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From Digital Engagement to Sustainable Purchase Intention: The Roles of Trust and Environmental Awareness Among Gen Z

RR. Siti Muslikhah[1]*
[1]Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: siti.muslikhah@uii.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the purchasing behavior of Generation Z consumers in the context of online shopping by examining the roles of digital engagement and trust in shaping sustainable purchase intention, while considering environmental awareness as a moderating factor. The proposed conceptual framework is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, where digital engagement represents the external stimulus, trust reflects the consumer's internal psychological state, and sustainable purchase intention constitutes the resulting behavioral response. The study uses a quantitative approach through a survey with a purposive sampling technique among Gen Z respondents aged 14–29 years who actively use social media every day and have an online shopping experience. Data were collected using an online questionnaire and analyzed with Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS to test the validity and reliability of the construct as well as direct path testing, mediation, and moderation. The results of the study show that the hypotheses in this study are all supported. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution in the form of strengthening the S-O-R model in the context of sustainable consumption in the digital era, as well as a practical contribution for companies in designing digital communication strategies that not only increase engagement but also build trust and strengthen sustainable purchasing intentions in the Gen Z segment.

Keywords: Digital Engagement, Trust, Sustainable Purchase Intention, Environmental Awareness.

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Introduction

Climate change and environmental degradation have developed into one of the most attention-grabbing global challenges in recent years. The *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* report shows that increased greenhouse gas emissions and excessive exploitation of natural resources are inseparable from unsustainable production and consumption patterns (IPCC, 2023). Therefore, changing people's consumption behavior is seen as one of the important steps to support sustainable development. This is also in line with the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) agenda, especially goal 12, which emphasizes the importance of implementing responsible consumption and production patterns (UNDP, 2015). In this context, Generation Z (Gen Z) is often seen as a group that has the potential to drive changes towards

more sustainable consumption behaviors. Various international surveys show that this generation has a high level of concern for environmental issues and climate change (Deloitte, 2025). In addition, they also increasingly consider sustainability aspects when choosing a product, including showing greater interest in environmentally friendly products (Angela et al., 2025). However, studies have found a gap between environmental awareness and actual purchasing behavior. Asaro (2025) reports that Gen Z's purchasing decisions are still more influenced by practical considerations, such as price, ease of obtaining products, and emerging trends. The findings indicate that high environmental awareness is not necessarily followed by the emergence of the intention to buy sustainable products.

On the other hand, the development of digital technology has changed the way companies interact with their consumers. Social media and various digital platforms are now the main means for brands to build communication while strengthening relationships with Gen Z. Vogels and Gelles-Watnick (2023) explain that most members of Generation Z use social media every day and use it as the main source to obtain information about products and values carried by a brand. This condition encourages companies to be more active in increasing *digital engagement*, namely consumer engagement through various forms of interaction with brand content on digital platforms.

Such engagement not only serves as a communication medium but also contributes to shaping consumer perceptions, judgments, and attitudes towards a brand. In addition, consumer responses to information about sustainability are also influenced by the level of *environmental awareness* that each individual has. Although Gen Z is generally known to have concern for environmental issues (World Economic Forum, 2023), their level of knowledge, understanding, and commitment to sustainability is not always the same. Individuals who have higher *environmental awareness* tend to pay more attention to sustainability-related information and are more critical in evaluating environmental claims submitted by companies.

This phenomenon shows that there are empirical problems that still need further explanation. The high level of digital engagement and environmental concern among Gen Z has not consistently increased sustainable purchase intention. This condition indicates that there are psychological factors that play a role in bridging the relationship. One of the factors that is thought to have an important role is trust, which allows digital interactions to develop into intentions to buy sustainable products. In addition, the level of environmental awareness is estimated to also determine how strong the influence of digital engagement is on the formation of trust and sustainable purchase intention. Thus, this study aims to explain how digital engagement can encourage sustainable purchase intention through the formation of trust, as well as test whether environmental awareness strengthens or weakens these relationships in Generation Z consumers.

To provide a deeper understanding of the factors driving sustainable purchasing behavior, this study develops a conceptual framework based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory. In this framework, digital engagement is conceptualized as the external stimulus generated through consumers' interactions with brand-related content on digital platforms. Rather than assuming that these interactions directly lead to sustainable purchase intention, the proposed model suggests that their influence occurs through the formation of trust as the internal psychological state, which subsequently shapes consumers' behavioral intentions.

The framework is further extended by incorporating environmental awareness as a boundary condition, acknowledging that consumers with different levels of environmental concern may interpret and respond to sustainability-related information in different ways. By integrating perspectives from digital marketing, consumer trust, and sustainable consumption, this study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how sustainable purchase intention is formed among Generation Z consumers, highlighting that digital engagement is most effective when it fosters trust and is accompanied by a strong level of environmental awareness.

Previous research has discussed digital engagement as a key concept in digital marketing. Conceptual studies and scale development show that engagement is not just an interaction, such as likes

or comments, but cognitive, affective, and behavioral activities that arise during or as a result of consumer interaction with brands on social media. The foundation of engagement measurement in the context of social media is widely referred to from the development of the consumer brand engagement scale (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014). The conceptual strengthening and operationalization of engagement in the context of online brand communities is also deepened through the dimensional approach and duality of engagement in the study (Dessart *et al*., 2016). At the platform content level, more recent research emphasizes that message characteristics affect consumer engagement levels towards brand posts, which ultimately shapes behavioral responses (Eslami *et al.,* 2018). Recent studies have begun to examine engagement as a driver of consumer behavioral intent, including purchase intention, especially in the young consumer segment. Duffett & Maraule (2026) highlight how engagement is related to intention to purchase in the younger generation (including Gen Z), while placing trust as an important element in the process of forming purchase intent in the digital environment. Some studies have placed environmental awareness as a factor that explains why not all consumers respond to digital marketing stimuli equally.

Empirical evidence shows that awareness can act as a boundary condition that strengthens or weakens the relationship of attitude or trust to green purchasing intentions. For example, a study examining the moderation of environmental awareness found that environmental awareness can strengthen certain relationships in the process towards green purchase intention (Yanti *et al.,* 2026). These findings are in line with previous research that linked environmental awareness with the formation of trust in eco-friendly brands and purchase intentions (Punyatoya, 2014). However, when pulled into the context of Mother's research, there is still room for development: engagement studies focus a lot on general purchase intentions, while sustainable consumption studies often focus on personal attitudes/values; The integration of digital engagement on trust and sustainable purchase intention with environmental awareness as a moderator in the Gen Z population is still not mainstream and therefore offers a clear theoretical contribution, namely explaining the mechanism of trust mediation and awareness moderation in encouraging sustainable purchase intention in the digital age (Dessart *et al*., 2016; White *et al.,* 2019; Duffett & Maraule, 2026).

Despite the growing body of research on digital engagement, its role in explaining sustainable consumer behavior remains relatively underexplored. Existing studies have predominantly examined the influence of digital engagement on conventional marketing outcomes, including brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, and general purchase intention (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Dessart et al., 2016). The present study extends this stream of research by examining sustainable purchase intention as the primary behavioral outcome within the context of Generation Z consumers. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, digital engagement is conceptualized as an external stimulus that affects consumer behavior through internal psychological processes rather than through a direct pathway (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In digital environments, engagement encompasses consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral interactions with brand-related content across digital platforms (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014; Dessart *et al*., 2016).

Prior studies have demonstrated that meaningful digital engagement enhances favorable brand evaluations, strengthens consumer–brand relationships, and encourages positive behavioral intentions (Eslami *et al.,* 2018). However, limited evidence is available regarding whether these engagement experiences also translate into intentions to purchase sustainable products, particularly among Generation Z, whose purchasing decisions are strongly shaped by digital media and social networking platforms (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Addressing this gap, the present study develops an integrated framework that examines the relationships among digital engagement, trust, environmental awareness, and sustainable purchase intention. Specifically, the study investigates whether digital engagement influences trust, whether trust enhances sustainable purchase intention, whether digital engagement directly affects sustainable purchase intention, whether trust mediates the relationship between digital engagement and sustainable purchase intention, and whether environmental awareness strengthens the relationship between digital engagement and trust among Generation Z consumers.

Literature Review

Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory

This research is based on the Stimulus-Organism–Response (S-O-R) Theory which was first introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in the study of environmental psychology. This theory explains that individual behavior (response) is the result of external stimuli (stimulus) that are processed through the internal psychological conditions of individuals (organisms). In other words, the influence of the environment on behavior does not occur directly, but through cognitive and affective mechanisms that occur in individuals. In subsequent developments, the S-O-R Theory was widely adopted in marketing research to explain how marketing environmental factors, such as store design, retail atmosphere, or communication elements, affect consumer emotions, perceptions, and behavioral intentions (Eroglu *et al.*, 2001; Jacoby, 2002). The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) approach is considered appropriate to explain consumer behavior in the context of modern marketing because it provides an overview of how stimuli from the external environment can affect behavioral responses through psychological processes that occur in individuals. This model emphasizes that consumer responses do not appear directly after receiving a stimulus, but are first influenced by an internal evaluation process that shapes the way individuals understand and respond to the information they receive.

The present study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework to explain how digital engagement influences sustainable purchase intention through consumers' internal psychological processes. Within this framework, digital engagement is conceptualized as the external stimulus (S), representing the interactions that Generation Z consumers have with brand-related content and activities across digital platforms. Rather than producing an immediate behavioral outcome, these digital interactions are expected to shape consumers' internal evaluations, which are reflected in trust as the organism (O). In this context, *trust* captures consumers' confidence in a brand's credibility, integrity, and honesty (Morgan *et al.*, 1994; Chen, 2010). Such confidence plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty surrounding sustainability claims, particularly as consumers become increasingly aware of misleading environmental communications associated with greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

According to the S-O-R perspective, the psychological state represented by trust subsequently gives rise to a behavioral response (R), namely sustainable purchase intention, which reflects consumers' willingness to purchase products that align with environmental and sustainability principles (Wang et al., 2019). To extend the explanatory power of the original S-O-R model, this study further incorporates environmental awareness as a moderating variable. This extension is based on the premise that consumers differ in their level of environmental concern and knowledge, which influences how they interpret, evaluate, and respond to sustainability-related information encountered through digital platforms (Mostafa, 2007; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Consequently, the effectiveness of digital engagement in fostering trust is expected to vary according to the level of environmental awareness possessed by Generation Z consumers.

Sustainable Purchase Intention

The dependent variable used in this study is *sustainable purchase intention*, which is the intention of consumers to buy products or brands that pay attention to sustainability aspects, both in terms of the environment and social responsibility during the production process. This concept is a development of *purchase intention* in the study of consumer behavior, which describes a person's tendency to make purchases in the future based on their evaluation and consideration of a product (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of sustainability, the concept is not only related to the desire to buy, but also reflects consumers' willingness to choose products that are more environmentally friendly, ethically produced, and have a better social and ecological impact than conventional products (Chen, 2010; White *et al.*, 2019).

Based on the perspective of Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R), sustainable purchase intention is positioned as a form of behavioral response that arises after consumers receive stimulus from the digital environment and conduct a psychological evaluation process through the formation of trust. In this study, these variables represent the final result of the process of consumer interaction with brand communication on digital platforms, especially in Generation Z, who have a high intensity of digital media use and are regularly exposed to various information about sustainability. The measurement of sustainable purchase intention is carried out through several indicators that describe the tendency of consumers to choose sustainable products, give preference to brands that have responsibility for the environment, and show a willingness to support business practices that apply sustainability principles (Chen, 2010; Wang *et al.,* 2019).

Digital Engagement

Digital engagement refers to the degree to which consumers actively interact with a brand across digital platforms. This engagement extends beyond observable online behaviors and also encompasses the cognitive attention and emotional connection that develop during interactions with brand-related content and communication. The concept originates from the broader *customer engagement* literature, which emphasizes that consumers are active participants in creating and maintaining relationships with brands rather than merely receiving marketing messages (Brodie *et al.,* 2015). In digital settings, consumer engagement may take many forms, including viewing brand content, responding through comments or reactions, sharing information within online communities, participating in digital campaigns, and communicating directly with brands via social media and other interactive platforms (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Dessart *et al.,* 2016).

The concept of digital engagement becomes increasingly important when studied in Generation Z. As a generation that grows along with the development of digital technology, Gen Z has a high intensity of social media use so that interactions with brands take place more through digital platforms compared to conventional communication channels (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). These experiences not only affect preferences for a brand, but also shape perceptions of credibility, closeness, and emotional connection to the company. Based on the perspective of Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R), digital engagement is positioned as a stimulus (S) because it is an external stimulus that consumers receive through various forms of digital communication. In this study, digital engagement reflects the level of exposure and engagement of Gen Z to brand communication activities on digital platforms, which is estimated to play a role in building trust and subsequently encouraging the emergence of sustainable purchase intentions.

Trust

In this study, trust is conceptualized as the mediating construct that reflects consumers' confidence in a brand's credibility, integrity, and ability to deliver on its promises and sustainability claims. Within the relationship marketing perspective, trust is widely regarded as a fundamental element for establishing and maintaining enduring relationships between firms and their customers (Morgan *et al.,* 1994). When consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, they are more likely to feel secure in their purchasing decisions because trust reduces the uncertainty and perceived risks associated with product evaluation and selection. As a result, stronger trust not only increases consumers' willingness to purchase but also fosters the development of long-term relationships with the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

In the context of digital marketing, the formation of trust does not only depend on the quality of the product or service, but is also influenced by how the company builds communication with its consumers. Interactions that take place openly, responsively, and transparently through various digital platforms can strengthen consumers' perception of brand credibility and integrity (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Thus, in the framework of Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R), trust is positioned as an organism component (O), which is a psychological condition that develops after consumers receive a stimulus in

the form of digital engagement. The trust formed through this process then becomes an internal mechanism that bridges the influence of digital engagement on the emergence of sustainable purchase intentions.

Environmental Awareness

The moderation variable in this study is environmental awareness, which refers to the level of knowledge, concern, and sensitivity of individuals to environmental issues as well as the impact of consumption activities on ecosystem sustainability. Environmental awareness reflects the extent to which individuals understand environmental problems and feel a moral responsibility to contribute to preserving the environment (Mostafa, 2007).

In the consumer behavior literature, environmental awareness is seen as an important determinant in shaping attitudes and intentions towards environmentally friendly products. Environmental awareness has special relevance because Gen Z is often reported to have a relatively high level of concern for climate change issues and social responsibility (Deloitte, 2025). However, this level of awareness is not homogeneous among individuals, so it can affect the way they process sustainability information received through digital platforms. Therefore, in this study, environmental awareness is positioned as a moderation variable that affects the strength of the relationship between digital engagement and trust.

Digital Engagement and Trust

In the context of digital marketing, digital engagement reflects the level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of consumers towards brand content on digital platforms (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014; Dessart *et al*., 2016). Intense and meaningful interactions between consumers and brands through social media can increase the perception of transparency, relational closeness, and the credibility of brand communication. According to marketing relationship theory, interactivity and two-way communication contribute to the formation of trust as consumers obtain clearer and more consistent information about the Company's values and commitments (Morgan *et al*., 1994). In a digital environment, high engagement also allows consumers to evaluate the authenticity of sustainability messages, thereby reinforcing confidence in brand integrity (Harrigan *et al*., 2017). Thus, the higher the level of digital engagement, the more likely it is to build trust in Gen Z consumers.

***H_1**: Digital engagement has a positive effect on trust in Gen Z consumers.*

Trust and Sustainable Purchase Intention

Trust is a central factor in reducing uncertainty and risk perception in purchasing decision-making (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In the context of sustainability, consumers often face information asymmetry related to eco-friendly claims, so trust is an important prerequisite in encouraging sustainable purchasing intentions (Chen, 2010). Empirical studies show that trust in brands that have environmental commitments significantly increases green purchase intention (Wang *et al*., 2019). In addition, the increasing practice of greenwashing (Delmas & Burbanos, 2011) makes trust a crucial mechanism that validates sustainability claims before consumers decide to buy. Thus, the higher the level of trust in the brand, the stronger the sustainable purchase intention of Gen Z.

***H_2**: Trust has a positive effect on sustainable purchase intention in Gen Z consumers.*

Digital Engagement and Sustainable Purchase Intention

Digital engagement allows consumers to gain information, build emotional connections, and increase the perception of value to brands (Brodie *et al*., 2015). In the context of sustainability, exposure to and active

interaction with digital content that features responsible practices can influence consumer purchasing attitudes and intentions (White *et al.,* 2019). Generation Z, who have a high intensity of social media use (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021) tend to make digital platforms the main reference in purchasing decisions. Therefore, high digital engagement has the potential to drive sustainable purchase intent directly. Thus, the higher the digital engagement, the higher the sustainable purchase intention in Gen Z consumers.

H_3: *Digital engagement has a positive effect on sustainable purchase intention in Gen Z consumers.*

The Role of Trust Mediation

According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974), the impact of external stimuli on consumer behavior occurs through an internal psychological evaluation rather than through a direct process. Within this perspective, consumers first interpret and evaluate the stimulus they receive before forming a behavioral response. In the present study, digital engagement represents the external stimulus, whereas trust reflects the internal psychological state that develops from consumers' interactions with brand-related content on digital platforms. As consumers become more engaged with a brand's digital communication, they are more likely to develop confidence in the brand's credibility and reliability. This psychological state subsequently encourages a stronger intention to purchase sustainable products (Chen, 2010; Wang et al., 2019). Based on this reasoning, trust is expected to serve as the underlying mechanism through which digital engagement translates into sustainable purchase intention.

H_4: *Trust mediates the relationship between digital engagement and sustainable purchase intention among Generation Z consumers.*

The Role of Environmental Awareness Moderation

Environmental awareness refers to the extent to which individuals recognize environmental problems and are concerned about their potential consequences (Mostafa, 2007). Consumers who possess a higher level of environmental awareness are generally more attentive to sustainability-related information and are more likely to carefully evaluate environmental claims communicated by companies. Consequently, they tend to respond more positively to messages that demonstrate genuine environmental responsibility (White et al., 2019). Existing studies also suggest that environmental awareness enhances the influence of sustainability-related perceptions on consumers' intentions to purchase environmentally friendly products (Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

Building on this perspective, the present study proposes that environmental awareness shapes the effectiveness of digital engagement in fostering consumer trust. When consumers are highly aware of environmental issues, they are more receptive to sustainability-oriented content delivered through digital platforms and are more likely to perceive such communication as credible. As a result, interactions with brand content are expected to contribute more strongly to the development of trust among environmentally conscious consumers. Accordingly, this study argues that environmental awareness positively moderates the relationship between digital engagement and trust among Generation Z consumers.

H_5: *Environmental awareness positively moderates the relationship between digital engagement and trust, such that the positive effect of digital engagement on trust is stronger among Generation Z consumers with higher levels of environmental awareness.*

Research Model

The independent variables in this study are Digital Engagement, Trust mediation variable, Environmental Awareness moderation, and the dependent variable is Sustainable Purchase Intention. The image of the research model is shown in Figure 1.

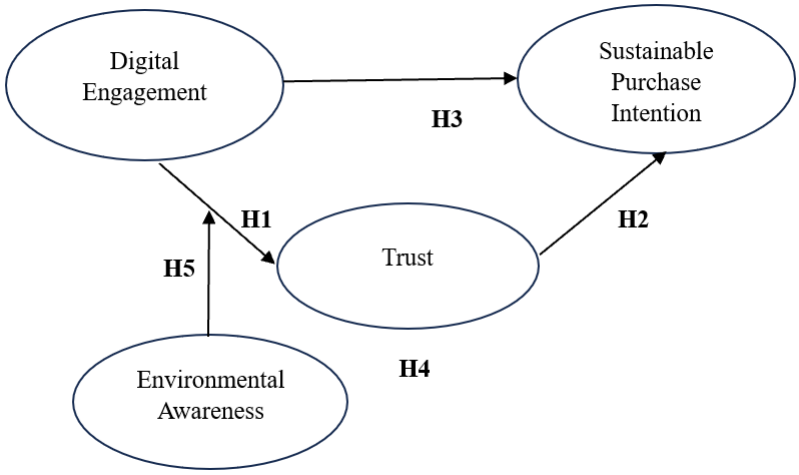


Figure 1. Research Model

Method

This research adopted a quantitative design using a survey to collect empirical data from the target respondents. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that allows researchers to recruit individuals who possess characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017). To ensure the suitability of the sample, respondents were required to meet three criteria: (1) belong to Generation Z, aged between 18 and 25 years; (2) actively use social media on a daily basis; and (3) have prior experience purchasing products through online shopping platforms. A total of 213 valid responses were obtained and included in the analysis. The proposed research model was subsequently evaluated using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach with the assistance of SmartPLS software.

Variable Operational Definition

Digital engagement is the level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement of consumers towards brand content on digital platforms (Hollebeek *et al*., 2014; Dessart *et al*., 2016). In this study, digital engagement was measured by adopting research (Karpinska-krakowiak & Eisend, 2019) and (Ndasi & Lai, 2026). Trust (TR) is the consumer's belief that the e-commerce platform and the products offered are reliable and have integrity in transactions. The indicators are the security of online transactions, the accuracy of the product information displayed, trust in the reputation of e-commerce, and the protection of consumers' personal data. In this study, trust was measured by adopting the research of Gefen (2000); (Chen & Chang, 2012); Ali *et al*. (2018).

Sustainable Purchase Intention (SPI) is an individual's intention to purchase products that consider environmental sustainability aspects (Chen, 2010; Wang *et al*., 2018). In this study, sustainable purchase intention was measured by adopting the research of Chen & Chang (2012); Nguyen *et al*. (2022); Alzahran & Zia (2025). Environmental Awareness (EA) is the level of individual knowledge and concern for environmental issues and the impact of consumption (Mostafa, 2007; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). In this study, environmental awareness was measured by adopting research methods (Fen & Abdullah, 2025)

Results

Respondent Profile

A more detailed description of the respondents is presented in Table 1 which contains data on age, gender, education, occupation, frequency of online shopping, monthly income, and monthly living expenses.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Sum	Percentage (%)
Age	14 – 17 years old	12	6
	18 – 20 years old	128	60
	21 – 23 years old	60	28
	24 – 26 years old	13	6
Gender	Men	100	47
	Women	113	53
Education	SMA	40	19
	Diploma (D1–D3)	6	3
	Bachelor/Diploma IV	165	77
	Postgraduate	2	1
Jobs	Student/Student	168	79
	Private Employees	8	4
	Entrepreneurship	5	2
	SOE Employees	2	1
	ASN	2	1
	Others	28	13
Frequency of Online Shopping	1–2 times/month	99	46
	3–4 times/month	57	27
	5–6 times/month	13	6
	> 6 times/month	44	21
Monthly Income	< IDR 2,500,000	130	61
	IDR 2.5 – 5 million	40	19
	IDR 5 – 7.5 million	4	2
	IDR 7.5 – 10 million	6	3
	> IDR 10 million	5	2
Cost of living/month	No fixed income	28	13
	< IDR 1,500,000	70	33
	IDR 1.5 – 3 million	95	45
	IDR 3 – 5 million	30	14
	> IDR 5 million	18	8

Based on Table 1, the distribution shown in the respondents' profiles shows the dominance of Generation Z aged 18–20 years, with the majority being students and having low income levels. However, what is interesting is that the intensity of online shopping shown is quite high. In terms of education, most of the respondents are students at the Bachelor/Diploma IV level. Monthly income shows that the majority of respondents have a monthly income below IDR 2,500,000. This is in line with the status of the respondents, the majority of whom are students or college students.

Outer Model Analysis

The measurement model was assessed using SmartPLS to examine the adequacy of the outer model. The evaluation included tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, internal consistency reliability, and indicator reliability to ensure that the measurement scales were both valid and reliable.

Table 2. *Outer Loading*

	Statement (Indicators)	***Loading Factor***
DE	**Digital Engagement**	
DE1	I will take the time to look up (eco-friendly) product information online	0,786

	Statement (Indicators)	*Loading Factor*
DE2	I will 'like' the product's photo/video content (eco-friendly) online	0,704
DE3	I am willing to share the photo/video content of this (eco-friendly) product with others online	0,836
DE4	I feel interested in posting or commenting on this (eco-friendly) product online	0,858
TR	**Trust**	
TR1	I am confident in the quality of eco-friendly products	0,785
TR2	I believe the product matches the environmental claims	0,832
TR3	I believe that buying eco-friendly products is beneficial	0,754
TR4	I believe that this eco-friendly product is reliable	0,821
TR5	I believe that the information about this product is honest	0,834
TR6	I feel safe using this product	0,851
TR7	I believe that this product is truly eco-friendly	0,860
TR8	The care for the environment of this product meets my expectations	0,880
TR9	This product keeps its promise and commitment to environmental protection.	0,868
SPI	**Sustainable Purchase Intention**	
SPI1	I intend to buy eco-friendly products in the future	0,822
SPI2	I would consider eco-friendly products as the top choice	0,833
SPI3	I'm willing to pay more for eco-friendly products	0,746
SPI4	I would recommend eco-friendly products to others	0,856
SPI5	I have a strong desire to use eco-friendly products	0,868
EA	**Environmental Awareness**	
EA1	I care about environmental issues	0,866
EA2	I realize the importance of taking care of the environment	0,845
EA3	I consider the environmental impact before buying	0,733
EA4	I try to reduce the negative impact on the environment	0,813
EA5	I am aware that environmental issues affect our health.	0,787
EA6	I am aware that high biodiversity improves the quality of the environment	0,863
EA7	I prefer eco-friendly products	0,720

The next stage is to evaluate the validity of the convergence **t**hrough *the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value.* The AVE value is used to measure the extent to which the latent construct is able to explain the variance of its indicators. A construct is declared to meet convergent validity if it has an AVE value of ≥ 0.50.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability of Constructs

	Cronbach's Alpha	**rho_A**	**Composite Reliability**	**Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**
Digital Engagement	0.808	0.809	0.875	0.637
*Environmental Awareness_*	0.909	0.911	0.928	0.649
Sustainable Purchase Intention	0.883	0.889	0.915	0.682
Trust	0.944	0.946	0.953	0.693

Based on the test results in Table 3, all constructs in this study have met the criteria of convergent validity and reliability. A high AVE value indicates that the indicator is able to represent the construct

well, while the *Composite Reliability*, Cronbach's Alpha, and rho_A values that are above the threshold indicate excellent internal consistency.

Inner Model Analysis

This evaluation was carried out by analyzing the value of the determination coefficient (R^2), effect size (f^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and testing the significance of the relationship between constructs through bootstrapping analysis.

Table 4. Test Results of the Quality Criteria Assessment Model (R^2)

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Sustainable Purchase Intention	0.607	0.602
Trust	0.542	0.537

The determination coefficient (R^2) is used to measure the extent to which an independent variable can explain the dependent variable in a structural model. Overall, the structural model in this study has good *explanatory power*, especially in the Sustainable *Purchase Intention variable*. F^2 provides more specific information about how much influence each independent variable has on forming dependent variables.

Table 5. *Effect Size (f2)*

Digital Engagement	Trust
Digital Engagement	0.139
Environmental Awareness_ Sustainable Purchase Intention	
Trust	0.539

The effect *size analysis* showed that *Digital Engagement* had a small to moderate influence on Trust (f^2 = 0.139), while Trust had a large influence on Sustainable Purchase Intention (f^2 = 0.539). After the structural model is evaluated, the next stage is to test the research hypothesis through bootstrapping analysis to determine the significance of the relationships between constructs in the model by looking at the path coefficient values, t-statistics, and p-values. A picture of the structural model in the analysis of the research path is shown in Figure 2.

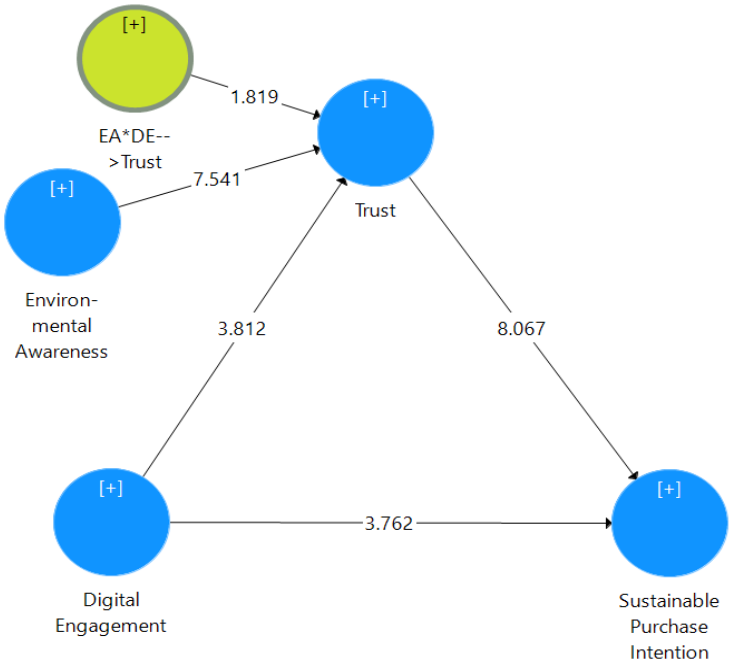


Figure 2. Inner Model

Hypothesis Testing

Based on the results of the research hypothesis test, it is stated that it has a significant effect if the p-value is < 0.05. Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that all hypotheses are supported.

Table 6. *Path Coefficients*

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Result
DE -> Trust	0.300	0.299	0.078	3.842	0.000	Supported
Trust -> Sustainable PI	0.571	0.575	0.071	8.092	0.000	Supported
DE -> Sustainable PI	0.290	0.289	0.078	3.743	0.000	Supported
DE -> Trust -> Sustainable PI	0.171	0.172	0.050	3.404	0.000	Supported
Moderating Effect	0.085	0.083	0.047	1.786	0.037	Supported

Based on Table 6, the research hypothesis is stated to have a significant effect if the p-value < 0.05. Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that all hypotheses are supported.

Discussion

The findings indicate that *digital engagement* exerts a positive and significant influence on *trust*. This suggests that consumers who actively engage with brand-related content, interact through digital platforms, and accumulate positive online experiences are more likely to develop confidence in a brand. From the perspective of the *Stimulus–Organism–Response* (S-O-R) theory, these results support the notion that external stimuli, represented by consumers' digital interactions, shape internal psychological states before influencing subsequent behavioral outcomes.

In this study, *digital engagement* functions as the external stimulus, while *trust* represents the internal psychological response that emerges from those interactions. The findings are also consistent with earlier studies demonstrating that meaningful digital engagement, supported by interactive communication and positive customer experiences, contributes to the development of consumer trust (Harrigan *et al.,* 2021; Molinillo *et al.,* 2020). At the same time, the present results suggest that the effectiveness of digital engagement depends not merely on the frequency of interactions but also on their quality and relevance. This finding extends previous research by highlighting that superficial or passive engagement is unlikely to generate the same level of trust as interactions that provide meaningful value to consumers (Dessart *et al., 2020).*

The study further reveals that *trust* has a positive and significant effect on *sustainable purchase intention*. This finding indicates that consumers who perceive a brand as credible and reliable are more willing to purchase products associated with sustainability. Trust appears to reduce uncertainty surrounding environmental claims, enabling consumers to make purchasing decisions with greater confidence. This result supports the findings of Chen and Chang (2013) as well as Yadav and Pathak (2017), who reported that confidence in a brand's environmental commitment strengthens consumers' intentions to purchase green products. Beyond its role as a cognitive evaluation, *trust* also represents an emotional attachment that reinforces consumers' willingness to support brands whose products and business practices are aligned with sustainability principles. However, these results need to be understood contextually, given that several studies have shown that there is a gap between trust and actual behavior (*attitude–behavior gap*), especially when consumers are faced with price factors or limited access (White *et al*., 2019)

This research shows that *trust* acts as a mediating mechanism that connects *digital engagement* with *sustainable purchase intention*. The findings indicate that consumer involvement in digital activities does not directly drive the emergence of intentions to buy sustainable products. Instead, the influence takes place through the formation of *trust* as a psychological process that bridges the relationship

between the two. These results provide empirical support for the theory *of Stimulus–Organism–Response* (S-O-R), which explains that stimuli from the environment do not necessarily produce behavioral responses, but are first processed through the internal conditions of the individual (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the context of this study, *digital engagement* plays a role as a *stimulus* (S) derived from consumer interaction with brands on digital platforms. The stimulus affects the psychological condition of consumers in the form of *trust* as *an organism* (O), which then encourages the formation of *sustainable purchase intention* as *a response* (R). Thus, this study confirms that the success of a digital marketing strategy does not only depend on the intensity of interaction with consumers but also on its ability to build trust as an internal mechanism that transforms digital experiences into sustainable purchase intention.

The findings can also be interpreted through the lens of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which suggests that consumers who are highly involved in digital interactions are more likely to process information through the central route. This mode of information processing encourages consumers to evaluate sustainability-related messages more carefully, enabling them to distinguish credible environmental claims from less reliable ones. As a result, meaningful digital engagement contributes to the development of stronger trust. In this regard, ELM complements the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework by providing a cognitive explanation of how trust is formed, whereas S-O-R offers the broader theoretical structure for understanding how digital engagement (stimulus) influences trust (organism), which subsequently leads to sustainable purchase intention (response).

Another important finding is that environmental awareness strengthens the positive relationship between digital engagement and trust. This result implies that consumers who are more conscious of environmental issues tend to be more receptive to sustainability-related communication encountered on digital platforms. Consequently, they are more likely to develop trust in brands that consistently demonstrate genuine environmental responsibility. The moderating effect observed in this study indicates that the success of digital engagement is influenced not only by the intensity of online interactions but also by consumers' personal values and environmental concerns. Nevertheless, a high level of environmental awareness may also make consumers more cautious when evaluating sustainability claims. Individuals with stronger environmental concern are generally more capable of identifying inconsistencies between a company's communication and its actual practices, particularly in cases involving greenwashing. Therefore, digital engagement is more likely to strengthen trust when sustainability messages are communicated in a transparent, accurate, and verifiable manner.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the relationship among digital engagement, trust, and sustainable purchase intention is dynamic and interconnected. Simply increasing consumer interaction through digital channels is unlikely to be sufficient to encourage sustainable purchasing behavior. Instead, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies depends on their ability to establish consumer trust through authentic and credible communication while simultaneously addressing differences in consumers' environmental awareness. By explaining these interrelated mechanisms, the present study extends existing knowledge on digital marketing and sustainable consumption and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological processes that shape sustainable purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers.

Conclusion

This study shows that digital engagement has a significant role in encouraging sustainable purchase intention, but this influence occurs through the formation of trust as the main psychological mechanism. The higher the consumer's engagement with brand activities on digital platforms, the greater the chance of trust being built which ultimately increases the intention to buy sustainable products. In addition, trust has been proven to be a mediator that explains the relationship between digital engagement and sustainable purchase intention, while environmental awareness strengthens the influence of digital engagement on the formation of trust. These findings confirm that the success of sustainability-oriented

digital marketing strategies depends not only on the high level of consumer interaction in the digital space but also on the ability of companies to build trust through transparent and credible communication, as well as pay attention to the level of environmental awareness possessed by their consumers.

Recommendations

This study recommends that companies and digital business people prioritize increasing *digital engagement* that not only focuses on the intensity of interaction, but also on the quality and relevance of content that can build consumer trust. Strategies such as providing transparent information, responsive two-way communication, and personalized user experiences need to be optimized to strengthen *trust*. In addition, companies are advised to integrate authentic, evidence-based sustainability messages to reach consumers with a high level of *environmental awareness*, while avoiding *greenwashing* practices that can undermine trust. On the other hand, policymakers and stakeholders need to encourage increased environmental literacy as well as set clear and credible sustainability communication standards. Thus, the synergy between *digital engagement* strategies, trust building, and increasing environmental awareness is expected to be able to effectively encourage *sustainable purchase intention*.

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