses, and expanded digital infrastructure, is essential for promoting sustainability.

The study advocates a holistic approach combining education, policy, and business innovation. Future research should examine sector-specific behaviors and generational differences in social media's role in sustainability. Social media remains a powerful tool to overcome barriers to sustainable consumption in Sri Lanka.

### ***Further Research Suggestions***

This study provides valuable insights into how social media influences sustainable purchasing behavior in Sri Lanka's FMCG sector and highlights key areas for future research. One potential direction is a comparative industry analysis to determine whether sustainability trends in FMCG apply to other industries, such as textiles, electronics, or automotive, which may have distinct consumer bases and responses to sustainability messages. Cross-cultural and regional studies could examine how socio-economic conditions and cultural values shape consumer engagement with sustainability content. A comparison between developed and developing countries may reveal the impact of technological access and cultural attitudes on social media sustainability campaigns.

Longitudinal studies could track consumer behavior over time to understand the long-term effects of social media exposure on sustainable purchasing, brand loyalty, and lifestyle changes. With the rise of short-form video platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels, future research should explore how user-generated content, influencer marketing, and infographics impact consumer sustainability perceptions.

The study concludes that consumer dependence on social media significantly mediates the relationship between sustainability attitudes and purchase behavior. FMCG companies should prioritize transparent and engaging social media campaigns using influencers and user-generated content. Policymakers can leverage these findings for educational campaigns promoting sustainable consumption. Academically, this study



contributes to understanding digital media's role in sustainability, particularly in developing countries. Future research should explore cross-industry and cross-cultural comparisons, as well as the long-term impact of social media engagement on sustainable consumer behavior.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated how information about sustainable production on social media affects consumer behavior in Sri Lanka's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. The findings confirm that social media significantly influences consumer attitudes, increases knowledge, and impacts purchasing decisions related to sustainable products. Furthermore, the research emphasizes that consumers' reliance on social media acts as a crucial mediator, enhancing the influence of social media knowledge and attitudes on sustainable purchasing behavior.

This study provides more than just a summary of the results; it highlights an important insight: social media is not merely an information platform but also a significant behavioral influence in the sustainability movement within the FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) sector. For FMCG marketers, this means they should focus on creating and sharing transparent, engaging, and frequent sustainability content on the social media platforms that are most popular with Generation Z. Marketers should also utilize social media influences, storytelling, and interactive campaigns to build trust and promote sustainable consumption.

Policymakers should consider creating guidelines for social media and forming partnerships aimed at promoting verified sustainability information. This approach will help ensure that consumers have access to accurate and reliable content. Implementing these initiatives can enhance the overall national sustainability agenda and empower consumers to make better-informed choices.

Ultimately, this research adds to the existing knowledge on sustainability communication in developing countries and offers a practical roadmap for enhancing sustainable consumer behavior through the strategic use of social media in Sri Lanka.

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