

**Sustainable Stewardship:  
The Heuristic-Systemic Approach to Sustainable Attitude-Behavior Gap**

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More than 30% of UK consumers are highly concerned about environmental issues, yet these consumers have not adopted noticeably more sustainable consumption behavior (Hughner et al., 2007). Although an increasing number of apparel businesses are striving to exert ecological and social influences that can change consumers' purchasing behaviors in relation to sustainable products, consumers still feel hesitant about adopting a sustainable lifestyle. Moreover, consumers tend to engage in a complicated decision-making process due to the motivational and practical complexity of sustainable consumption. Likewise, within a series of purchase decisions, individual decision may be unrelated and are often situational purchases, which, in turn, result in an 'attitude-behavior gap' (Young et al., 2010). To bridge such a gap, it is vital to examine consumers' social-psychological acceptance in conjunction with business accountability.

Zuckerman and Chaiken (1998)'s 'Heuristic-systematic model' describes the facilitation of sustainable stewardship through the systemic and the heuristic routes. The systemic route involves integrating all useful information, which requires the existence of a cognitive route leading from motivational attitude to behaviors. The heuristic route is comprised by situational decisions in which attitudes can be changed from simple associations of the CSR drives and eco-labels/indices. This demonstrates that the current corporate social responsibility (CSR) drives and eco-labels/indices can act as a strategic device for the practice of corporate stewardship in the apparel industry. Timberland and Patagonia® participate in environmental responsibility by eliminating harmful chemicals from their production processes, while many fashion brands such as REI and Patagonia® use eco-labels to convey information about environmental protection and environmentally friendly processes. Given the growing interest among societies and in many industries, comprehending these dynamics can help improve the knowledge level of consumers, and may stipulate further applications of sustainable stewardship. Thus, this study aims (1) to test the systematic conjunction of CSR drives with attitude and sustainable behaviors; and (2) to examine the heuristic influence of eco-labels/indices from the point of view of the sustainable attitude-behavior gap framework. The following hypotheses are tested:

- ♦ *In the systemic route, CSR drives positively affect pro-environmental attitude (H1a) which has positive impacts on green product purchasing (H1b), and green product recycling (H1c).*
- ♦ *In the heuristic route, CSR drives (H2a) and pro-environmental attitude (H2d) positively affect eco-labels/indices, which has positive impacts on green product purchasing (H2b), and green product recycling (H2c).*

Drawn from the existing scales of sustainable practices (Barr & Gilg, 2006; Tanner & Kast, 2003), and of CRS drives and eco-labels/indices (Zaichkowsky, 1985), self-administered questionnaires were developed and distributed electronically to online and offline courses at a

southwestern university in the US. Responses from a total of 239 respondents (93%) were used for further analysis. They were comprised of females (73.6%) and males (26.4%) with a median age of 21 years. The majority were Caucasian (42.9%), junior level (34.2%) and have purchasing experience of green products including food (73.8%), beauty care (37.9%), and clothing (29.6%).

The measurement model showed a good model fit ( $\chi^2 = 458.997$ , CFI of .947, and RMSEA of .068), and the fit statistics of the structural model indicated as  $\chi^2 = 469.325$ , CFI of .945, and RMSEA of .068. Upon testing the structural model, the effects of CSR on pro-environmental attitude (H1a:  $\Gamma = .438$ ,  $t = 6.455$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and eco-labels/Indices (H2a:  $\Gamma = .638$ ,  $t = 9.534$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were significant. The effects of pro-environmental attitude on eco-labels/Indices (H2d:  $\beta = .129$ ,  $t = 2.224$ ,  $p = .026$ ), green purchasing (H1b:  $\beta = .409$ ,  $t = 6.646$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and recycling (H1c:  $\beta = .579$ ,  $t = 8.113$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were significant. The positive effects of eco-labels/Indices on green purchasing (H2b:  $\beta = .779$ ,  $t = 11.191$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and recycling (H2c:  $\beta = .290$ ,  $t = 5.610$ ,  $p$ -value  $< .001$ ) were confirmed. Further, the results of mediating effects of pro-environmental attitude and eco-labels/indices on green purchasing ( $\beta = .550$ ,  $p = .050$ ) and recycling ( $\beta = .481$ ,  $p = .048$ ) showed positive relationships predicting sustainable practices. The H1 hypotheses were robustly supported, which validates the systemic route leading from CSR drives to attitude and behavior development. The data relating to the H2 hypotheses supported the heuristic route between attitude and the behavior gap, which highlighted the mediating role of eco-labels/indices in the relationships among CSR drives, attitude, and green product purchasing and recycling.

This study contributes to an empirical understanding of the heuristic-systematic approach to the attitude-behavior gap framework by substantiating the role of sustainable stewardship. CSR drives, a motivational tool of corporate sustainable stewardship, encourage systemic development of pro-environmental attitude by consumers, along with green product purchasing and recycling. Eco labels/indices are shown to be part of a heuristic process which fills the attitude-behavior gap through their robust mediation. The more positively consumers perceive CSR drives and pro-environmental attitude, the more consumers accept eco-labels/indices, and the more they purchase and recycle green products. Indeed, corporate sustainable stewardship is a driving force for consumers' sustainable practices.

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