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FROM DIGITAL PLATFORMS TO SUSTAINABILITY AWARENESS: THE ROLE OF ICT-Based CSR PRACTICES AMONG CONSUMERS

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of digital platforms has transformed the way organisations communicate their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and promote sustainability awareness among consumers. This study examines the level of ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness among consumers in Chennai. Primary data were collected from 100 respondents using a structured questionnaire through convenience sampling. The data were analysed using percentage analysis, mean, and standard deviation. The findings indicate a high level of ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness among the respondents. The study highlights the importance of digital platforms in communicating CSR initiatives, providing sustainability-related information, and encouraging responsible consumption. It concludes that ICT-enabled CSR practices can serve as an effective means of promoting sustainability awareness among consumers in Chennai.

KEYWORDS: ICT, CSR, Digital Platforms, Sustainability Awareness, Consumers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary consumers evaluate organisations not only on the quality of their offerings but also on their social and environmental conduct. Perceptions of a firm are increasingly shaped by its approach to environmental stewardship, labour practices, community welfare and ethical governance. Digital technologies have altered how such information reaches the public. Corporate websites, social networking sites and mobile applications now serve as primary points of contact through which consumers encounter an organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed CSR from periodic, report-based disclosure into continuous communication and stakeholder engagement. Firms can disseminate sustainability initiatives, environmental performance data and community programmes to wide audiences almost instantaneously, while consumers are able to comment, query and circulate this information themselves. These digitally mediated ways of implementing and communicating CSR are referred to in this study as ICT-based CSR practices.

Greater reach, however, does not necessarily produce greater understanding. Digital CSR content competes with commercial messaging, and consumers may find it difficult to separate substantive social action from promotional communication. Moreover, the form of engagement differs across platforms: the detailed disclosure found on a corporate website differs from the brief, interactive content of social media or the personalised features of a mobile application. Whether such practices leave consumers better informed about sustainability issues therefore remains uncertain.

This informed understanding, defined here as sustainability awareness, is a necessary precursor to responsible consumption. Consumers who recognise the environmental and social consequences of consumption, and who understand the role of business in addressing them, are better positioned to make considered choices. Awareness is also a meaningful indicator in itself of whether CSR communication educates its audience or merely promotes the firm. As sustainable development grows in global importance, identifying the practices that build such awareness has become increasingly relevant.

Existing research has examined CSR, corporate communication and digital media from various perspectives. A substantial share of this work has concentrated either on the ICT industry itself or on outcomes such as brand image, customer loyalty and purchase intention. Comparatively little attention has been paid to ICT-based CSR practices as a means of building consumer sustainability awareness, or to the relative contribution of different digital platforms. Given that digital platforms are now embedded in everyday consumer life, this gap warrants systematic investigation.

The present study accordingly examines the influence of ICT-based CSR practices on consumers' sustainability awareness, focusing on three platforms: corporate websites, social media and mobile applications. It adopts the consumer's perspective, assessing what individuals perceive and understand rather than what firms report about themselves. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on digital CSR communication and to offer practical guidance to organisations on where to direct their digital CSR efforts.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Muthulingam and Amirtharaj(2026) examined the relationship between consumer social responsibility, sustainability-related social-media influence, green trust, green perceived value and sustainable purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in India. The study used data from 347 respondents from Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad and employed structural equation modelling. The findings indicated that consumer social responsibility positively influenced green trust and green perceived value, while sustainability-related social-media influence positively influenced green trust. The study demonstrates that digital sustainability communication can influence consumers' perceptions and sustainable consumption responses. This study is particularly relevant to the present research because it connects CSR, social-media influence and consumer sustainability-related responses within the Indian context.

Nuery, Yannopoulou, Manika and Alamanos (2026) investigated consumer engagement with sustainability advertisements on social media. Using a 2 × 2 experimental design involving 279 UK respondents, the study examined how positive and negative sustainability-related captions influence consumer responses. The findings showed that positive sustainability messages generated stronger emotional responses and social-media engagement, which subsequently influenced purchase intentions. The study highlights the importance of the manner in which sustainability information is communicated through digital platforms and demonstrates that digital CSR communication can influence both engagement and consumer behavioural intentions.

Derenthal and Toporowski (2026) examined product-related CSR communication in the digital era and focused specifically on communication patterns that encourage consumer interaction on social media. The study observed that companies increasingly use social-media platforms to communicate product-related CSR initiatives in response to growing sustainability expectations. The research is relevant to the present study because it establishes social media as an important ICT-based channel through which CSR information can reach and engage consumers.

Pitardi and Acuti (2026) explored consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement with digital CSR communication. Using a netnographic approach, the researchers analysed more than 3,237 Facebook comments associated with no-plastic-waste initiatives by six coffee chains. The study found that information, response and involvement strategies used in digital CSR communication can stimulate different forms of consumer engagement. The findings demonstrate that digital CSR communication

extends beyond information dissemination and can encourage consumers to participate actively in sustainability-related discussions.

Muthulingam and Amirtharaj (2026) examined the influence of influencer marketing on Generation Z consumers' purchase intentions. Their structural equation modelling study highlighted the importance of consumer engagement and trust within social-media environments. Although the study focused on influencer marketing rather than CSR specifically, it demonstrates the growing influence of digital platforms on consumer perceptions and decisions. The findings provide supporting evidence for examining ICT-mediated consumer engagement within sustainability and CSR contexts.

Carl and Hinz (2024) reviewed the emerging concept of Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) and examined how organizations should address the opportunities and risks associated with digital technologies. Their review highlighted that corporate responsibility is increasingly extending beyond traditional social and environmental concerns to include responsible digital practices. The study is relevant because it provides a conceptual foundation for understanding ICT-based CSR as an emerging dimension of corporate responsibility.

Digital Sustainability and Corporate Digital Responsibility Review (2024) A systematic review of digital sustainability and Corporate Digital Responsibility examined the growing convergence between digital transformation and sustainability. The review demonstrated that digital technologies increasingly influence organizations' environmental, social and governance responsibilities. It suggests that ICT should not merely be considered a communication mechanism but also as an important component of contemporary corporate sustainability practices.

Social Media and Green Purchase Intention (2024)Research published in Young Consumers examined the influence of social media, green product knowledge, green consumption values and environmental responsibility on green purchase intention among young consumers. The findings indicate that social-media platforms can facilitate the dissemination of environmental information and strengthen consumers' sustainability-related knowledge and behavioural intentions. The study supports the role of digital platforms in shaping sustainability-oriented consumer behaviour.

Famularo (2023) examined CSR communication within the ICT sector and highlighted the increasing importance of digital responsibility, sustainability and transparency. The study noted that digitalization creates new responsibilities for organizations and increases stakeholder expectations regarding corporate transparency. The study is particularly relevant to the present research because it demonstrates the dual role of ICT as both a medium for CSR communication and an area in which organizations themselves must demonstrate responsible practices.

Green Purchase Intention Through Social Media (2022) A study published in Technological Forecasting and Social Change investigated the influence of social-media marketing and social-media usage on green purchase intention by extending the Theory of Planned Behavior. The study demonstrated that social-media marketing, green thinking and conventional behavioural factors collectively influence consumers' intentions to purchase green products. The findings establish the importance of digital platforms in connecting sustainability information with consumer decision-making.

Manzoor et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between social-media marketing, green thinking, environmental concerns and green purchase intentions. Their findings suggest that digital communication can strengthen consumers' exposure to environmental information and support the development of green consumption attitudes. The study reinforces the argument that ICT-enabled communication can contribute to sustainability-oriented consumer responses.

Zafar et al. (2021) examined social-media usage and sustainable purchasing attitudes using social learning theory. Based on 693 respondents, the study investigated social-media browsing, environmental responsibility, trust in social media and perceived environmental effectiveness. The findings showed that social-media usage positively influenced sustainable purchasing attitudes, while environmental

responsibility played an important mediating role. The study provides strong evidence that digital platforms can influence consumers' sustainability-related attitudes.

Chu, Chen and Gan (2020) examined consumer engagement with CSR communication on social media in China and the United States. Their study considered CSR communication attitudes, peer communication and opinion leadership as factors influencing consumer engagement and electronic word-of-mouth intentions. The findings highlighted the interactive nature of social-media CSR communication and demonstrated that consumers can actively participate in CSR communication rather than simply receive corporate messages.

Chu and Chen (2019) investigated consumers' CSR-related activities on social media and their effects on brand-related outcomes. The study showed that consumers' social-media activities related to CSR can influence brand attitudes, electronic word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. The research establishes that consumers are active participants in digital CSR communication and that their interactions can extend the reach of corporate CSR messages.

Saeed et al. (2019) investigated the role of social media in communicating sustainability information and influencing sustainable purchase behaviour. Their findings indicated that sustainability-related information on social media can affect consumers' purchase intentions and that consumers who actively seek sustainability information are more likely to use social media as an information source. The study provides direct support for examining digital platforms as mechanisms for developing sustainability awareness among consumers.

Kim and Ferguson (2018) examined factors affecting the effectiveness of CSR communication. Their study highlighted the importance of message characteristics, transparency, credibility and communication strategies in shaping consumer responses to CSR. The findings indicate that merely communicating CSR initiatives is insufficient; the credibility and quality of communication are important in determining how consumers interpret CSR information.

Kollat and Farache (2017) examined CSR communication through Twitter and its relationship with consumer trust. The study demonstrated that social-media communication can influence perceptions of corporate trustworthiness, particularly when organizations encourage dialogue with consumers. The findings are relevant to ICT-based CSR because they highlight the importance of interactive communication in establishing consumer trust in corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) examined the strategic communication of corporate social responsibility and its influence on stakeholder responses. They emphasized that consumers and other stakeholders may not recognize CSR activities unless companies communicate them effectively. The study established the importance of CSR communication in generating favourable stakeholder responses and provides a foundational basis for examining digital channels as contemporary CSR communication mechanisms.

Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) examined consumer responses to corporate social responsibility and demonstrated that consumers' reactions to CSR depend on their perceptions of the company and the specific CSR initiative. The study established an important foundation for understanding the relationship between corporate responsibility and consumer behaviour. It is relevant to the present study because digital CSR communication can influence the information consumers use to form such perceptions.

Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) examined the effects of corporate social responsibility and price on consumer responses. Their research demonstrated that consumers consider companies' social and environmental practices when evaluating organizations and their products. The study provides an early foundation for understanding CSR as a factor influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing-related decisions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from a convenient random sample of 100 respondents. The respondents comprised urban consumers in Chennai who use digital platforms and are exposed to ICT-enabled Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Secondary data were collected from scholarly journals, magazines, books, websites, and other relevant documented sources. The collected primary data were analyzed using percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation and Pearson's correlation analysis to assess consumers' awareness and perceptions of ICT-enabled CSR practices and to examine the relationship between ICT-based CSR practices and consumer sustainability awareness.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To assess the level of ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness and examine the relationship between the two among consumers in Chennai

H_0: There is no significant relationship between ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness among consumers.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness among consumers.

5. 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.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	48	48.0
	Female	52	52.0
Age	18–25 years	30	30.0
	26–35 years	28	28.0
	36–45 years	22	22.0
	Above 45 years	20	20.0
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	25	25.0
	Postgraduate	40	40.0
	M.Phil.	15	15.0
	Others	20	20.0
Occupation	Student	20	20.0

	Private Sector	30	30.0
	Government Sector	15	15.0
	Self-employed	20	20.0
	Others	15	15.0
Monthly Income	Below ₹25,000	25	25.0
	₹25,001–₹50,000	30	30.0
	₹50,001–₹75,000	25	25.0
	Above ₹75,000	20	20.0

Source: Primary Data (n = 100)

The demographic profile indicates that 52% of the respondents were female and 48% were male. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents (30%) belonged to the 18–25 years age group, followed by 28% in the 26–35 years category. Regarding educational qualification, postgraduates constituted the largest group (40%), followed by undergraduates (25%). With respect to occupation, 30% of the respondents were employed in the private sector, while students and self-employed respondents accounted for 20% each. In terms of monthly income, the highest proportion of respondents (30%) reported an income between ₹25,001 and ₹50,000.

TABLE 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of ICT-Based CSR Practices and Sustainability Awareness

Mean and standard deviation were employed to assess the level of ICT-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and sustainability awareness among the respondents. The study adopted a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The mean score was used to determine the overall level of ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness, while the standard deviation was used to assess the dispersion of responses around the mean. The obtained mean scores were classified into five levels ranging from very low to very high.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Digital CSR Communication	4.12	0.68	High
Social Media CSR Initiatives	3.96	0.74	High
Online Sustainability Information	4.05	0.71	High
Digital Transparency	3.88	0.79	High
Consumer Engagement through Digital Platforms	3.76	0.82	High
Overall ICT-Based CSR Practices	3.95	0.75	High
Awareness of Environmental Issues	4.18	0.63	High

Awareness of Sustainable Products	4.02	0.70	High
Awareness of Corporate Sustainability Initiatives	3.91	0.76	High
Awareness of Responsible Consumption	4.08	0.67	High
Awareness of Sustainable Practices	3.97	0.72	High
Overall Sustainability Awareness	4.03	0.70	High

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness among the respondents. The overall mean score for ICT-based CSR practices was 3.95, with a standard deviation of 0.75, indicating a high level of perception towards ICT-based CSR practices.

Among the dimensions of ICT-based CSR practices, Digital CSR Communication recorded the highest mean score (4.12), followed by Online Sustainability Information (4.05) and Social Media CSR Initiatives (3.96). Consumer Engagement through Digital Platforms recorded the lowest mean score of 3.76, although it remained within the high-level category.

The overall mean score for sustainability awareness was 4.03, with a standard deviation of 0.70, indicating a high level of sustainability awareness among the respondents. Awareness of Environmental Issues recorded the highest mean score (4.18), while Awareness of Corporate Sustainability Initiatives recorded the lowest (3.91)..

7. CONCLUSION

The study examined the level of ICT-based Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and sustainability awareness among consumers in Chennai. The findings indicate that respondents demonstrate a high level of awareness and exposure to ICT-enabled CSR practices, particularly through digital CSR communication, social media initiatives, and online sustainability information. The findings also reveal a high level of sustainability awareness among consumers, with greater awareness observed towards environmental issues, responsible consumption, sustainable products, and sustainable practices.The mean scores indicate that ICT-based CSR practices and sustainability awareness are at a high level among the respondents, while the standard deviation values suggest that the responses show relatively moderate variation around the respective mean scores. The demographic analysis further provides an overview of the profile of the respondents and their representation across different age, educational, occupational, and income groups.Overall, the study highlights the growing importance of digital platforms in communicating CSR initiatives and creating sustainability awareness among consumers. ICT-enabled CSR practices provide organisations with an effective means of communicating their environmental and social initiatives in an accessible and engaging manner. The findings suggest that organisations can make greater use of digital platforms to provide transparent sustainability information, encourage responsible consumption, and strengthen consumer awareness of sustainable practices.

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