

Purpose-Driven Marketing and Its Behavior Impact on Modern Consumers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Marketing discourse has gradually shifted from a narrow emphasis on product features toward broader narratives centered on organizational purpose, ethics, and social contribution. In digitally connected markets, consumers increasingly judge brands based on perceived values, authenticity, and responsible conduct rather than functional superiority alone. The purpose of this review paper is to explore how purpose-driven marketing influences consumer behavior, particularly in terms of attitudes, trust formation, emotional engagement, and behavioral intentions.

Methods: The study adopts a structured narrative review approach, examining peer-reviewed academic literature published between 2015 and 2025. Relevant studies were sourced from established academic databases using keywords related to brand purpose, ethical branding, consumer-brand relationships, and value-based consumption. Both conceptual frameworks and empirical findings were analyzed through thematic synthesis to identify recurring patterns, contrasts, and research gaps.

Findings: The review reveals that purpose-driven marketing tends to generate positive consumer responses when organizational purpose is perceived as genuine and consistently embedded in business practices. Authentic purpose communication is found to strengthen trust, enhance emotional attachment, and support favourable behavioural outcomes. Conversely, symbolic or opportunistic adoption of purpose narratives often leads to consumer skepticism, erosion of credibility, and adverse behavioral reactions.

Implications: The review reveals that purpose-driven marketing tends to generate positive consumer responses when organisational purpose is perceived as genuine and consistently embedded in business practices. Authentic purpose communication is found to strengthen trust, enhance emotional attachment, and support favourable behavioural outcomes. Conversely, symbolic or opportunistic adoption of purpose narratives often leads to consumer scepticism, erosion of credibility, and adverse behavioural reactions.

Originality: This paper contributes originality by synthesising recent and dispersed scholarship on purpose-driven marketing into a coherent analytical framework. By highlighting both enabling factors and limitations, the study advances a balanced understanding of how brand purpose operates within contemporary consumer markets.



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1. Introduction

Traditionally, marketing practice and theory have emphasised transactional efficiency, competitive differentiation, and consumer utility. But such priorities will be putting more than one of them to the test when it comes to changing societal attitudes and increased demands on corporate conduct. Today's consumers' behaviour takes place in an information-rich landscape where organisations' behavior, stakeholder perceptions, and activist discourse

spread instantly and broadly. Brands are judged by what they actually are rather than just what they sell, and so they're judged increasingly on what they stand for. The shift is being fueled by an emphasis on what's more than a bottom-line view and is moving towards a mission-driven mindset. In a way, this is manifested during this orientation in marketing towards purpose-driven approaches where it is the positioning of social contribution, ethical duty, and long-range value and social responsibility in marketing that is perceived to be essential to its branding efforts (Kotler &

Sarkar, 2018). Purpose has, in some ways, been created as a strategic sign, not as just an add-on to reputation in order to cultivate trust and a bond in emotional terms. From a consumer behaviour perspective, purpose-driven marketing as interpreted by consumers and associated with consumer loyalty is the confluence of trust, identification, and value congruence.

Previous work suggests that consumers are more likely to engage in positive attitudes towards a brand when they feel they share its moral or social ideals (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). They might show up in increased loyalty, or advocacy, or resilience towards organizational failure, which can possibly add to advocacy from these perceptions. While the exploration of purpose-based marketing is growing, the literature on purpose-based marketing is rather conceptually scattered.

2. Objective of the Study

The emergence of purpose-driven marketing in recent years can be attributed to a fundamental paradigm shift in contemporary marketing philosophy whereby companies are expected to balance financial motives with their contribution to society and the environment. However, despite its increasing significance, the construct appears to remain ambiguous in academic research, characterized by inconsistent operationalization and conceptual confusion, particularly in relation to its connection to other constructs such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and cause-related marketing. Additionally, the increasing ability of consumers to critically assess the validity of firms' assertions about their purposes poses challenges for the effective implementation of such marketing strategies. The current paper aims to conduct a systematic review to summarize the available knowledge, highlight existing gaps, and identify important connections between purpose-driven marketing and consumers' behaviors and attitudes under different conditions of perceived authenticity.

- **Conceptualization of Purpose-Driven Marketing:** The first objective of the current research is to address the issue of conceptual confusion regarding the nature of purpose-driven marketing by exploring how it is understood in previous studies. Earlier researchers appear to define this phenomenon in rather diverse ways, describing it either as a component of CSR efforts or as an aspect of strategic branding grounded in an organization's identity (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988; Kotler *et al.*, 2021). Such diversity creates serious theoretical ambiguities since purpose-driven marketing becomes hard to distinguish from related concepts. The current paper will attempt to critically evaluate the

existing perspectives and synthesize them to achieve greater theoretical clarity.

- **Identification of Consumer-Related Outcomes:** The second objective involves assessing a range of consumer-related outcomes of employing purpose-driven marketing. Existing studies have identified that the use of this strategy allows influencing various variables, such as brand trust, customer loyalty, purchase intention, and emotional attachment (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Ellen *et al.*, 2006). However, not all studies seem to reach the same conclusions, and thus there is a need for systematic consolidation of the literature and identification of the key factors contributing to consumer-related outcomes. It will be the goal of the current study to achieve this aim.
- **Moderating Role of Perceived Authenticity:** Finally, the third objective of the current paper includes analyzing the potential moderating role of perceived authenticity in consumer reactions to purpose-driven marketing strategies. Consumers today are becoming more vigilant in verifying claims made by organizations regarding their commitment to certain purposes. Hence, it seems logical to argue that authentic communication of purpose helps enhance brand-consumer relationships through the creation of greater trust (Napoli *et al.*, 2014; Vredenburg *et al.* 2020). In contrast, "purpose-washing" may have adverse effects on consumer behavior due to the perception of inauthenticity (Porter & Kramer, 2019). This topic deserves special attention in future research.

The aforementioned objectives of the current study are aimed at achieving an overall integration of existing knowledge in the area of purpose-driven marketing, identifying important theoretical inconsistencies, consolidating empirical evidence, and paying particular attention to the role of authenticity.

3. Review of Literature

3.1. Transition of Purpose When Viewed with Marketing Thought

The idea of purpose in marketing did not just rise to prominence. It emerged slowly in harmony with an overarching discourse on business's role in society. Early marketing literature shaped a view of organisational success that was almost entirely market-oriented, competitive, and centered on products. If ethics mattered, they were relegated strictly to compliance or philanthropy. And disillusioned with the economic-only reading of value, academics increasingly pondered whether firms could be socially legitimate only in the interest of their shareholders.

Stakeholder theory was a principle of this transformation as it believes that companies can be responsible for more than just shareholders (Freeman, 2010). This perspective consequently affected marketing research by challenging it to consider social and ethical dimensions of exchange as well as economic ones. Then there was the dawn of corporate social responsibility (CSR) research, which focused on how “right” behaviours shape consumer attitude and brand perception. Yet, much of the original CSR literature tended to cast social activity in the light of supplementary rather than central features of the organization.

Table 1: Evolution of Purpose-Drive Marketing in Academic Literature

| Period | Dominant Perspective | Key Scholarly Focus |
|--------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Pre-2000 | Transactional marketing | Product value, exchange efficiency |
| 2000–2010 | CSR-oriented marketing | Corporate responsibility and reputation |
| 2011–2017 | Stakeholder and ethical branding | Trust, legitimacy, shared value |
| 2018–Present | Purpose-driven marketing | Authenticity, identity alignment, social impact |

Source: Developed by the Authors based on Synthesis of Prior Studies (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Kotler & Sarkar, 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2019).

Recent studies differentiate between purposeful marketing and standard CSR in terms of strategic embeddedness. Purpose has increasingly been conceptualized as a value program and programmatic guiding strategy, brand narratives, and stakeholder relations rather than only a technique for outward-facing communication (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018).

3.2. Contextualization of Purpose-Driven Marketing

Interest is on the rise; however, existing literature does not yield a general definition of purpose-driven marketing. Some define this approach with a very concrete social mission, while others argue that purpose aligns an organization with its customers, creating value. Du *et al.* (2010) define it as a strategic perspective in which creation of social value is synchronized with core business objectives. In order to understand this thinking, purpose-driven marketing is separate from cause-related marketing, where social engagement is more campaign-based, transactional, with the specific audience that is the focus of the cause-

related marketing. CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), cause-related marketing, purpose-driven marketing. Strategic integration: peripheral, campaign-specific, core organisational strategy. Time horizon: short to medium, short-term, long-term.

Table 2: Conceptual Distinction Between CSR, Cause-Related Marketing, and Purpose-Driven Marketing

| Dimension | Corporate Social Responsibility | Cause-Related Marketing | Purpose-Driven Marketing |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Strategic integration | Peripheral | Campaign-specific | Core organisational strategy |
| Time horizon | Short to medium | Short-term | Long-term |
| Consumer perception | Ethical compliance | Promotional association | Identity and value alignment |
| Behavioral impact | Moderate | Situational | Sustained and relational |

Source: Adapted and Synthesized from Du *et al.* (2010), Varadarajan and Menon (1988), and Porter and Kramer (2019).

Expectations of consumer ethical compliance, promotional association, identity, and value alignment. Behavioural impact: moderate, situational, sustained, and relational. Synthesized and adapted from Du *et al.* (2010), Varadarajan and Menon (1988), and Porter and Kramer (2019). One common theme that surfaced across the studies was the idea of symbolic and substantive purpose. Symbolic purpose is a public message out of which little or no linkage between something and internal experience is evident, and substantive purpose is evident in organisational culture, governance, and priorities.

This gap also leads to the idea that consumers are growing attuned to purpose, evaluating it not only through messages but most significantly through apparent organisational behaviour. But this conceptual haziness is both a problem and also an opportunity. While the different definitions have a tension between theory and practice, they also highlight that purpose-driven strategies are multidimensional. That leads one to the best idea of purpose-based marketing by way of umbrella terms of ethical intent, social contribution, and long-term stakeholder perspective.

3.3. How Purpose is Critical to Establishing Consumer Trust

Trust sits at the centre of the current academic literature around the behavioural effects of purpose-driven marketing. The most frequent definition of trust is a consumer’s intention

to trust a brand through perceived honesty and benevolence. Purpose-driven initiatives have a positive impact on brands, as consumers find that they trust the brand when company values are aligned (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), and studies corroborate this line of argument. But it suggests that trust formation in purpose-based contexts can be gradual and progressive. Rather than responding to singular purpose-oriented claims, consumers learn credibility in the face of many touchpoints and engagements.

However, disconnects between stated purpose and organisational behaviour have been found to reduce trust on the part of consumers, more than if purpose claims are not communicated; therefore, purpose augments consumer expectations and scrutiny. Recent literature has also stressed the role of transparency in trust formation. The level of information asymmetry between businesses and consumers has dramatically shrunk in an era of digital connectivity. Rather, trust is defined more by third-party evaluations, employee actions, and supply-chain information disclosures than by brand-driven communication.

3.4. Emotional Involvement and Brand Identity of Consumers

Trust has gone beyond this, and purpose-driven marketing has been correlated with even deeper emotional attachment and consumer–brand identification. Brand identification refers to consumer links to brand values, beliefs, and social goals. A consumer's brand preference is formed based on their identity with the brand. Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) argue that this identity can facilitate greater consumer attachment to the brand and encourage brand behaviour that transcends transactional loyalty.

Through literature, this work has shown that purposeful brands can symbolically value consumer expression of moral and social identity via consumption. This is even more prominent for a youth and socially conscious consumer audience in the conceptualisation of purchase decisions, whereby such decisions are, in many cases, considered reflective of their own values. Purpose-driven emotional engagement is related to advocacy, resistance to negative information, emotional resilience, and durability.

Table 3: Key Constructs Linking Purpose-Driven Marketing and Consumer Behavior

| Construct | Description | Associated Behavioral Outcomes |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Perceived authenticity | Consistency between purpose claims and actions | Trust, credibility |
| Consumer trust | Belief in brand integrity and intent | Loyalty, reduced skepticism |

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Emotional engagement | Affective connection with brand purpose | Advocacy, commitment |
| Consumer skepticism | Critical evaluation of purpose motives | Resistance, disengagement |

Source: Developed by the Authors based on Literature Synthesis (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Du *et al.*, 2010).

At the same time, academics cite that the emotional motivation for identification adds to perceived betrayal in an emotional context, which has already been reported by the authors. Emotion, attitudes, and cognitive response to betrayal: the emotional drive to identify is also emphasized. And when purpose-driven brands fall short on anything and everything, customers heavily invested in the brand can become increasingly disenchanted with the effort behind it, disengaging or taking action.

3.5 Consumer Skepticism and Resistance

A nascent stream of literature focuses on consumer scepticism towards purposeful marketing. With the rise of purpose narratives, consumers are more wary about firms' intentions. According to some research, scepticism is magnified when purpose claims seem opportunistic, reactive to social trends, or disconnected from core business purpose (Porter & Kramer, 2019). This scepticism is not equally shared among consumer cohorts.

Well-informed consumers and digitally conscious groups present high responsiveness to inconsistencies and are inclined to critically analyse contradictions via platforms such as social media and online forums. That sort of resistance takes the form of lost trust, negative word-of-mouth, and demands for explanation. These results show that meaning-based marketing increases consumer motivation. Instead of accepting ethical narratives as true in a passive vacuum, consumers understand, interpret, and judge organisational intent, restructuring the balance of power between firms and markets.

3.6. Research Gap and Needed Synthesis

Despite the extensive development of the literature related to the concept of purpose-driven marketing, there are still many limitations associated with conceptual and methodological issues. For example, in terms of theoretical grounding, the major problem relates to the failure to establish the connections among different aspects, including consumer outcomes such as trust, loyalty, or purchase intentions, through stakeholder theory or any other broader framework (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Freeman, 2010). Therefore, it is hard to speak about an integrated, consistent knowledge base in this field.

The second issue is associated with contextual moderators that might be important but are not considered in most articles. Culture, industry affiliation, and the degree of market maturity can have a significant impact on how consumers perceive the initiative implemented by companies in question. For example, developed economies feature higher levels of consumer suspicion regarding corporate purpose than emerging countries (White *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, the use of cross-sectional design represents another limitation because it fails to consider the dynamic nature of the process being studied. For example, building trust and fostering consumers' sense of authenticity is a long-term and continuous process (Du *et al.*, 2010). Consequently, one cannot evaluate it accurately without taking into account the time factor.

The literature on the subject in question is dispersed and fragmented. Marketing research, ethics, and consumer psychology often overlap in terms of addressing issues related to organizational purpose and corporate social responsibility. Nevertheless, the connection between all the perspectives has not been established clearly. Synthesis is needed to reconcile inconsistencies and build upon available data.

4. Methodology

To test the relationship between purpose-driven marketing and consumer behaviour, this study employs a systematic narrative review design. As conceptual diversity and methodological heterogeneity characterize existing research on this subject, a review-based approach was appropriate. This narrative review does not simply apply a method to all the previous findings based on original data, as does an

empirical study, which aims to test specific hypotheses by means of primary data.

4.1. Research Design

The selection of a narrative review instead of a meta-analytic or bibliometric approach was guided by the limitation of common constructs and comparable measurement scales across previous works. Research on purpose-driven marketing spans multiple traditions branding, ethics, stakeholder theory, and consumer psychology which make statistical aggregation both methodologically constricting and theoretically narrow-minded. Consequently, a structured narrative synthesis would give greater freedom for discerning patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the literature (Bryman *et al.*, 2019).

4.2. Literature Selection Strategy and Sampling Design

The procedure in literature selection is done by a non-probability, judgmental sampling strategy as it is generally used in theory-based reviews. The sampling frame consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025, which is an indicator of the increased scholarly interest in brand purpose, ethical engagement, and value-based marketing communication. Relevant research was retrieved from reputable academic databases and journal databases focusing on marketing research, management, and interdisciplinary business research. Specific inclusion criteria were established for relevance and academic rigor. More specifically, studies were included if they:

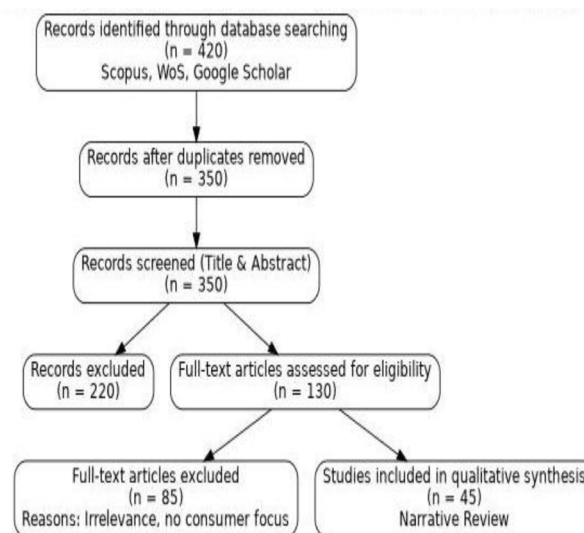


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram Illustrating the Process of Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion of Studies
Source: Authors Compilation based on PRISMA Framework

- a. were directly relevant to purpose-driven marketing, brand purpose, or similar constructs;
- b. investigated consumer outcomes including trust, attitude, affective engagement, or behavioural intention; and
- c. were clearly grounded in theory or had empirical relevance.

A focus on philanthropic activity, corporate reporting, or regulatory compliance alone without reference to consumer behaviour was not included. This qualitative approach allowed for cohesion across studies examined while keeping to an analytical level. While the sampling strategy excludes statistical generalisation, it maximizes conceptual relevance that is at the heart of review-based inquiry.

4.3. Thematic Coding

Thematic coding was applied to analyze the literature, which was used as the main method to make sense of findings and to derive meaningful conclusions from them. Thematic coding refers to the process of identifying and organizing recurrent patterns in qualitative data with a view to transforming individual findings into themes (Bryman *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, the literature in question was analyzed using thematic coding in an iterative process of careful reading and comparisons, making it possible to develop constructs and connections inductively without relying on any predetermined categories.

Conceptually similar variables and research findings were sorted into broader thematic categories such as authenticity perceptions, consumer trust, emotional involvement, and consumer skepticism. For example, all discussions related to the alignment between the actions and promises of organizations could be classified into the category of authenticity, whereas all those related to the consequences of authenticity for repeat purchases and long-term commitment by consumers would go into the category of consumer loyalty. In this way, studies that used different concepts and terms to refer to identical or similar phenomena were incorporated into thematic groups.

Besides, the application of thematic coding made it possible to identify both convergence and divergence among studies. On the one hand, most of them emphasized a significant positive relationship between authenticity and trust, whereas others drew attention to the potential moderating effect of some environmental conditions.

4.4. Data Extraction and Encoding Process

After selecting the articles, data extraction took place manually by reading and rereading each study in an iterative and reflective manner. Instead of using self-heuristic extraction

tools, close textual engagement was recommended to maintain the contextual complexity. The main pieces of information extracted were the theoretical orientation, the research context, the method used, central constructs, and major findings regarding consumer behaviour. The retrieved material was then thematically coded, with recurring notions and behaviours grouped into broader analytical categories. These categories were gradually honed as more studies were consulted, enabling themes to emerge informally rather than being forced a priori. This method aided interpretive richness and minimised the risks of oversimplification sometimes associated with checklist-type reviews (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

4.5. Analytical Approach Framework and Synthesis Method

The article was thematic-synthesis-based and informed by the findings from conceptual and empirical research. Not summarizing study results per study, the review instead sought to identify patterns of convergence and divergence across the literature. Perceived authenticity, trust formation, emotional engagement, and consumer scepticism, and other themes were explored as relative factors in relation to organisational intent and strategic consistency. Where there were contradictory findings, contextual variables, encompassing industry configuration, cultural context, and market maturity, were used to explain variation. Such a comparative approach facilitated the construction of an analytical narrative that is consistent with context and responsive to local nuances (Du *et al.*, 2010).

4.6 Achieving Rigor and the Credibility of the Analysis

Although there is no statistical rigour in review-oriented research, methodological rigor was preserved by being transparent and consistent at each step of the review process. To ensure that original arguments were read correctly, multiple readings of seminal and frequently cited studies were undertaken. Interpretive bias was avoided by comparison of findings between various methodological traditions, not privileging one methodology. In addition, the exclusive emphasis on peer-reviewed sources further adds credibility to the synthesis. Although interpretive, the nature of the conclusions is somewhat mitigated by the structured methodology, and the methodological approach lends support to the analytical rigour and its potential.

5. Results

The findings of this review stem from an extensive review of the present literature on purpose-focused marketing and

its impact on consumer behaviour. The results are presented thematically rather than statistically since this study is review-based. These are revealed through the analysis and seem to relate to specific behavioural outcomes that are often present in multiple modes of research. These outcomes do not work alone; they constitute a behavioural sequence through which meaningful marketing influences people's attitudes and reactions.

Table 4: Summary of Themes Identified in the Review (Results Synthesis)

| Theme | Nature of Evidence | Interpretation |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Authenticity | Strong convergence | Foundational condition for positive response |
| Trust formation | Consistent across contexts | Mediates behavioral outcomes |
| Emotional engagement | Context-dependent | Strengthens long-term relationships |
| Skepticism | Increasing prominence | Heightens evaluative scrutiny |

Source: Authors' synthesis of reviewed peer-reviewed studies (2015–2025)

Four main themes emerged from the review: perceived authenticity of brand purpose, consumer trust building, emotional engagement and consumer–brand identification, and consumer resistance induced by scepticism. Each theme presents different, but intersecting, facets of consumer response.

5.1. Brand Purpose and Authenticity of its Performance

A central finding in the literature reviewed is that perceived authenticity plays a key role in how consumers perceive purpose-driven marketing as authentic and subsequently assess the impact of the use of a specific product on consumer response. Consumers are not only looking at purpose claims as a matter of whether any claim has moral appeal or social relevance; they are determining whether they have any credibly strong or credible backing in the behaviour of an organisation itself. Research repeatedly shows that when purpose is embedded in business strategy, operational procedures, and long-term organisational commitments, it is seen as authentic (Du *et al.*, 2010).

According to the literature, authenticity is presumed through continuity, not visibility. It also reveals that purpose initiatives that seem episodic or campaign-driven are less likely to provoke favourable behavioural responses, even where the underlying cause resonates with consumers. In comparison, consistent and systematic alignment between

purpose statements and practices that can be measured (i.e., ethical sourcing, employee treatment, transparency of governance practices) builds credibility over time. Such findings illustrate that authenticity serves as a precondition for behavioural influence. Without these elements, purpose-driven communication is merely symbolic and has no potential impact on consumer action.

5.2. Fostering Trust and Having a Good Reputation as the Brand

While a key behavioural outcome for purpose-driven marketing is trust, the studies reviewed suggest that trust is not a consequence of purpose articulation at the moment. Trust is not acquired immediately; rather, it is built over time and through repeated validation of organisations acting in accordance with articulated values. Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) mention that consumers are more inclined toward trusting brands that are perceived to be value-consistent, especially when it comes to ethical concerns or uncertainty. The results further indicate that purpose-driven marketing raises consumer expectations. Brands that advertise a commitment to social or ethical goals end up with stricter evaluative standards. Thus, the difference between communication (from the content of the statement) and behaviour (in terms of how it is communicated and enacted) is more likely to undermine trust than if no purpose claims are being made. This imbalance highlights the risk of purpose positioning: although credibility of purpose enhances trust, perceived departure aggravates reputational exposure. Thus, trust serves as an endpoint as well as the mediator through which subsequent brand behavior is interpreted by consumers.

5.3. Engagement and Consumer Brand Identification

Besides cognitive perception, previous literature provides evidence that purpose-driven marketing affects consumer behavior through emotional bonds and identity alignment. A brand articulating relevant social and ethical goals provides customers with symbolic value and enables them to project personal values through the purchases they make. This process leads to consumers identifying with the brand, whereby the brand is incorporated into the consumer self-concept (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

The examined studies tie this to behavioural outcomes extending beyond transactional loyalty. Purpose-aligned consumers show greater advocacy, tolerance of small service failures, and longer-term commitment. Emotional engagement therefore serves as a pathway by which purpose affects sustained behavioural reactions. Yet consumers who

are emotionally engaged also show heightened sensitivity to perceived purpose infringement. Strong identification intensifies both negative and positive reactions, therefore reaffirming the contingent nature of purpose-driven influence.

5.4. Consumer Scepticism and Behavioural Resistance

One of the key counterpoints found in extant literature is the increased consumer scepticism towards purpose-driven marketing. With the growing prevalence of purpose narratives, consumers have greater insight into opportunism. Research of this type suggests that consumers challenge the motivations underlying purpose claims, notably when such claims respond to social trends or seem disconnected from core business logic (Porter & Kramer, 2019).

This scepticism is particularly prominent among digitally savvy and educated consumers who depend on third-party information, peer-to-peer interactions, and organisational transparency to inform their assessments of credibility. Behavioural resistance can be expressed through disinterest, negative word-of-mouth, or reputational damage, reflecting that purpose-led marketing enables consumer agency rather than undermining it. The results indicate that emphasis on a purpose-driven approach intensifies evaluative processes rather than circumventing them, highlighting the role of consistency and accountability.

5.5. Consolidated Behavioral Pattern

Collectively, the results suggest that purpose-based marketing affects consumer behaviour through a multi-level process rather than a simple cause-effect relationship. Authenticity shapes trust; trust influences emotional involvement; and emotional involvement leads to long-term behavioural outcomes. Alternatively, perceived inauthenticity disrupts this order, where scepticism and resistance follow. This holistic pattern implies that purpose-based marketing, as a strategic orientation, is not a tactical intervention. Purpose-driven marketing functions as a strategic philosophy rather than merely a strategy. Its efficacy relies largely on continuous organisational alignment over a long-term communication programme rather than isolated communication efforts.

6. Discussion

The aim of the present review is to consider how purpose-driven marketing influences today's consumer behaviour by synthesising up-to-date academic work. The findings suggest that purpose-driven marketing is not merely a persuasive communication method but a mechanism of exchange in

which consumers evaluate organisational intent, credibility, and long-term legitimacy. This conclusion advances marketing research by reiterating that consumer behaviour results not only from perceived value and satisfaction but is also influenced by moral congruence, identity congruence, and value alignment.

Table 5: Integrated Behavioral Pathway of Purpose-Driven Marketing

| Stage | Process Description | Behavioral Consequence |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Purpose articulation | Brand communicates social/ethical intent | Initial attention |
| Authenticity assessment | Consumers evaluate alignment | Trust formation |
| Emotional alignment | Identity congruence develops | Engagement and loyalty |
| Evaluation over time | Continuous scrutiny | Sustained support or resistance |

Source: Conceptual Model Developed by the Authors

Central insight coming out of the review is that purpose-driven marketing does not lead to homogeneous behavioral effects. Its impact, however, depends on its framing, performance, and perpetuation in organisational practice. This conditionality is a useful way to account for discrepancies found in previous research where purpose-led initiatives resulted in both favourable and negative consumer reactions under different conditions (Du *et al.*, 2010). The purpose, therefore, serves as an amplifying mechanism that reinforces the extent to which previously formed perceptions of credibility are confirmed by purpose or, inversely, magnifies scepticism where inconsistencies arise.

6.1. Purpose, Authenticity, and Strategic Consistency

In drawing conclusions about the findings, the issue of authenticity plays a central role. The literature review shows consistently that consumers view purpose not as an abstract moral issue but rather as being reflected in observable organizational conduct. This view is consistent with the perspective of stakeholder theory, which stresses the alignment among values, actions, and governance structures (Freeman, 2010). Therefore, when purpose is woven into the heart of strategy, into the fabric of choices and operations, consumers are more likely to associate sincerity and integrity with a brand.

This finding defies methods that consider purpose to be almost entirely a branding or communication exercise. Instead of being a symbolic differentiator, purpose seems to be evaluated through long-term consistency. Porter and Kramer

(2019) propose that value creation based on collective societal benefit demands structural integration, not episodic activity. The review presented supports this view by evidencing that in a digitally transparent environment, consumers are more attentive to the depth of purpose integration.

6.2. *Trust as a Mediating Mechanism*

Trust appears as a major mediating variable between purpose-based marketing and behavioural outcomes. Unlike trust from a transactional, performance-reliability perspective, trust in purpose-driven contexts manifests as beliefs about organisational intent and moral commitment. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004), consumers have a tendency to build relational relationships with value-consistent brands, consistent with this review. However, the discussion also reflects the fragile nature of trust in purpose-based relationships.

Trust erosion tends to be stronger when organisations do not measure up to the expectations that result from their purpose claims, particularly when explicit ethical positioning is involved. This asymmetry indicates that purpose-led marketing raises levels of appraisal, generating both potential rewards and risks with regard to value-based positioning. The implication is that trust is cumulative, not permanent, and can be undone once gained in an organizational setting.

6.3. *Emotional Engagement and Identity-Based Consumption*

The results of the study also indicate that purpose-based marketing influences consumer actions through emotional and identity-related processes. Purpose offers consumers symbolic resources that facilitate consumption as a means of expressing identity and self through identification.

This mechanism is in line with theories of consumer-brand identification, which argue that people prefer brands that correspond to their concepts of self-definition and moral compass (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Emotional engagement based on purpose is qualitatively different from satisfaction-based loyalty. These behaviours are difficult to achieve through functional differentiation, yet purpose-aligned consumers show advocacy, acceptance of small failures, and long-term commitment. Conversely, the literature has also cautioned that identity-focused attachment exacerbates betrayal reactions because it leads to a perceived breach of commitment when purpose claims conflict with actions, resulting in disengagement or reputational shock.

6.4. *Consumer Scepticism and the Rise of Evaluative Agency*

The review further highlights that consumer scepticism increasingly emerges as an active evaluative force. As purpose

narratives gain prominence, consumers are less willing to accept ethical assertions at face value. Instead, they apply evaluative processes by conducting comparative assessments of credibility using third-party information, peer discussion, and organisational disclosure. This adjustment reflects a broader shift in consumer agency enabled by digital connectivity and access to information.

As Porter and Kramer (2019) advise, superficial adoption of social issues may undermine, rather than enhance, trust; symbolic gestures can damage trust rather than foster it. Extending this caution, the review shows that scepticism does not inherently have negative implications but instead reflects consumer engagement and moral awareness in the marketplace. Purpose-driven marketing does not suppress critical evaluation but intensifies it.

6.5. *Integrating Purpose into Consumer Behaviour Theory*

From a theoretical perspective, the results indicate the need to reconceptualize purpose within consumer behaviour models. Conventional frameworks generally emphasise cognitive judgement and utility maximisation, with limited attention to moral reasoning and identity alignment. The review suggests that purpose-driven marketing introduces a relational and normative dimension that complements, rather than replaces, existing behavioural drivers. This synthesis supports the development of integrated models that incorporate ethical alignment, trust dynamics, and emotional attachment as part of consumer decision-making. Positioning purpose within an interpretative framework rather than as a discrete concept may enable future research to better understand consumer responses in value-based markets.

7. **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this review have important implications beyond managerial practice and extend to theoretical, practical, and societal debates about marketing that emphasizes purpose. Rather than considering purpose as a universally effective strategy, the results highlight its conditional influence on consumer behaviour, providing nuanced insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers.

7.1. *Theoretical Implications*

Theoretically, these results contribute to the emerging literature on consumer behaviour where value-based and identity-based arguments remain important dimensions of consumer understanding. Traditional consumer behavior models have largely been dominated by rational evaluation, perceived

usefulness, satisfaction, and overall rational judgment in decision-making. The review indicates that purpose-oriented marketing adds a relational and normative dimension, which operates alongside these established mechanisms.

Table 6: Theoretical Contributions of the Study

| Existing Theory | Extension Offered by This Study |
|---------------------------|---|
| Consumer behaviour theory | Incorporates moral and identity dimensions |
| Brand trust models | Positions trust as dynamic and reversible |
| CSR literature | Distinguishes embedded purpose from symbolic action |

Source: Authors' Interpretation based on Synthesis of Reviewed Literature

It can be concluded from the synthesis that purpose acts as an interpretative lens through which consumers assess organizational intention, authenticity, and moral alignment. This observation builds on previous research on consumer-brand identification by showing that identification tied to ethical or social purpose is not a given but is instead frequently updated in relation to organizational behavior (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

Thus, purpose-driven marketing disrupts static conceptions of brand meaning and warrants dynamic theoretical models around trust erosion over time, scepticism, and re-alignment of a brand. In addition, this approach indicates that authenticity should be considered a core moderating variable in purpose-driven marketing studies. Previous work has often assumed a strong positive correlation between ethical positioning and consumer outcomes, a finding that the review shows is based on perceptions of credibility and dependability (Du *et al.*, 2010). Inclusion of authenticity, either as a mediator or moderator of the association, will consequently improve explanatory power in future theories.

7.2. Practical and Managerial Implications

For marketers, the results highlight that purpose-driven marketing cannot be treated as a short-term brand or promotional play. Purpose-driven claims have raised consumer expectations, but they have also given rise to deeper scrutiny, particularly in digitally transparent environments. Therefore, organizations that vocalise social or ethical pledges without operational congruence may undermine rather than enhance trust with their customers.

Table 7: Managerial and Practical Implications of Purpose-Driven Marketing

| Managerial Area | Strategic Implication |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Brand strategy | Embed purpose beyond communication |

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Operations | Align sourcing and processes with values |
| Consumer engagement | Prioritize transparency and consistency |
| Risk management | Anticipate skepticism and reputational exposure |

Source: Developed by the Authors based on Review Findings

The model is based on review findings and is developed by the authors. Purpose in business should permeate every aspect of organisational life, from strategy formulation to supply chain decisions to employee engagement to governance frameworks, according to the review. Managers might be drawn to embedding purpose into their daily decisions even more than to high-profile campaigns that lack meaningful backing. This is in keeping with the argument that authentic purpose arises when organisational behaviour, rather than simply communication, gives credence to purpose (Porter & Kramer, 2019).

Furthermore, the results indicate that goal-orientated strategies are more likely to facilitate longer-term relational outcomes (such as loyalty, advocacy, and tolerance) rather than transactional rewards for stakeholders. As a consequence, practitioners should judge success in terms of longer-term and relational factors, as opposed to short-term measures of performance. This approach will enable organisations to better control the risks of purpose positioning and to nurture stable consumer ties.

7.3. Social and Policy Implications

More importantly, beyond the firm, the review highlights that there are broader social implications associated with purpose-driven marketing. Value-focused consumption behaviors suggest that consumers reward organisations perceived to have a beneficial effect on society. This relationship may act as a pressure on market norms by providing incentives for ethical behaviour and discouraging opportunism.

Table 8: Social Implications and Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

| SDG | Relevance to Study | Contribution Pathway |
|--------|-------------------------|--|
| SDG 12 | Responsible consumption | Encourages ethical purchasing |
| SDG 16 | Institutional trust | Reinforces transparency and accountability |

Source: Authors' mapping based on United Nations SDG framework.

From a policy perspective, the results imply the need for regulators and industry bodies at the policy level

to promote positions that enhance transparency and accountability. Standardised reporting and disclosure methods, along with ethical disclosure frameworks, can allow consumers to participate in rational, value-driven choices that further reinforce trust in market decisions. These measures are particularly pertinent in situations where sustainability and social equity concerns become relevant, especially when purpose statements intersect with issues of sustainability and social justice. The implications also align with global sustainability agendas, particularly those focused on responsible consumption and production. The more purpose-driven strategies guide organizations to internalize social responsibility rather than presenting it as marketing rhetoric, the more the sector can contribute to a sustainable and inclusive market ecology. However, the results caution that these outcomes depend on genuine and authentic commitment, not superficial claims.

8. Limitations and Scope of Future Work

Despite constituting a structured synthesis of preexisting studies, this article presents some important issues that ought to be considered when interpreting the results of the present study. First, the literature review is based on a secondary data pool drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles. Although this approach allows for theoretical consolidation, it necessarily relies on the scope, quality, and methodological choices of previous studies. Therefore, biases or limitations in the preceding research could indirectly impact the interpretations made in this review. Second, although the design of the narrative review is appropriate for examining conceptual diversity, it does not allow for statistical generalization.

9. Conclusion

The limited quantitative aggregation makes it difficult to evaluate the relative strength of the relationships between purpose-driven marketing and certain behavioural outcomes. As such, the results are interpretive, not predictive. This limitation reinforces the exploratory nature of research performed in dynamic areas that remain theoretically underdeveloped. Third, the reviewed literature largely reflects research conducted in developed and digitally mature markets. However, consumer reactions toward purpose-focused marketing may be influenced by cultural norms, economic conditions, and institutional settings, and findings may not generalize to other contexts. Given the limited representation from emerging and developing economies, the conclusions cannot be generalized globally.

Table 9: Identified Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

| Gap Identified | Suggested Research Direction |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Cross-sectional focus | Longitudinal consumer studies |
| Limited emerging economy data | Context-specific research |
| Conceptual fragmentation | Integrated theoretical models |

Source: Authors' Analysis of Reviewed Literature

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Authorship Contribution

The present study was developed together by Pallavi Kumari, Associate Professor of ICFAI University Jharkhand and Anjan Niyogi, Assistant Professor of Shree Agrasain College. The two authors were actively involved in all phases of the research process from the formulation of the research idea, literature review, methodological plan, critiquing, and manuscript writing. Both authors, taking responsibility for the integrity and academic quality of the work, approved the final version of the paper.

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Ethical Approval

As this study does not involve human participants, animals, or primary data collection, ethical approval from an institutional ethics committee was not required.

Conflict of Interest

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest in relation to this research or its publication.

Declaration

The authors confirm that the manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Data Availability Statement

This study is based on a structured review and synthesis of existing academic literature. No new datasets were generated or analysed during the course of this research. Consequently, data sharing is not applicable to this manuscript.

Use of Artificial Intelligence Statement

The authors affirm that this manuscript has been prepared in accordance with the journal's plagiarism and publication ethics policies. Artificial intelligence-based tools were not used for generating substantive content, analysis, or conclusions. All sources consulted have been appropriately cited, and the manuscript represents original scholarly work.

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