



## The impact of sustainable initiatives on Generation Z consumers' behaviour: A serial mediation analysis

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### ABSTRACT

Generation Z's awareness of environmental issues has risen high of late, necessitating businesses to strategise to meet the values of GZ. This study, therefore, is intended to examine the impact of sustainable initiatives on Gen Z consumer behaviour and the mediating role of ethical and perceived marketing strategies. The Theory of Planned Behaviour serves as the anchor for the study. A quantitative method was employed for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents who are students and fall within the age group of 15 to 35 years for the study. Partial least squares Structural equation modelling (SmartPLS4) was used to analyse the data. The structural model shows significant paths: SUS → EM ( $\beta = 0.570$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), SUS → PMS ( $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), PMS → GZ ( $\beta = 0.538$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and EM → PMS ( $\beta = 0.497$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), while EM → GZ is positive but not significant ( $\beta = 0.156$ ,  $p = 0.122$ ). Findings support the predictive power and practical relevance of the model, offering valuable insights for policymakers and managers aiming to enhance sustainable consumer engagement among Generation Z. Also, ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies serially mediate sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumer behaviour, underscoring their importance for corporate marketing decisions. The  $Q^2$ predict revealed that both EM and PMS had the same predictive power (0.294) in influencing the dependent variable (GZ). However, EM had a less comparable MAE (0.615) to PMS (0.680), indicating EM's superiority in terms of predictive power. The PLS predictive performance revealed that both EM and PMS had predictive power in influencing the dependent variable (GZ); however, EM was found to be superior in terms of its predictive power. The study suggests practical contributions and implications for corporate business management to integrate ethical and marketing strategies in a sustainability drive.

**Keywords:** Ethical Marketing, Gen Z, Serial Mediation, Sustainable Initiatives, Theory of Planned Behaviour

### I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour across the various demographics has been greatly reshaped with the advent of sustainable initiatives (Ali et al., 2023; Trudel, 2019). This paradigm shift has significantly affected Generation Z (Gen Z) (Kushwaha, 2021), particularly, factors that influence Gen Z purchase intentions of green products (Ghouse et al., 2025). Societal environmental awareness and social consciousness have led most people, especially Gen Z, to prioritize brands that have shown commitment to sustainability and ethical practices (Elgammal et al., 2024; Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). Among factors that have led to this phenomenon are the increased access to vital information through various digital platforms and the quest for supporting companies that cherish and adhere to such values (Hosta & Žabkar, 2016). Such development has driven businesses to include sustainable initiatives in their broad marketing strategies to attract and retain individuals and groups that hold to environmental consciousness and influence their purchasing decisions (Fathinasari et al., 2023) and brand loyalty (Cagnin & Nicolas, 2022; Ayuni, 2019) while making such individuals ambassadors of their brands (Da Fonseca, 2023).

Moreover, among the broad spectrum of sustainable practices are eco-friendly product development, clear lines of supply chains, corporate social responsibility issues, etc (Khandare, 2024; Panigrahi et al., 2019). Such initiatives have reduced environmental impact on the populace (Tang & Zhou, 2012). Aside from that, it also enhances the company's reputation, especially with those demographics who constantly scrutinize business ethics (Hsu et al., 2016).



Sustainability has become crucial in the consumer purchasing decision process and especially for Gen Zs, whose consumer behaviour is mostly driven by their moral and ethical considerations (Chaturvedi et al., 2020). The cumulative effect is that brands that embrace sustainable practices attract and win the trust of young consumers (Shetty et al., 2019)

Ethical marketing plays an important role in attracting Gen Z purchases (Djafarova & Fooks, 2022) and considerably impacts sustainable initiatives (Anuradha et al., 2023). Communication of sustainable messages, therefore, should be authentic and transparent, since Gen Zs easily doubt greenwashing (Urbanski, 2020). Besides, companies can strengthen consumers' perception about their brands through effective storytelling and embracing sustainability practices to attract Gen Z (Junior et al., 2023; Andhini & Andanawarih, 2022). The question this paper postulates is, does sustainable initiative impact Gen Z consumers' behaviour? Also, do ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies mediate the relationship between sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumer behaviour?

It is believed that ethical and deceptive marketing communication strategies have negatively affected Gen Z trust in sustainable practices (Abdulsalam & Tajudeen, 2023). Despite the numerous studies on sustainability and Gen Z (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Ghouse et al., 2024; Kara & Min, 2024), this paper presents a serial mediation analysis involving ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies that link sustainability and Gen Z consumer behaviour. The gap will be filled by examining the mediating role of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies on the relationship between sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumer behaviour. The findings from this research will contribute to current discourse and extant literature regarding sustainability practices in the business environment and Gen Z consumer behaviour.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Recent issues on sustainability have caught the attention of the young generation, who have taken a key interest in sustainability practices (Dabija et al., 2019; Dragolea et al., 2023). This cohort of the young generation has developed an interest in sustainable issues, which has engendered brands to consider sustainable practices in their production process (Sharma & Joshi, 2019). Additionally, brands target Gen Z because of their strong preference for various products. However, they are difficult to handle and not convinced (Adriana-Camelia, 2015). Gen Z prefers companies that communicate effectively and are likely to recommend those companies to others (Dewalska-Opitek & Witczak, 2023). However, critical issues regarding greenwashing and unethical marketing techniques and communication have made Gen Z not trust brands (Al-sharouf & Naesae, 2022). This study, therefore, seeks to examine the extent to which sustainable initiatives impact Gen Z consumer buying behaviour and the mediating role ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies play in the relationship.

### 1.2 Research Objective

This paper examines the mediating role of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies on the relationship between the impact of sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumers' behaviour.

### 1.3 Research question

Do ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies mediate the relationship between the impact of sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumers' behaviour?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

This research is premised on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), propounded by Ajzen (1991). The theory of planned behaviour is built on the previous theory, the theory of reasoned action (TRA). The theory of planned behaviour, as postulated by Michelle et al. (2019) and Ajzen (1991), is based on personal attitude, subjective norms, perceived behaviour control, and behaviour intention. Elgammal et al. (2024) posit that Gen Z buying decisions are usually dictated by their self-driven motives. The theory of planned behaviour has been used extensively by authors to gain an in-depth understanding of Gen Z consumer buying behaviour (Djafarova & Fooks, 2022; Ngah et al., 2021).

#### 2.1.1 Gen Z

Gen Z's diverse interest in ethnicity have shaped their perception of urbanization and culture (Turner, 2015). Though they may exhibit different attitudes between urban and rural communities, they remain indifferent so long as they have access to basic infrastructure (Verma et al., 2019). Studies have shown a diverse interest among Gen Z based on individualistic, nonconformity, deep complexity, and subtlety (Van den Bergh & Pallini, 2018).

It is unequivocal that Gen Z comprises nearly 32% of the global population (Jancourt, 2020). However, there are some minor discrepancies regarding the definition ascribed to it, with some authorities suggesting that such a category of people is those within the birth group of 1995-2010 (Turcic, 2022; Francis & Hoefel, 2018), and some falling within 1997-2012 (Eldridge, 2024). Some writers assert that this cohort of individuals not only falls within 1997-2012,



but is predominantly from developing countries like India and China (Priporas et al., 2017; Black et al., 2017) Priporas et al., (2017). Priporas et al., (2017).

According to McKeever (2020), this cohort of demographics is called “the most disruptive generation” as compared to other generations, due to their high-income capability. This notwithstanding, Gen Z are noted for their penchant for diverse perspectives and the liking for online activities which are driven by a shared purpose (Mahapatra et al. 2022). Gen Z usually evaluates the merits of existing retail establishments' e-commerce sites before making purchasing decisions, eventually opting for virtual retail due to its superior benefits (Habibi & Susanti, 2025). Briggs and Briggs (2022) assert that Gen Z demonstrates their penchant for information across various social media platforms, averaging four hours a day. According to Gutfreund (2016), Gen Z is difficult to target due to their ability to research and make comparisons; hence, getting a better understanding of their purchasing habits will be of benefit to retailers and marketers. Besides, they usually demonstrate a cynical behaviour towards brands (Gutfreund, 2016)

Despite Gen Z's awareness of sustainable issues, governments' lack of enthusiasm to address critical climate issues has caused them great disappointment (Hickman et al., 2021). This notwithstanding, Gen Z is influenced by their quest to search the internet to obtain knowledge that affects them (Djafarova & Foots, 2022).

### **2.1.2 Sustainability**

The advent of digital transformation brought on its wake a paradigm shift in the mode of manufacturing, product, and service delivery, which has implications for businesses' prospects and sustainability, prompting researchers to develop interest in sustainable issues within the corporate environment (Abad-Segura et al., 2019). Gen Zs have taken the issue of sustainability to another level due to their interest in environmental consciousness and social consumption (Djafarova & Foots, 2022)

Sustainability refers to any development that concurrently meets present needs while ensuring that future generations are not disadvantaged (Lee & Huang, 2020). The way Gen Zs perceive sustainable initiatives has made them perceive brands in line with their philosophy (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). For instance, developments that are eco-friendly, environmental advocacy, and supply chain have gained popularity among Gen Z (Tran et al., 2022). Wandhe (2024) posits that “sustainability, ethical practices, and corporate social responsibility are important factors when making purchasing decisions.” This makes Gen Z embrace and support brands and commit themselves to mitigating environmental footprints, and encourage social good.

### **2.1.3 Ethical Marketing**

As part of Gen Z's sustainable consumption practices is the adherence to ethical marketing practices. (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). Typical hallmarks of ethical marketing that influence Gen Z consumption patterns are brand image, brand experience, brand trust, and brand loyalty (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). The authors contend that these factors inform Gen Z's choice of brand. Customers exhibit loyalty to brands when they decipher the existence of transparency, commitment to elements of sustainability (Khotimah, 2024). In line with this argument, is the assertion by Song et al. (2020), that increased awareness and knowledge on matters of social and environmental issues are determinant factors for Gen Z's response to sustainable practices. Besides, the adoption of ethical marketing practices builds trust and customer loyalty (Calatayud Salinas, 2021)

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

### **2.2.1 Sustainability and Gen Z**

Gen Zs have gained prominence in sustainability consciousness and their expectation from businesses to act responsibly in conforming to standards and acceptable production procedures (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Access to information on sustainability has enabled them to critically assess corporate activities that influence their choice of brands (Priporas et al., 2017; Theocharis & Tse kouropoulos, 2025). Eventually, companies that cherish sustainability practices and corporate social responsibility win the trust and loyalty of Gen Z consumers (Narayanan, 2022).

Besides, this action of Gen Z customers towards sustainability reveals a shift towards emphasizing sustainability in their daily buying decisions (Brand et al., 2022; Djafarova & Foots, 2022). This category of customers prefers paying a higher price for ethically produced products that meet environmental sustainability standards (Gomes et al., 2023; Brand et al., 2022)

### **2.2.2 Sustainability and Ethical Marketing**

Efforts are being made by marketers to pursue communication strategies that attract customers and focus more on Gen Zs (Bezbaruah & Trivedi, 2020). Ethical marketing plays a critical role in attracting Gen Z towards sustainable initiatives (Liang et al., 2022). Among strategies that constitute the bedrock of ethical marketing that connect brand values with consumers are transparency, honesty, and accountable communication (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2025; Parris et al., 2016). Businesses can build trust in Gen Z by showcasing their environmental initiatives through ethical marketing (Theocharis et al., 2015; Isoni et al., 2025). Thus, businesses seeking to engage Gen Z should incorporate sustainability



into their operations and apply ethical marketing techniques to promote trust and loyalty and long-term commitment (Khotimah, 2024). In view of the discussions above, it is hypothesised that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Sustainability has a positive and significant influence on ethical marketing.*

### **2.2.3 Sustainability and Perceived Marketing Strategies**

Sustainability has gained popularity in marketing over the years (Gleim et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2012; McDonald & Oates, 2006). The need to advance sustainability in marketing strategy is eminent as ongoing advancement depends on enhancing the linkage between production and consumption, while incorporating consumer and user viewpoints into innovation and design processes to mitigate obstacles such as rebound effects (Blok et al., 2015). Though studies have been done on sustainability and marketing (Kumar et al., 2012), little research exists that establishes the connection between sustainability and marketing strategy. Bocken & Short (2021) are of the view that sustainability is no longer an option in contemporary business. In contemporary companies, where sustainability issues are paramount, integrating sustainability into marketing strategies has become indispensable. A robust brand sustainability plan is essential for firms aiming to thrive, since sustainability and strategic marketing are intrinsically linked in today's corporate environment (Aripin et al., 2023). It is also believed that the green marketing method has a positive impact on companies' image and improves their performance (Sujanska & Nadanyiova, 2023; Mukonza, 2020). Further, for businesses to remain competitive, notably, the retail sector, it is critical to apply green marketing techniques in their operations (Mukonza & Swarts, 2020). The authors, therefore, hypothesize that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Sustainability has a positive and significant influence on marketing strategies.*

### **2.2.4 Ethical Marketing and Perceived Marketing Strategies**

Elements like corporate social responsibility, transparency, and authenticity play a major role in informing Gen Z's perception about companies' brands (Bergstrand & Åradsson, 2024; Tata et al., 2023). Aside from that, employing sustainable practices and communicating effectively with Gen Z builds their trust and brand loyalty, since they prefer sustainable initiatives that resonate with their beliefs (Agu et al., 2024). Ngo et al. (2014) assert that Gen Z exhibits a positive attitude towards brands that demonstrate authenticity and commitment to sustainability, underscoring the important role ethical marketing plays in attracting such a category of consumers. Based on the afore discussions, it is hypothesized that:

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a direct connection between ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies.*

### **2.2.5 Ethical Marketing and Gen Z**

It has been established that there is a link between ethical consumption regarding Gen Z consumer patterns (Bonera et al., 2023). Combining an appeal approach with social or personal norms creates effective marketing information, especially when the message focuses on advertising ethical goods (Fraser et al., 2023). Gen Z critically analyzes the authenticity of a company's marketing messages on the brand's integrity and social responsibility (Jamali, 2025; Uche, 2018). They are willing to associate and patronise brands that demonstrate ethics in production, and seek the welfare of consumers than those brands that are interested in only profits (Kirnosova, 2021). For example, campaigns that highlight genuine sustainability efforts or social causes tend to generate positive responses from Generation Z, who often view such actions as indicative of a company's core values rather than mere marketing ploys (Confetto et al., 2023; Dragolea et al., 2023). Based on this, we hypothesize that:

*H<sub>4</sub>: Ethical marketing has a positive impact on Generation Z consumers.*

### **2.2.6 Perceived marketing strategies and Gen Z**

Gen Z's response to sustainability practices is strongly influenced by perceived marketing strategies, which translate to positive perceptions and purchasing intentions (Aliraj & Halemariam Fishale, 2025; Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). Studies have revealed that superficial and misleading tactics tend to diminish the gains of sustainable initiatives and create doubts among Gen Z consumers (Isac et al., 2024; Sajid et al., 2024). Sustainability practices will impact positively where marketing strategies are seen to be performing their mediating role effectively (Alhouthi et al., 2016) and link with the sustainable consumption behaviour (Kokkinopoulou et al., 2025). Based on these discussions, it is hypothesized that:

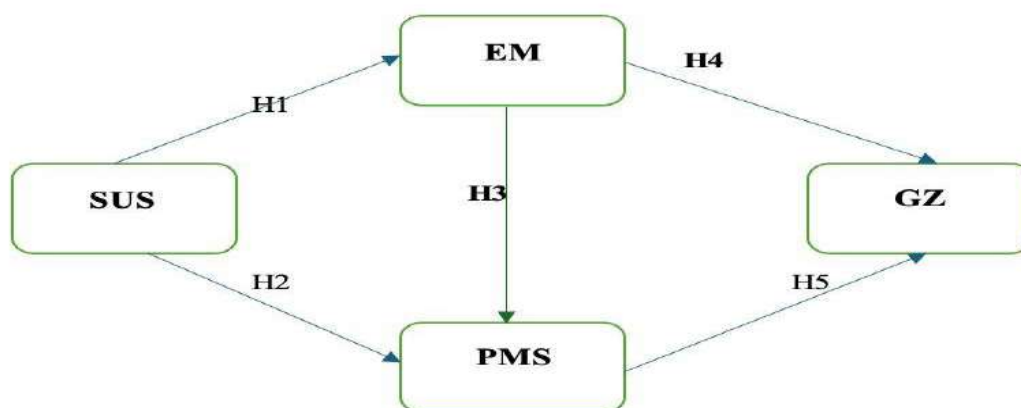
*H<sub>5</sub>: Perceived marketing strategies have a positive and significant relationship with Gen Z consumer behaviour.*



### 2.2.7 Mediating Role of Ethical Marketing and Perceived Marketing Strategies

Understanding the mediating function of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies is critical due to their influence on Gen Z consumption patterns (Satybaldiyeva et al., 2024). Social consciousness, honesty, and transparency promote trust and loyalty among Gen Z, who expect adherence to sustainable and ethical practices by companies (Chatzopoulou & de Kiewiet, 2021). Adopting sustainable practices and effectively communicating them ethically creates a positive perception among Gen Z consumers and influences their purchasing intentions (Panopoulos et al., 2022). It is therefore suggested that:

*H<sub>6</sub>: Ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies mediate sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumers’ behaviour.*



**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework*

## III. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional research design was used for the study and quantitatively tested the relationship between the model variables between sustainable initiatives and ethical marketing, sustainable initiatives and perceived marketing strategies, ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies, ethical marketing and Gen Z consumer behaviour, and perceived marketing strategies and Gen Z consumer behaviour.

The study used a quantitative research approach (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019) to investigate the mediating role of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies on the relationship between the impact of sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumers’ behaviour.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS version 4 was used to analyse the data. The measurement model and the structural model constitute the structural equation model. The observable variables are usually reduced to a reasonable number of latent variables. The measurement model trims observable variables to a reasonable number of latent variables, and the structural model establishes a causal relationship among the many latent variables. This study preferred Smart PLS due to its ability to accommodate smaller data and complex relationships. Unlike the covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), SmartPLS does not emphasize the sample size. It gives a better procedure for interpreting diagrams that illustrate causal relationships and the modification of actual theories that underpin prediction. Also, as postulated by Hair et al. (2019) in line with their “10-times rule”, the sample size of 120 far exceeds the required minimum.

#### 3.1.1 Data Collection

The constructs of the variables for collecting data were designed based on the literature review. The questionnaire was in the form of a Google Format and based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. 120 individuals, mainly students aged between 15 to 35, responded to the questionnaire. Per Cohen’s (1992) statistical power analysis, this number was sufficient. Moreover, it can identify any medium effect sizes ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ) with a power of 0.80 and a 5% significance level.

#### 3.1.2 Population and Sampling

A survey methodology was used to sample 120 respondents who were mainly youth and fell between fifteen to thirty-five years. Through Google Forms made available online, respondents who had basic knowledge of filling out an



online questionnaire were required to fill out the questionnaire. This was to ensure that they accurately respond appropriately to the questionnaire (Yin, 2018).

### 3.1.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of this study basically looked at the measurement model and structural model. The measurement model entails the validity and reliability of the data that were tested, while the relationship among variables is catered for in the structural model.

Validity pertains to how accurately measurements reflect the constructs they are intended to measure, and is evidenced when two instruments assessing the same concept produce a strongly correlated score (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.5 are used to establish convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017). According to Hair et al. (2017), accepted loadings should be 0.7 or 0.708. Shin (1998) argues that a lower bound of 0.5 is sufficient. Likewise, Hulland (1999) intimates that a value of 0.4 or more is acceptable when doing exploratory studies. Initially, SUS had six items, while the other three variables, i.e., EM, GZ, and PMS, had five items each. Items (GZ1, GZ3, SUS1, SUS4, SUS6, PMS3, EM1, EM2) that did not meet the threshold of 0.7 were deleted (see Table 1)

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Findings

#### 4.1.1 Measurement Model

This section begins with the measurement model. Table 1 shows the outer loading of the variables and their constructs.

**Table 1**  
*Outer Loadings*

	EMS	GZ	PMS	SUS
EM3	0.857			
EM4	0.920			
EM5	0.718			
GZ2		0.805		
GZ4		0.816		
GZ5		0.847		
PMS1			0.779	
PMS2			0.732	
PMS4			0.808	
PMS5			0.759	
SUS2				0.781
SUS3				0.791
SUS5				0.771

EMS = Ethical marketing; GZ = Generation Z; PMS = Perceived marketing strategies; SUS = Sustainable initiatives

Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability are also used to test the credibility of the data. The accepted value required to meet the threshold and for analysis is 0.7. Except for SUS, which had a value of 0.681, all three variables had values beyond the threshold of 0.7. AVE for all variables exceeded the accepted value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017)

**Table 2**  
*Reliability Test*

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EM	0.781	0.812	0.873	0.699
GZ	0.762	0.766	0.863	0.677
PMS	0.771	0.774	0.853	0.593
SUS	0.681	0.681	0.824	0.610

#### 4.1.2 Common Method Bias

Common method bias (CMB), also called common method variance (CMV), should be avoided to ensure the validity of the research and, hence, the findings. This study ensured that all observed variables were summed up onto a single factor with the use of the principal component axis extraction approach without any rotation (Podsakoff, 2012). The Harman one-factor test is normally used to forestall such cases. Usually, a single factor with a total variance less



than 50% is sufficient to declare the non-existence of common method variance. The total variance for the first factor was 36.23% which fell below the threshold of 50%, indicating that CMB was not an issue.

### 4.1.3 Validity and Reliability

Discriminant validity is normally used to assess the extent to which a factor correlates with its anticipated construct. It is established when two separate components exhibit no association, and the outcomes of a validity assessment reveal no correlation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The Fornell-Larcker criterion (1981) and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of correlations (HMTM) (Hensler et al., 2015) are usually used to test for discriminant validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) assert that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent variable serves as an indicator of discriminant validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) assert that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct provides a measure of discriminant validity. As shown in Table 3, the square root of AVE was greater than its correlation with the other constructs.

**Table 3**  
*Fornell-Larcker Criterion*

	EM	GZ	PMS	SUS
EM	0.836			
GZ	0.512	0.823		
PMS	0.661	0.641	0.77	
SUS	0.57	0.579	0.572	0.781

Table 4 buttresses the distinction of the constructs. Hensler et al. (2015) posit that all HTMT values should be below the acceptable threshold of 0.85. Table 4 shows that all values of HTMT are below 0.85, the highest value being 0.834, and 0.65 being the lowest. The figures in Tables 3 and 4 attest that there is discriminant validity.

**Table 4**  
*Heterotrait-Monotrait Ration (HTMT)*

	EM	GZ	PMS
EM			
GZ	0.650		
PMS	0.834	0.829	
SUS	0.772	0.798	0.782

To add to the normal causal explanations in management and social science research, this research provides policymakers and managers with the insights that facilitate estimating an explanatory model with predictive power. A summary of the PLSpredictive/CVPAT test (Shmueli et al., 2019) is shown in Table 5. The model includes two metrics: Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) and Mean Absolute Error (MAE). Both benchmarks reveal how accurately the models predict the dependent variable Genz (GZ) through the mediating variables, EM and PMS. A higher Q2predict demonstrates a better predictive performance, while lower RMSE and MAE values indicate a good model accuracy. Both RMSE and MAE recorded higher values. However, MAE had relatively lower values than RMSE (see Table 5). Also, EM and PMS have the same Q2predictive values, indicating that both have the same predictive performance. EM, however, demonstrates the best predictive performance across all benchmarks.

**Table 5**  
*PLSpredictive/CVPAT*

R-Square	R-Square Adjusted		Q <sup>2</sup> predict	RMSE	MAE
0.325	0.320	EM	0.294	0.876	0.615
0.425	0.415	GZ	0.274	0.880	0.658
0.494	0.485	PMS	0.294	0.899	0.680

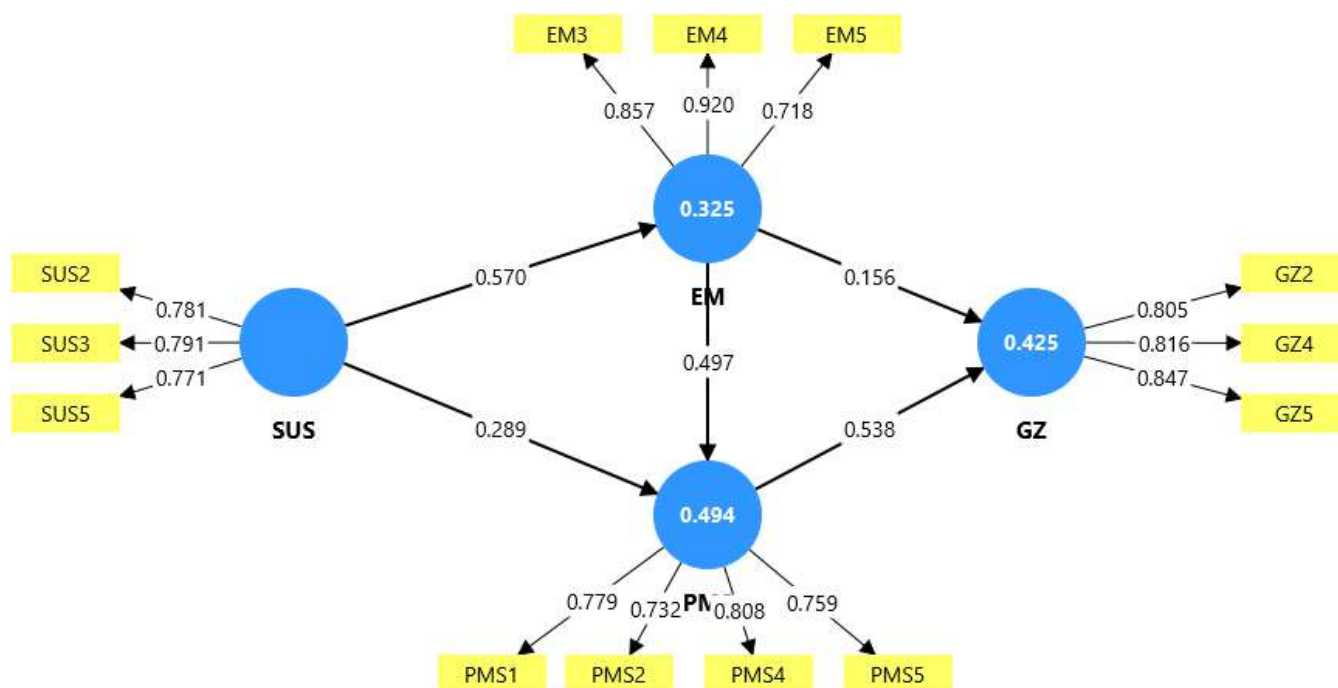
### 4.1.4 Structural Model

*Direct effects:* In this study, Gen Z's (GZ) consumer behaviour is the dependent variable. It measures the degree to which sustainable initiatives influence Gen Z consumer behaviour. As shown in Table 6 and Figure 2, all relationships had positive and significant relationships, except ethical marketing and Gen Z, which, though they had a positive direction, are not statistically significant. The main independent variable, sustainable initiatives (SUS), has a correlation coefficient of 0.570, t-value = 6.580, and p < 0.01 with EM. It also has a correlation coefficient of 0.289, t-value = 2.706, and p < 0.01 with PMS. These significant correlations demonstrate that sustainable initiatives impact on ethical marketing, perceived marketing strategies, and hence Gen Z consumer behaviour.



**Table 6**  
*Direct Effects*

	Beta	Standard error	T statistics	P values
EM -> GZ	0.156	0.101	1.547	0.122
EM -> PMS	0.497	0.071	6.957	0.000
PMS -> GZ	0.538	0.117	4.605	0.000
SUS -> EM	0.570	0.087	6.580	0.000
SUS -> PMS	0.289	0.107	2.706	0.007



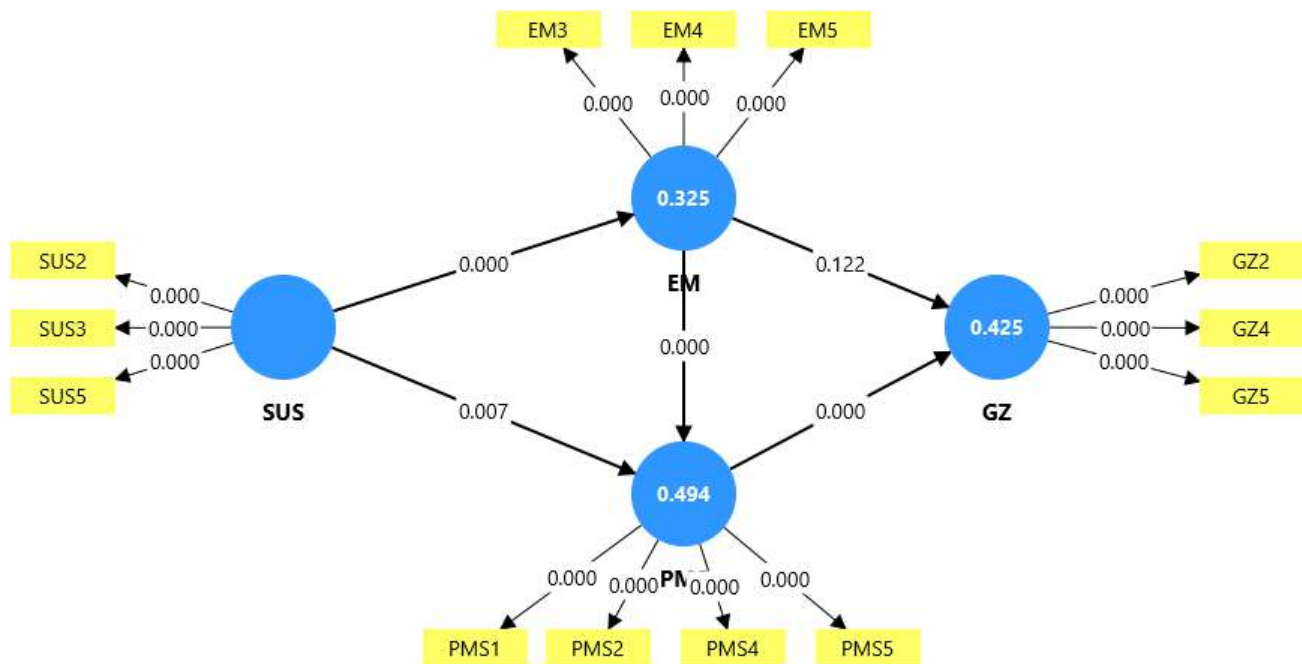
**Figure 2**  
*Direct Paths*

**4.1.5 Mediation**

The mediation role of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies. All indirect effects of the latent variables in the model are positive and statistically significant (see Table 6). The mediating variables (EM, PMS) mediate serially in the relationship between SUS and GZ. Thus, the correlation between SUS and GZ with EM and PMS playing the role as mediators was significant with a coefficient of 0.152, t-value = 3,332, and p < 0.05 (see Table 7). This result demonstrates the possibility of a combined mediating role of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

**Table 7**  
*Indirect Effect*

	Beta	Standard error	T statistics	P-values
SUS -> PMS -> GZ	0.155	0.077	2.016	0.044
SUS -> EM -> PMS -> GZ	0.152	0.046	3.332	0.001
SUS -> EM -> GZ	0.089	0.063	1.413	0.158
SUS -> EM -> PMS	0.283	0.056	5.047	0.000
EM -> PMS -> GZ	0.267	0.062	4.29	0.000



**Figure 3**  
*Indirect Path*

## 4.2 Discussion

This study examined the impact of sustainable initiatives on Gen Z's consumer behaviour. Researchers have proven the relationships that exist between sustainability and Gen Z consumer behaviour (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Priporas et al., 2017). The argument by Bocken & Short (2021) that sustainability cannot be a choice anymore is reinforced by this study. This is evidenced by the results of the analysis. Findings from this research show a positive and significant relationship in all direct relationships, except ethical marketing (EM) and Gen Z (GZ), which, though had a positive direction, was statistically insignificant ( $b = 0.156$ ,  $t\text{-value} = 1.547$ ,  $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ).

The significant positive relationship resulting from the variables, SUS, PMS, EM, and GZ underscores the importance of practicing sustainability-motivated marketing tactics. The relationship between SUS and EM ( $\beta = 0.570$ ,  $\rho < 0.001$ ) demonstrates that employing ethical marketing practices tends to influence Gen Zs. Also, this resonates well with and gives credence to Bocken & Short's (2021) claim that sustainability is a non-negotiable feature of corporate decisions. The relationship between SUS and PMS ( $b = 0.298$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) demonstrates that sustainability dictates the importance of developing and communicating marketing strategies geared towards Gen Z's values.

Also, the connection between PMS and GZ ( $b = 0.538$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that when marketing strategies are effectively aligned with sustainability initiatives can positively influence Gen Z consumer buying behaviour. Furthermore, the positive relationship ( $b = 0.156$ ,  $t = 1.547$ ,  $p > 0.005$ ) is an indication that ethical marketing may not influence Gen Z consumer buying behaviour in the absence of perceived marketing strategies. Thus, ethical marketing should be considered alongside broader sustainable initiatives to impact Gen Z consumer behaviour. The PLS predictive performance revealed that EM and PMS had the same predictive power in influencing the dependent variable (GZ), and EM was found to be superior in terms of its predictive power.

The mediating role of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies which the study sought to examine with respect to its relationship between sustainable initiatives and gen z consumers' behaviour was positive and statistically significant, indicating its' influence on consumers' behaviour, and therefore, its' influence on business decisions on their brands (Brand et al., 2022; Djafarova & Fouts, 2022). It is important, therefore, to implement sustainable strategies that meet the buying decisions of Gen Z (Varadarajan, 2017). The findings are crucial for businesses that seek to create trust and develop loyalty with Gen Z, since any form of misleading information can have a negative perception and influence on Gen Z.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

Existing literature has shown the crucial role sustainability plays in the way individuals and groups respond to actions of businesses in their quest to draw the attention of such demographics. Delving into the mediating role that ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies play in the relationship between sustainable initiatives and Gen Z



consumer behaviour, has added another layer to existing literature. Besides, this study has established the possibility of a chain mediation of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies in the relationship between sustainable initiatives and Gen Z consumer behaviour. Moreover, the predictive power of ethical marketing and perceived marketing strategies in influencing Gen Z is a reality. The findings underscore the importance of authentic, sustainable, and ethical marketing in the business environment. Consequently, companies seeking to attract Gen Z should include ethical marketing and marketing strategies in strategic decisions.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Companies seeking to achieve sustainability in their marketing efforts to engage Gen Z should seek to strategically incorporate ethical marketing practices and marketing strategies to influence Gen Z purchasing decisions. In the quest to implement ethical marketing and marketing strategies, companies' marketing decisions should be in line with authentic, sustainable practices that meet Gen Z's values and aspirations.

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