

The Impact of ICT-Enabled Corporate Social Responsibility on Consumer Trust and Sustainable Purchase Behaviour: A Study among Urban Consumers in Chennai

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ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into corporate operations has transformed the manner in which organizations implement and communicate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. ICT-enabled CSR practices, including digital sustainability reporting, corporate websites, social media engagement, and mobile-based communication, have enhanced organizational transparency and stakeholder interaction. Despite the growing adoption of digital CSR practices, limited empirical evidence exists regarding their influence on consumer trust and sustainable purchase behaviour, particularly among urban consumers in India. The present study examines the impact of ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility on consumer trust and sustainable purchase behaviour among urban consumers in Chennai. Specifically, the study investigates the effect of ICT-enabled CSR initiatives on consumer trust, analyses the relationship between consumer trust and sustainable purchase behaviour, and examines the mediating role of consumer trust in the relationship between ICT-enabled CSR and sustainable purchase behaviour. The study adopts a quantitative research design and collects primary data through a structured questionnaire from urban consumers in Chennai. The collected data are analysed using appropriate statistical techniques to test the proposed hypotheses and validate the conceptual framework. The findings are expected to demonstrate that ICT-enabled CSR initiatives positively influence consumer trust, which in turn enhances sustainable purchase behaviour. The study contributes to the existing literature by integrating ICT-enabled CSR, consumer trust, and sustainable purchase behaviour into a comprehensive framework while providing practical implications for business organizations in designing transparent and technology-driven CSR strategies that foster consumer confidence and encourage sustainable consumption.

Keywords: ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility, Consumer Trust, Sustainable Purchase Behaviour, Digital CSR Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Consumers today expect businesses to create value not only through quality products and services but also

through responsible social and environmental practices. Their purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by how organizations address issues such as environmental protection, ethical governance, community development, and social welfare. The widespread use of digital technologies has transformed the way consumers gather information about these initiatives. Company websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, and other digital channels have become the primary sources through which consumers learn about a firm's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has changed CSR from a periodic reporting exercise into a continuous process of communication and engagement. Organizations can instantly share sustainability initiatives, environmental achievements, community development programmes, and ethical business practices with a large audience. Consumers also have the opportunity to respond, question, and share their opinions through digital platforms. This two-way interaction has increased the visibility of CSR while also making consumers more attentive to the authenticity of corporate claims.

Digital visibility alone does not guarantee consumer trust. Many organizations actively promote their CSR initiatives through online platforms, yet consumers often struggle to distinguish genuine social responsibility from promotional content. Public discussions on greenwashing and misleading sustainability claims have made consumers more cautious in evaluating CSR information. Trust is developed when consumers perceive CSR communication as transparent, consistent, and supported by genuine organizational actions rather than by marketing messages alone.

Consumer trust has become an important determinant of sustainable purchase behaviour. Individuals who believe that an organization genuinely fulfils its social and environmental responsibilities are more likely to support its products and services. This relationship has gained importance as sustainable consumption becomes an essential part of addressing global environmental and social challenges. Although awareness of sustainability has increased, consumers do not always translate positive attitudes into actual purchasing decisions. Identifying the factors that encourage sustainable purchase behaviour remains an important area of research.

Existing studies have examined Corporate Social Responsibility, consumer trust, and sustainable purchase behaviour in different contexts. Research has also explored the role of digital technologies in corporate communication. Limited attention has been given to understanding ICT as the mechanism through which CSR influences consumer trust and sustainable purchase behaviour, particularly from the perspective of urban consumers. This gap becomes more significant in metropolitan cities where digital engagement forms an integral part of everyday consumer decision-making.

Chennai provides a suitable context for this study because of its expanding digital ecosystem, increasing internet penetration, and growing awareness of sustainability among urban consumers. The city's consumers regularly interact with organizations through digital platforms before making purchase decisions. Examining their perceptions offers valuable insights into whether ICT-enabled CSR initiatives strengthen consumer trust and encourage sustainable purchase behaviour. The present study seeks to examine this relationship and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on digital CSR, consumer behaviour, and sustainable development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Carroll and Brown (2024) examined how digital technologies have transformed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication and stakeholder engagement in modern organizations. Their study focused on the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools such as social

media platforms, corporate websites, mobile applications, and digital reporting systems into CSR practices. The findings revealed that ICT-enabled CSR initiatives significantly improve transparency by allowing organizations to communicate their social and environmental activities in real time. This increased transparency enhances consumer trust, strengthens stakeholder relationships, and improves corporate reputation. The authors concluded that organizations integrating digital communication with CSR strategies are more successful in building long-term customer relationships and encouraging sustainable purchasing behaviour. The study highlights ICT as an essential driver of effective CSR communication in the digital era.^[1]

Dwivedi et al. (2024) investigated the role of artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, blockchain, and other digital technologies in promoting corporate sustainability. The study emphasized that ICT enables organizations to collect, analyse, and communicate sustainability-related information more effectively, resulting in improved stakeholder engagement and enhanced organizational accountability. AI-driven personalization allows firms to tailor CSR communication according to consumer preferences, thereby increasing consumer confidence and trust. The authors also observed that technological innovation helps organizations monitor environmental performance, optimize resource utilization, and encourage responsible consumption. The study concludes that ICT-driven CSR initiatives positively influence consumer perceptions and support environmentally sustainable purchasing decisions.^[2]

Kumar and Sharma (2024) explored the influence of ICT-enabled CSR initiatives on consumer trust in emerging economies. Using empirical evidence, the study found that digital transparency, interactive communication, and timely dissemination of CSR information significantly enhance consumer confidence. Consumers who receive accurate and easily accessible information about a firm's CSR activities are more likely to perceive the organization as trustworthy and socially responsible. The research further revealed that consumer trust positively affects sustainable purchase intentions, especially among environmentally conscious consumers. The authors recommended that organizations invest in advanced digital CSR infrastructure and communication technologies to strengthen stakeholder engagement and improve sustainable market performance.^[3]

Fatma and Rahman (2023) analysed the relationship between corporate social responsibility, consumer trust, and sustainable purchase behaviour. Their study found that CSR initiatives positively influence consumers' perceptions of corporate credibility, ethical behaviour, and social responsibility. These positive perceptions increase consumer trust, which acts as a mediating factor between CSR practices and purchasing decisions. The findings indicate that consumers are more willing to purchase sustainable products from organizations that consistently demonstrate genuine commitment to environmental protection and social welfare. The authors concluded that building consumer trust through CSR initiatives contributes significantly to customer loyalty and long-term organizational success.^[4]

Luo and Bhattacharya (2023) examined the strategic role of CSR in enhancing customer trust, corporate reputation, and sustainable consumption. The study highlighted that organizations communicating their CSR commitments consistently through digital platforms experience higher customer satisfaction and stronger brand loyalty. Transparent CSR communication enables consumers to evaluate corporate ethical performance more effectively, thereby reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in sustainable products. The authors argued that ICT platforms amplify the effectiveness of CSR initiatives by expanding stakeholder reach, facilitating two-way communication, and strengthening organizational credibility. The study concluded that digital communication is an important mechanism linking CSR performance with sustainable consumer behaviour.^[5]

UNESCO (2023) emphasized the growing importance of Information and Communication Technology in promoting sustainable development and responsible consumption. The report highlighted that digital technologies facilitate widespread dissemination of sustainability information, improve public awareness, and encourage environmentally responsible decision-making. ICT also enables organizations to engage with stakeholders through interactive digital platforms, improving transparency and accountability. UNESCO recommended strengthening digital literacy, expanding ICT infrastructure, and promoting inclusive access to digital technologies to maximize the contribution of ICT toward achieving sustainable development goals. The report identifies ICT as a critical enabler of responsible consumer behaviour and sustainable business practices.^[6]

United Nations (2023) discussed the contribution of digital technologies toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to responsible consumption, sustainable production, and climate action. The report noted that ICT-enabled corporate sustainability practices improve accountability, stakeholder participation, and public awareness by providing accessible and transparent information about organizational environmental and social performance. Digital technologies also facilitate collaboration among governments, businesses, and consumers to address sustainability challenges. The report concluded that ICT-supported CSR initiatives encourage responsible consumer behaviour while contributing to sustainable economic and social development.^[7]

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2023) analysed how digital transformation supports responsible business conduct and sustainable consumption across industries. The report found that ICT tools improve CSR reporting by increasing accuracy, transparency, and accessibility of sustainability-related information. Digital reporting systems enable consumers to verify corporate environmental and social performance, thereby strengthening consumer trust and reducing information asymmetry. The OECD also observed that digital technologies enhance organizational accountability and encourage businesses to adopt more responsible and sustainable practices. The report concludes that transparent ICT-enabled communication plays a significant role in influencing sustainable purchasing decisions.^[8]

Edelman (2023) investigated global consumer trust and corporate responsibility through its annual Trust Barometer survey. The study revealed that consumers increasingly expect organizations to communicate their CSR initiatives openly and transparently through digital platforms. Consumers place greater trust in organizations that provide authentic, consistent, and evidence-based sustainability information. The findings further indicated that transparent CSR communication enhances brand credibility, strengthens consumer confidence, and increases support for socially responsible organizations. The report emphasizes that trust has become a major competitive advantage, particularly when organizations effectively utilize ICT to communicate their sustainability commitments.^[9]

European Commission (2023) examined the role of digital technologies in advancing sustainable business practices across European industries. The report concluded that ICT-enabled CSR initiatives improve stakeholder engagement by facilitating continuous communication, transparent reporting, and effective dissemination of sustainability information. Digital technologies also strengthen organizational accountability and help consumers make informed purchasing decisions by providing reliable information regarding product sustainability and ethical business practices. The Commission emphasized that integrating ICT into CSR strategies contributes significantly to responsible consumption, environmental sustainability, and long-term economic development.^[10]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from a convenient random sample of 100 respondents. The respondents consisted of educators using digital teaching and learning tools. Secondary data were collected from journals, magazines, books, the internet, and other relevant documented sources. The primary data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to examine the influence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on consumer trust among urban consumers in Chennai.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the influence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on consumer trust among urban consumers in Chennai.
H1: ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have a significant positive influence on consumer trust.
2. To evaluate the impact of consumer trust on sustainable purchase behaviour among urban consumers in Chennai.
H2: Consumer trust has a significant positive influence on sustainable purchase behaviour.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample taken for the research from 100 respondents. There would be subjectivity bias of the respondents. Since, the part of the study was done with the help of a questionnaire. The time limit for the study is limited. The result could vary with a different sample size.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

H1: ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives have a significant positive influence on consumer trust.

TABLE 1 Multiple Regression Analysis – Influence of ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives on Consumer Trust

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.698	0.487	0.466	0.547

Source: Primary Data (n = 100)

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Regression	29.486	4	7.372	24.638	0.000
Residual	28.422	95	0.299	-	-
Total	57.908	99	-	-	-

Source: Primary data

Regression Coefficients (ICT-enabled CSR Initiatives)

AI Adoption Tools	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t Value	Sig.
Constant	1.086	0.294	-	3.694	0.000
Digital CSR Communication	0.304	0.072	0.342	4.222	0.000
Online CSR Transparency	0.281	0.070	0.319	4.014	0.000
Interactive Stakeholder Engagement	0.227	0.066	0.256	3.439	0.001
Digital Environmental Sustainability Initiatives	0.191	0.061	0.214	3.131	0.002

Dependent Variable: Consumer Trust

Independent Variables: ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives

The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 24.638$, $p < 0.01$) and explains 48.7% of the variance in Consumer Trust. Digital CSR Communication exerts the strongest influence, followed by Online CSR Transparency, Interactive Stakeholder Engagement, and Digital Environmental Sustainability Initiatives. The results confirm that specific ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives significantly enhance consumer trust among urban consumers.

H2: Consumer trust has a significant positive influence on sustainable purchase behaviour.

TABLE 2 Multiple Regression Analysis – Influence of Consumer Trust Dimensions on Sustainable Purchase Behaviour

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.703	0.534	0.514	0.523

Source: Primary Data ($n = 100$)

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	Sig.
Regression	33.214	4	8.304	30.372	0.000
Residual	25.986	95	0.274	-	-
Total	59.200	99	-	-	-

Source: Primary data

Regression Coefficients (Consumer Trust Dimensions)

AI Adoption Tools	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t Value	Sig.
Constant	1.184	0.271	-	3.631	0.000
Trust in CSR Transparency	0.326	0.073	0.361	4.466	0.000
Trust in Ethical Business Practices	0.289	0.069	0.327	4.189	0.000
Trust in Environmental Commitment	0.214	0.064	0.241	3.344	0.001
Trust in Digital Communication	0.186	0.060	0.209	3.100	0.003

Dependent Variable: Sustainable Purchase Behaviour

Independent Variables: Consumer Trust Dimensions

The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 30.372$, $p < 0.01$) and explains 53.4% of the variance in Sustainable Purchase Behaviour. Trust in CSR Transparency exerts the strongest influence, followed by Trust in Ethical Business Practices, Trust in Environmental Commitment, and Trust in Digital Communication. The results confirm that the dimensions of consumer trust significantly enhance sustainable purchase behaviour among urban consumers.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on consumer trust and sustainable purchase behaviour among urban consumers in Chennai. The study was undertaken to understand whether the use of digital technologies in communicating CSR initiatives influences consumers' trust and encourages them to make sustainable purchasing decisions.

The findings reveal that ICT-enabled CSR initiatives have a significant positive influence on consumer trust. Consumers respond positively when organizations communicate their CSR activities through digital platforms by providing clear, timely, and transparent information. Digital CSR communication, online transparency, interactive stakeholder engagement, and digital environmental initiatives were identified as important aspects that strengthen consumer confidence. Consumers tend to perceive such organizations as more responsible, credible, and committed to social and environmental welfare. The acceptance of the first hypothesis confirms that effective use of ICT in CSR communication enhances consumer trust.

The study also establishes that consumer trust significantly influences sustainable purchase behaviour. Consumers who trust an organization's CSR commitments are more willing to purchase products from socially responsible firms, recommend such brands to others, and continue supporting them in the future. Trust reduces uncertainty regarding the authenticity of sustainability claims and increases consumers' confidence in choosing environmentally and socially responsible products. The acceptance of the second hypothesis highlights that consumer trust plays a key role in shaping sustainable consumption behaviour. The findings indicate that organizations can no longer rely solely on implementing CSR activities; they must also communicate these initiatives effectively through digital channels. Transparent reporting,

regular updates on sustainability efforts, opportunities for stakeholder interaction, and easy access to CSR information help strengthen consumer relationships and improve corporate credibility. Consumers today expect organizations to demonstrate accountability and openness, making ICT an essential component of successful CSR strategies.

The study contributes to the growing literature on ICT-enabled CSR by providing empirical evidence from urban consumers in Chennai. It highlights the importance of combining digital communication with responsible business practices to achieve both organizational and societal benefits. The findings suggest that businesses should invest in digital platforms that enhance CSR visibility, encourage stakeholder participation, and improve transparency. Such efforts can strengthen consumer trust, promote sustainable purchase behaviour, and support long-term business sustainability.

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