

The Attitude–Behaviour Gap:
A Systematic Review of the Green Purchase Paradox
and Consumer Sensemaking

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Abstract

This systematic literature review (SLR) investigates the paradoxical tensions consumers face in green purchasing decisions, contributing to the attitude–behaviour gap, and how consumers make sense of these tensions to develop strategies that overcome this gap. Despite favourable environmentally friendly attitudes, empirical evidence shows consumers frequently opt for less sustainable options. Hence, the attitude–behaviour gap poses significant practical challenges to more sustainable consumption habits, gaining prominent interest among scholars. However, the fragmented literature with inconsistent findings highlights the need for a comprehensive synthesis and integration of the theories, paradigms and findings. By employing paradox theory, this SLR not only delineates the conflicting yet coexisting forces causing tensions behind consumer choices in green purchasing but also enriches the comprehension of how consumers make sense of these contradictory values. This review aims to provide valuable insights to academics, practitioners and policymakers in approaching the attitude–behaviour gap through the paradoxical lens, i.e., recognising and addressing these conflicting tensions consumers experience when they make green purchases, thereby fostering more sustainable consumption habits.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the reward of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Preface

The aim of Chapter One is to provide the background surrounding the research, as well as the aim, objectives and research questions. Hence, the chapter begins with the background of the study, i.e., the attitude–behaviour gap. Then, the chapter details the issues surrounding the research on the attitude–behaviour gap. From the identified gaps in the literature, the chapter sets the aims, objectives and research questions in the following section. The next section entails the significance of this study, which highlights the contributions to academics, practitioners, and policymakers. Lastly, the chapter ends with the organisation of this research, providing an overview of the structure of this systematic review.

1.1 Background

Why do consumers express concern for environmental issues yet continue to favour conventional products over green alternatives? This is known as the attitude–behaviour gap, where consumers support the idea of sustainability but do not actually engage in it (Munro et al., 2023). Pilgrimienè et al. (2020) pointed out that despite the increasing consumer awareness of sustainable consumption, it does not lead to actual purchase behaviours. This is significant as household consumption accounts for approximately 60% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as well as natural resources use (50–80%) (Reisch et al., 2021). The World Economic Forum (2020) also mentioned that human activities have significantly affected 75% of land and 66% of marine environments. Nearly 2,000 species suffer from habitat loss and degradation due to factors such as unsustainable agriculture, commercial development, pollution and climate change (Global Footprint Network, 2016).

Moreover, modern production systems, with their emphasis on shorter life cycles and rapid-response models, have reshaped consumer behaviour, fuelling an ever-growing demand for frequent product replacements, all of which lead to excessive waste and landfill accumulation (Rafi-Ul-Shan et al., 2018). Economic growth demands large amounts of energy for production, consumption, transportation, etc., causing environmental degradation (Kartal, 2022). Assadourian (2010) added that for human society to prevail, current consumption patterns need to improve due to their unsustainability, as humanity has

markedly disrupted ecological systems over the past millennium. Additionally, the progress report by the United Nations (2024) revealed that, with just only a few years remaining, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 is falling significantly short.

Hence, green consumerism, i.e., the production, promotion and consumption of goods and services through eco-labelling schemes, public awareness campaigns, eco-efficient production standards, green technology, green public procurement and recycling programmes, plays a prominent role in fostering more sustainable consumption behaviours (Akenji, 2014). The momentum of research on green purchases has markedly increased post-2000, driven by advancements in technology, government rules and regulations and amplified global consumer awareness levels (Peattie, 2001; Sharma et al., 2023). Additionally, consumers' awareness of sustainability has increased remarkably (Testa et al., 2021).

However, Young et al. (2010) mentioned that 30% of UK customers show concern for environmental issues yet do not actually exhibit green purchase behaviours. Another study showed that while the majority of UK citizens displayed positive attitudes towards organic foods, only 4–10% purchased them (Hughner et al., 2007). Schils (2022) also reported that 50% of grocery shoppers do not engage in green purchase behaviour despite claiming that they are worried about the environment (Munro et al., 2023). This results in the green gap or the value–action gap (Farjam et al., 2019), which occurs when consumers' positive attitudes and intentions towards green products do not translate into actual buying behaviours (Hanss et al., 2016; Peattie, 2010).

In green consumption literature, this phenomenon is commonly regarded as the “attitude–behaviour gap”. Given the severe environmental harms caused by modern consumption patterns, addressing the attitude–behaviour gap has become relatively crucial for the well-being of the environment. ElHaffar et al. (2020) also stated that consumers' excessive justification of their non-green behaviours may establish societal norms where these behaviours are more accepted over time, indicating the significance of studying this gap.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

As a significant issue, the attitude–behaviour gap has received serious attention from both scholars and practitioners as they seek to understand and bridge this gap (ElHaffar et al., 2020; Gupta & Ogden, 2009). The attitude–behaviour gap has been studied in various industries and contexts, such as sustainable fashion (Bly et al., 2015; Hiller & Woodall, 2019; Pauluzzo & Mason, 2022), organic food (Frank & Brock, 2019; Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015), and sustainable tourism (Dolnicar et al., 2017; Hales & Caton, 2017), etc. Hence, there are often inconsistent findings, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of specific factors affecting the attitude–behaviour gap (Sharma et al., 2023).

ElHaffar et al. (2020) have conducted a narrative and comprehensive literature review to summarise the theories, methodologies and paradigms of the green gap. While the study provided valuable insights, such as intrapsychic and contextual factors leading to the attitude–behaviour gap, methodological bias and coping mechanisms, the narrative review lacks the rigour of systematic approaches like SPAR-4-SLR (Paul et al., 2021). A more recent systematic literature review by Munro et al. (2023) examined the current state of knowledge on the attitude–behaviour gap in the context of grocery shopping, following the SPAR-4-SLR principles, offering methodological rigour. However, the review is limited to the grocery store sector and focuses exclusively on household shoppers, ignoring the attitude–behaviour gap in broader green purchasing contexts. Therefore, these issues indicate the need to conduct a systematic literature review that not only provides methodological rigour but also covers the broader sustainable consumption behaviours that contribute to the attitude–behaviour gap across various contexts.

The green consumption literature and research on the attitude–behaviour gap is dominated by behavioural, cognitive and decision-making theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). While these approaches address the attitude–behaviour gap, they oversimplify the complexity of this gap by assuming that these behaviours are rational and deliberate (Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Despite the evidence of the association between green attitudes and behaviour through the use of the TPB (Maichum et al., 2016; Nascimento & Loureiro, 2024; Paul et al., 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2016), the attitude–behaviour gap is still persistent.

Similarly, Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) is widely used to explain the psychological discomfort consumers feel when their pro-environmental values and their non-sustainable purchase behaviours conflict. While this theory acknowledges the internal contradiction, it assumes that

individuals are cognitively motivated to eliminate the dissonance over time. However, the continued presence of such conflicting values in green consumption suggests the need for a more nuanced perspective that accommodates the coexistence of the inconsistency, rather than framing it solely as a problem to be solved. Therefore, the attitude–behaviour gap requires a more holistic approach that demonstrates the complexity of the factors contributing to the gap (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018).

Paradox theory is widely applied in management and organisation studies to holistically explore complementary yet contradictory forces in the workplace (Lewis, 2000; Smith et al., 2017). However, in the attitude–behaviour gap research, the application of paradox theory is scarce. The paradoxical lens provides a unique perspective, viewing the inconsistency between consumers’ attitudes and behaviours as contradictory yet complementary (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005). This theoretical approach is essential for developing realistic interventions that acknowledge and work within these paradoxes rather than attempting to eliminate them (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989).

In management and organisation studies, these conflicting forces lead to persistent paradoxical tensions (Smith et al., 2017). These tensions are inherent in organisations and cannot be eliminated as they stem from contradictions in the system itself (Clegg et al., 2002; Smith & Tushman, 2005). Therefore, Smith and Lewis (2011) proposed four main paradoxical tensions in organisations – learning, organising, performing and belonging tensions. These tensions detail the clash between existing and new knowledge (learning), rivalry between existing structures and practices within the workplace (organising), conflicting priorities and goals (performing) and identity-based conflicts between individuality and collective practices (belonging). These are explored further in Chapter Two.

For the attitude–behaviour gap, research has shown that consumers hold contradictory values, i.e., favourable environmental attitudes and non-sustainable buying behaviours (Carrington et al., 2010; Essiz et al., 2023; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). However, much of the extant literature tends to oversimplify this gap by presenting it as a straightforward problem–solution dynamic, focusing on a set of external barriers, such as price (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Moraes et al., 2012), quality (Carey & Cervellon, 2014), and social pressures (Meenakshi, 2020). Little is known about how the external barriers interact with consumers’ existing pro-environmental attitudes, leading to a complex network of persistent tensions contributing to the attitude–behaviour gap. Hence, the first research question is generated:

RQ1: What are the consumers' tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap in green purchases?

In organisational paradox studies, scholars also tackle sensemaking mechanisms to mitigate paradoxical tensions (Chen et al., 2021; Farrukh & Sajjad, 2023; Knight & Paroutis, 2017; Lundgren-Henriksson & Tidström, 2021). When making sense of the tensions, Hahn et al. (2014) discussed two cognitive frames – paradoxical (both/and) and business case framing (either/or). The former means that the tensions are persistent and complement each other, whereas the latter involves prioritising financial outcomes through a narrow and pragmatic approach. Miron-Spektor et al. (2018) added that paradoxical thinking is a cognitive process that enables individuals to accept contradictions, which in turn fosters creativity and flexibility. Additionally, Lewis (2000) discussed six defensive mechanisms individuals react to the tensions – splitting, projection, repression, regression, reaction formation and ambivalence. Studying these sensemaking processes is essential to examine the internal sensemaking processes of how individuals interpret and respond to conflicting demands, focusing on the ongoing nature of contradictions over time rather than eliminating them (Weick et al., 2005).

In the attitude–behaviour gap, researchers have explored different consumer coping mechanisms to mitigate the inconsistencies between their attitudes and purchase behaviours, such as denying the consequences of their actions (Hanna & Adams, 2019), acknowledgement of inconsistent behaviours (Szmigin et al., 2009), prioritising themselves and cheaper options (Hiller & Woodall, 2019; Luchs et al., 2015), etc. However, little is known about whether consumers with paradoxical (both/and) and business case (either/or) framings apply specific defensive mechanisms or other coping strategies in the context of green consumption. Moreover, Sharma and Jaiswal (2018) called for more research on the interaction between paradoxical and business case framing. Therefore, this can not only enrich the literature on paradox theory and cognitive frames but also provide countless valuable insights to practitioners and policymakers in helping consumers mitigate these paradoxes in the long term. Hence, the second research question is generated:

RQ2: How do consumers make sense of these tensions?

1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Research

In answering the two research questions, the aim of this systematic literature review is to synthesise the current knowledge on consumers' attitude–behaviour gap in green purchases through the lens of paradox theory. The second aim of this SLR is to identify the paradoxical tensions contributing to the attitude–behaviour gap in consumers and their sensemaking mechanisms to mitigate these tensions when their attitudes and behaviours conflict, providing valuable insights into fostering more sustainable consumption habits. Based on the research questions and aims of this SLR, there are five specific research objectives which guide the research process for this SLR:

- To delineate the current state of knowledge on the attitude–behaviour gap regarding green purchases from the literature.
- To identify the tensions reported in the literature which contribute to the attitude–behaviour gap in green purchases. The findings are categorised by applying the framework developed by Smith and Lewis (2011), i.e., learning, performing, belonging and organising tensions and the interplay between these tensions.
- To explore the sensemaking mechanisms consumers employ to mitigate these tensions when their attitudes and behaviours conflict. To report the findings, the cognitive frames proposed by Hahn et al. (2014) are predominantly applied, including the defensive mechanisms identified by Lewis (2000).
- To offer a research agenda that addresses the gaps in the existing literature and discover avenues for future researchers.
- To investigate the practical implications, by supporting consumers in overcoming the attitude–behaviour gap, practitioners in setting marketing strategies to alleviate this gap, and policymakers to develop policy interventions that encourage more sustainable consumption behaviours.

As for the scope of the research, this SLR focuses on the perspective of the consumer, analysing how individuals experience, interpret and respond to these tensions. While the primary emphasis is on green purchasing behaviours, insights from adjacent areas, such as ethical purchasing and sustainable consumption, are also included to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitude–behaviour gap. As it is an SLR, the research draws insights from the existing literature and does not involve primary data collection.

Therefore, the findings are generalisable within the scope of theoretical discourse and existing empirical

studies but do not provide direct empirical evidence. Moreover, this SLR only synthesises the academic articles identified during the structured search across academic databases. The definitions of the key terms used in this research are detailed in Chapter Two, whereas Chapter Three further emphasises the scope of this study, i.e., the inclusion/exclusion criteria for the data analysis process.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This SLR synthesises the current knowledge on the attitude–behaviour gap in green purchasing through the lens of paradox theory, making significant contributions to multiple stakeholders, including consumers, academics, practitioners and policymakers. The findings of this study provide both theoretical advancements and practical implications, which help mitigate the persistent gap between consumers' attitudes and behaviour in green purchasing. This study aids in fostering more sustainable consumption patterns (SDG 12), thereby addressing climate change issues all over the world (SDG 13), which in turn contributes to economic growth while maintaining environmental responsibility (SDG 8) (United Nations, 2024). The contributions of this study are as follows.

From a theoretical perspective

This SLR demonstrates how consumers experience persistent tensions between their pro-environmental attitudes and contradictory purchase behaviours, providing a more holistic approach to exploring the gap. This review advances the understanding of the tensions described by Smith and Lewis (2011), cognitive frames reported by Hahn et al. (2014) and defensive mechanisms identified by Lewis (2000), while simultaneously extending the knowledge of paradox theory in the realm of consumer behaviour. From the findings of this SLR, future researchers can further investigate the complex nature of paradoxical tensions in the attitude–behaviour gap and more nuanced sensemaking mechanisms beyond paradoxical (both/and) and business case (either/or) framings.

This SLR can also allow future research avenues based on the current state of the literature. These include methodological advancements and emphasis on areas that requires more attention. Moreover, this review can enable interdisciplinary research and theory advancement by linking marketing with management and organisational behaviour, and even psychology, sociology and public policy. By framing the attitude–

behaviour gap as a paradoxical phenomenon, this study can also benefit curriculum development in marketing education, adding academic value.

For practitioners and policymakers

The findings of this study make significant contributions to businesses and policymakers seeking to mitigate the attitude–behaviour gap in the following ways. First, this SLR provides a paradoxical approach to the attitude–behaviour gap, where the conflicting values are persistent rather than a problem to be resolved (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Based on the findings from the literature, this study highlights the role of simplified eco-labelling, social influence strategies and structural policy interventions that address the tensions stemming from knowledge gaps, sociocultural constraints and systemic barriers. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of sustainability messaging in resolving the conflicts of consumers with paradoxical and business case framings.

1.5 Organisation of the Dissertation

This section provides an overview of the structure of this dissertation. Chapter One introduces the background, problem statement, research questions and significance of this study. Chapter Two provides an overview of key concepts and the terms used in this study, including a further explanation of the attitude–behaviour gap and the theoretical background of paradox theory (paradoxical tensions and sensemaking), which is widely applied in organisation studies. Using the frameworks detailed in this chapter, this SLR synthesises the current knowledge. Then, Chapter Three details the methodology chosen for this dissertation and the steps taken to synthesise the existing literature, detailing the inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction methods and analytical approaches.

Next, Chapter Four reports the findings from the analysis to address the research questions developed in the first chapter. The chapter identifies key themes that cause tensions leading to the attitude–behaviour gap in consumers and how they make sense of these paradoxical tensions through the application of frameworks detailed in Chapter Two. Finally, Chapter Five synthesises the key findings from the previous chapter, emphasises the theoretical contributions and practical implications, identifies gaps in the literature to present future research directions and limitations of this SLR, and finishes with a conclusion.

Chapter 2: An Overview

2.0 Preface

Chapter Two aims to provide in-depth justification and background for the key concepts and issues outlined in Chapter One to enhance the reader's understanding of this research. First, section 2.1 defines the concept of green purchases adopted in this study. Then, the section explores the different concepts employed by researchers to study the inconsistency between consumers claiming they are pro-environmental and their actual purchase behaviour (attitude-behaviour gap). Given that the paradox theory, underpinned in this research, is deeply embedded in management and organisational behaviour studies, the succeeding sections 2.2 and 2.3 provide the background of paradoxical tensions and sensemaking logics in those disciplines.

2.1 Green Purchasing and the Attitude-Behaviour Gap

The purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive overview of the concept of green purchases and the different concepts of the attitude-behaviour gap investigated in the literature. Green purchases, in this study, refer to an individual purchasing or consuming products (tangible or intangible) that have minimal direct or indirect environmental impacts throughout their life cycles (Nguyen et al., 2019; Tawde et al., 2023). Green products are regarded as environmentally superior products that safeguard or improve the environment by conserving energy or resources and by reducing or eliminating toxic waste, pollution and harmful substances (Ottman et al., 2006).

Moreover, Gleim et al. (2013) and Memery et al. (2015) mentioned that ethical consumption includes both an environmental focus (green) and social justice (Fair Trade, ethical labour). Although there are differences between green, ethical, local and organic products, consumers subjectively perceive them as overlapping (Frank & Brock, 2019). Thus, as previously stated in Chapter One, this study includes insights from adjacent areas, such as research on ethical consumption and sustainable purchases, for a better understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap.

Research has also stated that green purchase behaviour is a sophisticated form of ethical decision-making and socially responsible behaviour, which involves the actual purchasing of green products by consumers (Kaufmann et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2014). According to Stern (2000), early research investigated consumers' environmentally significant behaviour as homogenous, but it varies with regard to a

combination of causal factors. This behaviour ranges from actively participating in pro-environmental demonstrations and supporting activist behaviours, policies, etc., to purchasing, consuming and disposing of green products and individual behaviours within larger organisations, such as engineers designing products in more or less environmentally friendly methods (Stern, 2000).

Hence, research on the “incompatibility between pro-environmental values and environmentally-supportive behaviour” (Kennedy et al., 2009, p. 151) is generally regarded as the environmental values–behaviour (EVB) or the value–action gap. However, to further explore this value–action gap, scholars have investigated the “intention–behaviour gap”, “attitude–behaviour gap”, and “attitude–intention–behaviour gap”. ElHaffar et al. (2020) mentioned that the intention–behaviour gap research focuses on behavioural and traditional rational paradigms. In their study of the intentions–behaviour gap, Tawde et al. (2023) adopted green purchase intentions as consumers’ willingness to purchase environmentally friendly products for the well-being of the environment, and this leads to the motive to purchase green products (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018).

When consumers exhibit favourable attitudes towards green products but do not engage in green purchase behaviour (Hanss et al., 2016; Peattie, 2010), the attitude–behaviour gap occurs. For the attitude–behaviour gap, it was found that scholars had different interpretations of “attitudes”. Jacobs et al. (2018) stated that attitudes are considered the key antecedents of behaviour, shaping the attitude–behaviour gap, which is influenced by consumers’ values. Moraes et al. (2012) claimed attitudes are based on information and knowledge, whereas Padel and Foster (2005) highlighted the role of preferences, perceptions and information. Studies have also defined attitude as “positive or negative feelings towards an issue or an object” (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018, p. 422).

ElHaffar et al. (2020) and Duong (2024) discussed the attitude–intention–behaviour gap in an attempt to capture the linear and progressive process from consumers’ attitudes causing purchase intentions and then leading to purchase behaviour (Tung et al., 2012). This delineates the role of attitudes in driving purchase behaviour in general, as consumers’ intentions to engage in purchase behaviours rely on their attitudes towards the product. Similar to Munro et al. (2023), this research explores the discrepancies between consumers’ pro-environmental values and their actual purchase behaviour under the term “attitude–behaviour” gap. Furthermore, as detailed previously in Chapter One, the attitude–behaviour gap is mainly examined through decision-making lens, framing the gap as a problem to be corrected. Hence, the following

sections introduce paradox theory and sensemaking perspectives from the management and organisational behaviour literature in-depth, which underpin this SLR's approach to understanding persistent consumer tensions.

2.2 Paradox Theory and Tensions in Management and Organisation Literature

The term “paradox” is deeply rooted in philosophy and rhetorical studies to understand the “theoretical contradictions and oppositions embedded in complex traditions” (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989, p. 563). The concept of paradox has a deep historical background, as it was described by philosophers such as Lao Tzu and Confucius as “a mystical interplay of interdependent contradictions”. Paradox has also been portrayed as “irrational and unsolvable puzzles or double binds” by Aristotle and Hegel (Smith et al., 2017, p. 303). Paradox refers to a situation, behaviour or act that exhibits qualities that are contradictory or inconsistent with each other; these diametrically opposed conditions can coexist simultaneously (Jarvenpaa & Lang, 2005; Mick & Fournier, 1998; Yap et al., 2021). According to the paradox theory, these oppositions are persistent and interdependent yet exist simultaneously and offer no clear resolution or direction for action, which results in tensions (Smith et al., 2017). Paradoxical tensions, as opposed to non-paradoxical, are recurring and persistent contradictions in nature that cannot be resolved (Farrukh & Sajjad, 2023).

Smith and Lewis (2011) classified organisational tensions into four categories – learning, belonging, organising and performing tensions. Learning tensions arise from the need to balance exploration (innovation and adaptation) and exploitation (maintaining and refining existing knowledge and practices). This entails both preserving and dismantling elements of the past in order to shape the future (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). Organisations must evolve and innovate while preserving past practices, operational stability and efficiency for future opportunities.

Belonging tensions are related to identity, influenced by the diversity and complexity within organisations, which occurs when individuals and groups struggle with the need to belong and maintain an identity versus the need to differentiate and assert their uniqueness (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). These tensions include conflict between personal values and group norms within organisations (Farrukh & Sajjad, 2023). Organising tensions occur due to conflicting needs in organisations' structures to achieve

their goals. These tensions involve balancing flexibility and control (Smith & Lewis, 2011); for instance, organisations must be adaptable and responsive to change (flexibility) while also maintaining consistent structures (control). Finally, performing tensions arise when organisations face different, often conflicting goals. These tensions emerge when organisations simultaneously pursue different objectives (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013), such as profitability versus social responsibility.

Smith and Lewis (2011) also demonstrated that these paradoxes are not isolated but often intersect, creating complex challenges for organisations. The learning::belonging tensions stem from the clash between adaptation and change while maintaining the sense of self and purpose. The learning::organising tension occurs when the requirement of stability and clarity of organisation routines and structures conflicts with the need for flexibility and adaptation. The rivalry between innovation and change for the future and maintaining success in the present causes learning::performing tensions. When organisations face conflicts between social and occupational demands and individual identities, the performing::belonging tensions arise. The performing::organising tensions tackle the competing demands and performance, such as customer demands vs employees and high commitment vs high performance. Tensions stemming from collective goals and action versus individual identities lead to belonging::organising tensions. Drawing on the tensions introduced by Smith and Lewis (2011), this research explores the consumer tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap of green purchases (RQ1).

2.3 Sensemaking of Tensions in Management and Organisation Literature

This section aims to outline the background of sensemaking widely explored in organisation studies (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), to interpret, understand and navigate the paradoxical tensions, tackling RQ2 about how consumers make sense of these tensions stemming from the attitude–behaviour gap. Sharma and Good (2013) revealed that middle managers make sense of the tensions between the social and profit logics, i.e., corporate social responsibility versus financial performance, in for-profit organisations through institutional work. Scholars characterise institutional works as the everyday adjustments or adaptations made by individuals to influence the legitimacy of practices and to define the boundaries between insiders and outsiders (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). A key component of institutional work is the agency, where the institutions shape how individuals behave, and those individuals, in turn, can

shape the institutions. In the article by Sharma and Good (2013), middle managers can use their agency (ability to act independently) to navigate and reconcile these conflicting demands by carrying out institutional work – taking actions that balance and address the expectations of both competing demands.

Sensemaking, which is within the perspective of institutional logic, tackles cognitive and social mechanisms for managing unpredicted events (Kristiansen et al., 2015). According to Weick et al. (2005), sensemaking is defined as an “ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalise what people are doing, and it involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (p. 409). Zhang and Soergel (2014) described sensemaking as the “information task of creating an understanding of a concept, knowledge area, situation, problem, or work task often to inform action” (p. 1734). At its most fundamental, sensemaking is understanding how various interpretations are attributed to the same event (Helms Mills et al., 2010). The sensemaking process encompasses scanning, interpreting and reporting (Hahn et al., 2014). Decision-makers make sense of the unclear signals and develop a strategic response through cognitive frames, essential in understanding sustainability tensions (Sharma & Jaiswal, 2018). Hahn et al. (2014) proposed two cognitive frames – business case frame and paradoxical frame – that influence the stages of the sensemaking process.

The business case frame is grounded in the belief that environmental and social sustainability efforts must align with economic objectives, leading to managers prioritising economic considerations (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). In the scanning stage, the selective information-gathering process on financial performance limits the breadth of information that managers consider, emphasising metrics, such as cost savings, leading to interpreting these tensions as either opportunities or threats based on their potential impact on the organisation’s financial performance. Hence, the response to these tensions is typically pragmatic and incremental, focusing on solutions that fit within existing organisational routines and structures (Hahn et al., 2014). As managers prioritise one perspective over another, this aligns with “either/or” thinking (Chen et al., 2021).

In contrast, paradoxical framing embraces the inherent tensions and contradictions between the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainability. Rather than eliminating them, the paradoxical frame encourages managers to recognise and accommodate these conflicting demands, i.e., a “both/and” approach (Smith & Lewis, 2011). In the scanning phase, managers with a paradoxical frame

engage in a broader and less structured scanning process, gathering information from a wide range of sources and are more likely to consider the views of diverse stakeholders. Interpreting with the paradoxical frame involves recognising both positive and negative aspects of the tensions rather than eliminating them. Thus, managers respond to these tensions with caution and prudence, allowing greater innovation but slower decision-making (Hahn et al., 2014).

Additionally, Lewis (2000) mentioned that paradoxes can be a double-edged sword, both driving and inhibiting change (causing defensive reactions). Thus, the author described six defensive mechanisms that actors (individuals or organisations) use when faced with paradoxes – splitting, projection, repression/denial, regression, reaction formation and ambivalence. Splitting further polarises the contradictions, for instance, dividing organisations into subgroups, each defending one side of the paradox, pushing to more extreme conditions. Projection involves transferring conflicting feelings or attributes onto someone or something else (often a scapegoat).

In the repression/denial mechanism, individuals may block out or deny the existence of the paradox altogether, refusing to acknowledge conflicting experiences. Regression leads individuals to revert to past behaviours or understandings that provide them with a sense of security instead of addressing the paradox. Reaction formation is an overreaction to the tension, where individuals exhibit the opposite behaviour to the one that threatens them. Ambivalence represents a lukewarm or half-hearted engagement with both sides of the paradox. Individuals try to navigate both sides, but their reaction lacks the intensity of fully committing to one or the other. Drawing on the cognitive frames proposed by Hahn et al. (2014) and defensive mechanisms described by Lewis (2000), this SLR synthesises how consumers make sense of the tensions within the existing literature (RQ2).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Preface

This chapter outlines the methodological foundation and processes employed in this study to address the research questions. The chapter begins with an emphasis on the use of a systematic literature review, its relevance and rigour in synthesising extant literature, and the processes in a systematic literature review, i.e., SPAR-4-SLR (assembling, arranging and assessing). The succeeding sections implement the SPAR-4-SLR processes through literature searches, title/abstract screening, full-text reading, and reporting the data. This research reports the data by adopting descriptive and thematic analyses. For the thematic analysis, this chapter explains the procedures and presents the patterns and themes in the literature, as Chapter Four: Findings will provide detailed interpretations to address both research questions.

3.1 Systematic Literature Review

This section justifies the use of the chosen method for this research. A systematic literature review (SLR) is a research method used to “identify, select, critically evaluate and synthesise extant literature in a rigorous, transparent and replicable manner” (Vrontis & Christofi, 2021, p. 813). SLRs allow researchers to summarise all relevant findings by capturing the context of an issue, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge on a phenomenon. They also provide a structural roadmap of knowledge while minimising bias and error. The rigour of this method is rooted in its use of a well-established framework (Munro et al., 2023). With paradox theory being the theory underpinning this review, this research is, hence, regarded as a theory-based review (Paul et al., 2021).

As discussed previously in Chapter One, the objective of this review is to examine the attitude–behaviour gap of green purchases in the extant literature through the lens of paradox theory. Chapter One also noted that the literature surrounding the attitude–behaviour gap remains fragmented due to often inconsistent findings. Thus, there is a need for an integration or synthesis of the literature on this phenomenon. In doing so, this review identifies the consumer tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap of green purchases and how consumers make sense of these tensions within the existing literature.

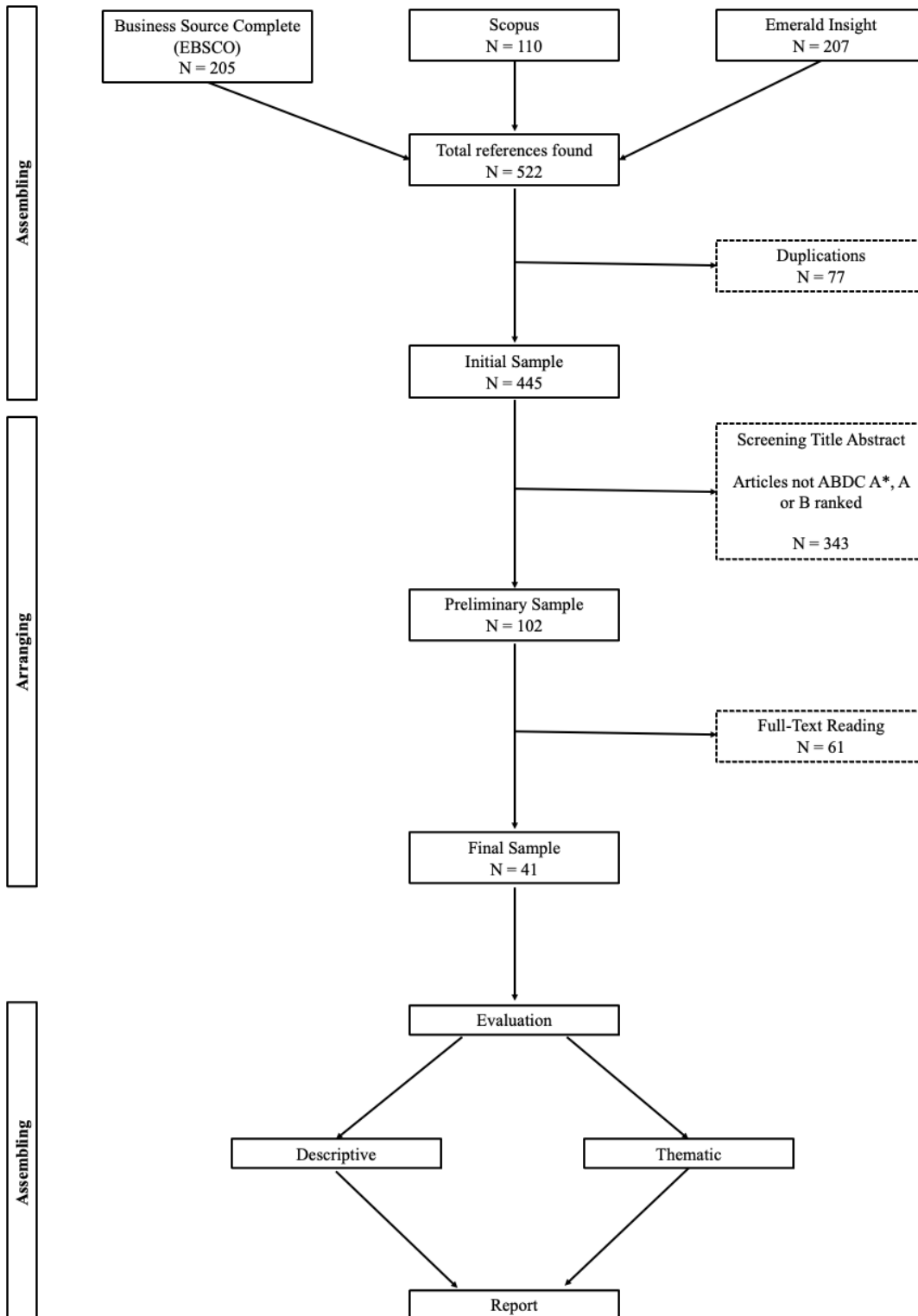
3.2 Systematic Literature Review Process

This review follows the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR), a framework for conducting systematic literature reviews (Paul et al., 2021). The steps involved in the SPAR-4-SLR framework constitute 3As, i.e., assembling, arranging and assessing the literature, with each step consisting of two sub-stages (Paul et al., 2021). The assembling step is important to “set the scene” (Munro et al., 2023, p. 138740) through data identification and acquisition of the data across databases (Paul et al., 2021). The data identification phase involves defining the research domain to set the research area (e.g., attitude–behaviour gap), research questions, determining the inclusion and exclusion of sources (e.g., including peer-reviewed academic sources and excluding non-academic sources), and the quality of those sources. The acquisition step is the process of identifying the search mechanism used to source the articles (e.g., Scopus), defining the search period (e.g., 2000–2023), and the search keyword(s) (e.g., Boolean, truncation, etc.).

The arranging phase includes organisation and purification (Paul et al., 2021). The former means grouping the identified articles from the literature search, which encompasses extracting key information from each article (e.g., theoretical frameworks, author locations, and publication dates). The latter follows, serving as a filtration process to ensure that the articles selected are relevant to the review’s objectives. Similarly, the assessing step also has two steps, i.e., evaluation and reporting (Paul et al., 2021). During the evaluation step, the focus is on how the data will be analysed, which involves identifying themes in this instance. Moreover, this phase includes the proposal for a future research agenda. The reporting step involves how the findings will be reported or presented alongside identifying the limitations of the present data. Figure 1 shows the steps in an SLR following the SPAR-4-SLR framework (Paul et al., 2021); the succeeding sections detail the process taken in this review.

Figure 1

The SLR Process



Note. Adapted from “The sustainable attitude-behavior gap dynamic when shopping at the supermarket: A systematic literature review and framework for future research,” by P. Munro, S. Kapitan and B.

Wooliscroft, 2023, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 426, p. 138740. Copyright 2023 by Elsevier Ltd.

3.3 Assembling

In this stage, the first part of the data identification process involves defining the research domain, objectives and research questions, which are detailed in Chapter One. Hence, this section begins by developing well-defined and replicable search inclusion parameters. As part of the acquisition stage, data selection is another crucial step, which entails identifying the databases where the data search will be conducted. To ensure an extensive literature search, three databases were searched in this review: Business Source Complete (EBSCO), Scopus and Emerald Insight. These databases were chosen due to their reliability and reputability in academic research. Scopus is widely used among researchers conducting SLRs (Paul & Criado, 2020); EBSCO and Emerald Insight are recognised as the leading databases for business-related research (Johnsen et al., 2017; Vrontis & Christofi, 2021).

When conducting the initial literature search on the databases, the following Boolean search terms were used: ("Attitude-Behavio*" OR "Attitude-Behavio*" OR "green gap" OR "value-action" OR "value-action") AND (gap OR discrepant* OR disconnect OR align*) AND (green OR ethical OR eco* OR sustainab* OR environment* OR organic*) AND (purchas* OR consum* OR buy*) AND (paradox* OR "paradox theory") AND ("consumer*" OR "consumer behavio*") AND (tension* OR dilemma* OR dissonance) AND (sensemak* OR "make sense" OR rationali* OR cope OR "coping").

The use of Boolean operators, such as AND and OR and truncation (*) allows all the possible studies to be found in the initial search. For instance, by using AND, the search includes all of the terms, whereas OR includes either one of the terms and truncations, such as behavio*, allow the results to consist of both "behaviour" and "behavior". Furthermore, to account for conceptual variation in the literature, the search string also included multiple synonymous terms for green, such as ethical, eco, sustainable, environmental and organic. As mentioned in Chapter One, these terms were treated under the umbrella of "green consumption" for the purpose of this review. This approach ensured a comprehensive retrieval of relevant literature without compromising thematic consistency during synthesis. However, original terminology used by authors was retained during the reporting of findings to preserve the integrity of the source material and avoid misrepresentation.

Prior to commencing the screening process in the next section, timeframes were applied to the search string across the databases. Sharma et al. (2023), in their review, stated that the green purchase research gained tremendous momentum after 2000; hence, their review included articles between 2000–2021.

Similarly, the timeframe for this research was set to 2000–2024. Thus, a total of 522 references were found between EBSCO (205), Scopus (110), and Emerald Insight (207) from the initial sample. All the results from the literature search across the databases were exported into EndNote 20.

3.4 Arranging

The initial stage of the arranging process begins with screening each paper from the initial sample and reviewing them by title, abstract, and keywords to identify their relevance to the SLR objectives, language, journal quality, and time frame; these are known as the inclusion/exclusion criteria (Paul et al., 2021). Table 1 details the process of filtering the academic articles, and the following sub-section details the inclusion/exclusion process of the SLR.

3.4.1 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

According to Meline (2006), the inclusion/exclusion criteria determine the scope and validity of systematic reviews by defining which studies will be included or excluded and ensuring only relevant and high-quality research is included. Firstly, the EndNote file was exported into Covidence, a systematic literature review software, used by researchers to streamline the review processes. The software removed 77 duplicates automatically, which left 445 articles for the next screening process. As shown in the table below, articles not written in English were excluded. The decision to include only English-language articles was made to minimise the risk of misinterpretation and inaccuracies that may arise from language barriers in the data extraction process.

The choice to include only scholarly peer-reviewed articles was to ensure a high level of credibility and scholarly rigour. To further ensure that the articles are of high academic standard, this review only included articles published in A*, A and B rated academic peer-reviewed journals, as classified by the Australian Business Dean Council (ABDC) (Munro et al., 2023); thus, the articles that did not meet that criterion were excluded. The next step was the title/abstract screening; in this step, articles not relevant to the concept of green purchases defined in Chapter Two and the attitude–behaviour gap were removed according to their titles, abstracts and keywords. At this stage, 343 articles were identified to be irrelevant to the

review, resulting in 102 remaining eligible articles for the next stage of the arranging process, i.e., the full-text review.

Table 1

Justification of Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time frame	Articles published between 2000 and 2024	Articles published before 2000 and after this SLR is undertaken (until October 2024 – data extraction process)
Language	English	Any other language – to reduce the risk of potential mistranslations from its original language
Type of resource	Scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles	All resources that are not scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles.
Journal quality	A*, A and B ranked journals according to Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)	Journals that were ranked lower than B, or those not present on the ABDC list.
Relevance to SLR	Articles related to the key concepts of this review, i.e., attitude–behaviour gap of green purchases	Articles with little to no relevance to the attitude–behaviour gap of green purchases.
Methodology	All types of methodology are included.	None are excluded to enable useful insights through varying paradigms and perspectives.

3.4.2 Full-text Review

In this step, all key information was extracted from the remaining 102 articles through full-text reading. Similar to the previous screening step, articles were included if they were directly related to the attitude–behaviour gap in green purchases or if the research on green consumption highlighted a discrepancy between consumers’ favourable environmental attitudes and their actual purchase behaviour. If the articles were not relevant to these concepts, and thus would not contribute to the application of paradox theory to assess the data in the following sections and answer the research questions, they were removed by the exclusion criteria (Meline, 2006). After the full-text review process, 61 more articles that did not meet the criteria explained previously were eliminated, leaving a total of 41 articles for the final step of the SPAR-4-SLR process, i.e., assessing the data.

3.5 Assessing

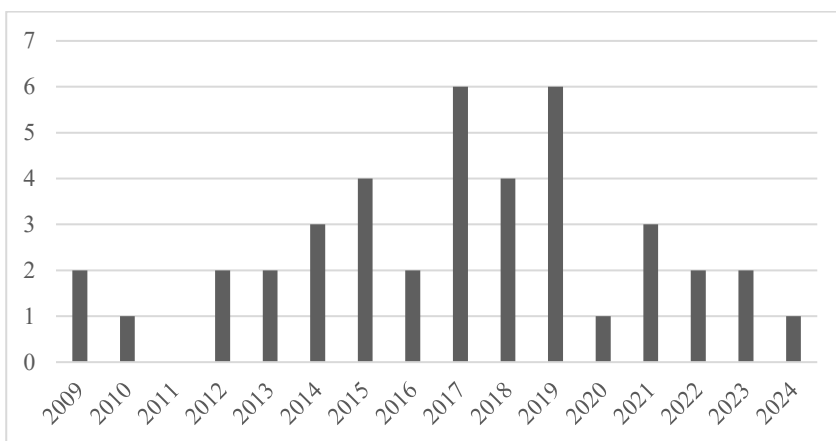
In this research, the articles are assessed in two ways, first through a descriptive analysis, followed by a thematic analysis to address both RQs.

3.5.1 Descriptive Analysis

This SLR followed the descriptive analysis steps by Munro et al. (2023). Similar to their SLR, the data set was summarised in terms of publication year, journal of publication, country of study, research methodology and specific area of green purchase behaviour studied. Hence, this sub-section provides a comprehensive analysis of the final 41 selected articles. Figure 2 indicates that the majority of the studies (40%) were published between 2017 and 2019, seeing sharp spikes during these years, while 2009–2014, a slow increase in article numbers can be seen. However, post-2019, there is a noticeable decline, with 2020 having the lowest count (1). Nonetheless, the rebound in the following years indicates that the attitude–behaviour gap research has been of interest among researchers throughout the years. Among the articles, 51% of the articles were published in the top three A-ranked journals – *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Journal of Marketing Management* (See Table 2).

Figure 2

Publication Dates of Articles



Note. Publication year of articles selected in this SLR.

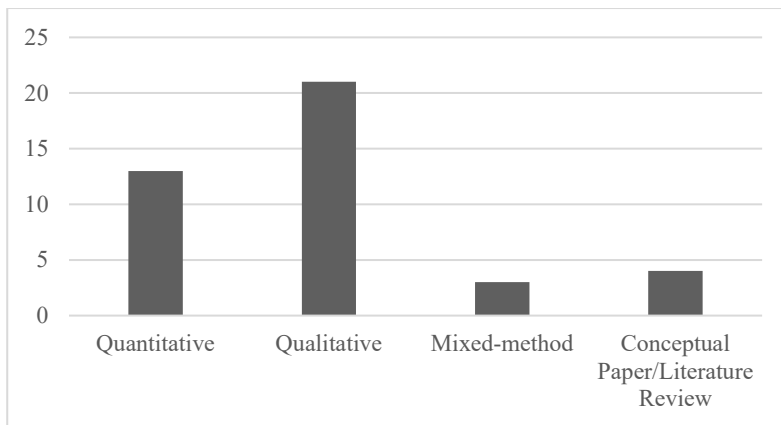
Table 2*Journal Titles and Ranking*

Title	Journal Ranking	Number of Articles
International Journal of Consumer Studies	A	8
Journal of Business Ethics	A	7
Journal of Marketing Management	A	6
Psychology & Marketing	A	3
European Journal of Marketing	A*	2
International Marketing Review	A	1
British Journal of Management	A	1
Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management	B	1
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	A*	1
Journal of Global Marketing	B	1
Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice	B	1
Journal of Public Policy & Marketing	A	1
Marketing Intelligence & Planning	A	1
Journal of Travel Research	A*	1
Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization	A*	1
Management Decision	B	1
Tourist Studies	B	1
Journal of Advertising	A	1
Journal of Consumer Marketing	A	1
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	A*	1

According to Table 3, research on the attitude–behaviour gap is dominated by behavioural, psychological, cognitive and decision-making theoretical lenses, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1991), the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen (1980), and Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger (1957). Figure 3 illustrates the research methods employed in the reviewed articles. It was revealed that the attitude–behaviour gap research is dominated by qualitative studies, accounting for 21 studies. Within the qualitative category, in-depth and semi-structured interviews were the most common, as utilised in 16 articles. The quantitative methods are represented in 13 studies. For quantitative studies, surveys and experimental methods – including laboratory and field experiments – were the most prevalent, with 8 articles. In order to integrate the quantitative and qualitative insights, the mixed-method approach has been adopted by researchers to understand the attitude–behaviour gap in 4 studies. Conceptual papers and literature reviews were also conducted to synthesise the literature.

Table 3*Theoretical Lenses of the Selected Studies*

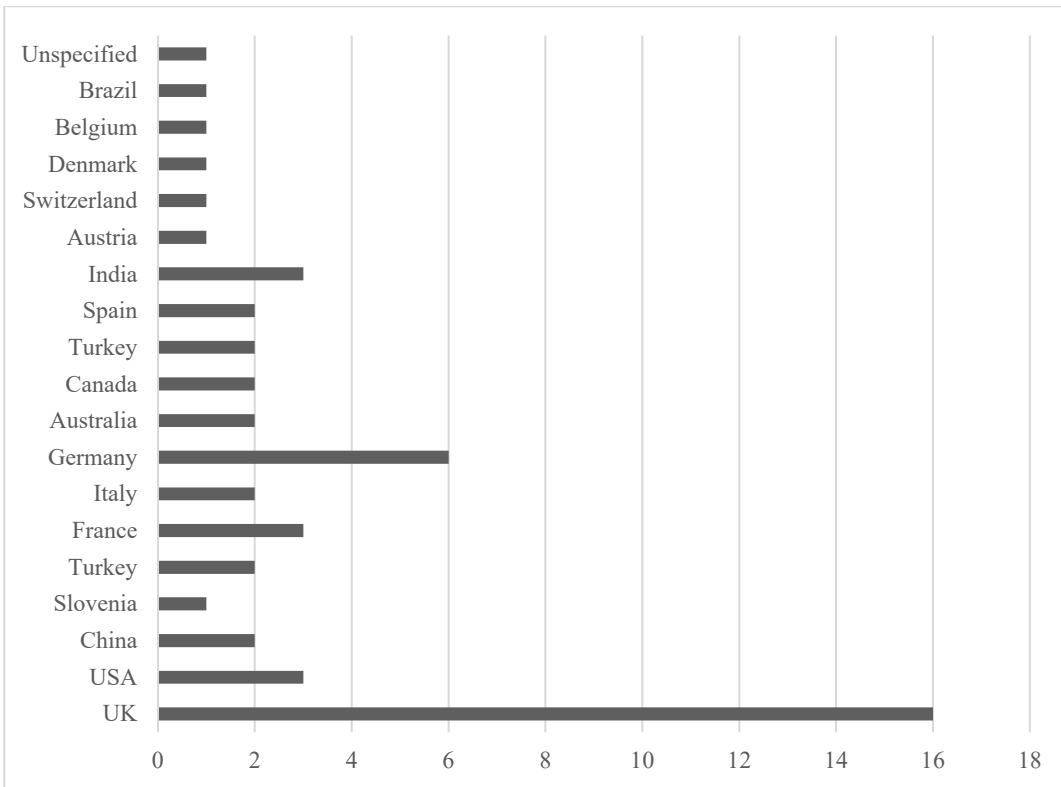
Theoretical Lenses	Number of articles
Behavioural, Psychological, Cognitive and Decision-Making Theories	15
Social and Cultural Theories	4
Moral Philosophy and Ethical Theories	3
Motivation, Values and Action Regulation Theories	5
Institutional and Structural Theories	2
Communication Theories	1
None	12

Figure 3*Methodology of the Articles*

Note. Methodology of the articles selected in this SLR.

Figure 4 shows the geographical distribution of the investigation of the attitude–behaviour gap. Some studies explored multiple geographical locations in their studies. With 16, there is a significant concentration of research in the United Kingdom (UK), followed by Germany with 6. The review and conceptual papers were conducted without a direct geographical focus; hence, they are classified as “unspecified”. In terms of the type of green product investigated, most studies (46%) explored broader pro-environmental behaviours rather than exploring a specific aspect. Organic/Fair Trade products and sustainable/ethical fashion come second (17% each), indicating a moderately strong interest from scholars (See Figure 5). From the descriptive analysis, several gaps were identified in terms of methodology, theoretical underpinning and country of study, which are further discussed in Chapter Five.

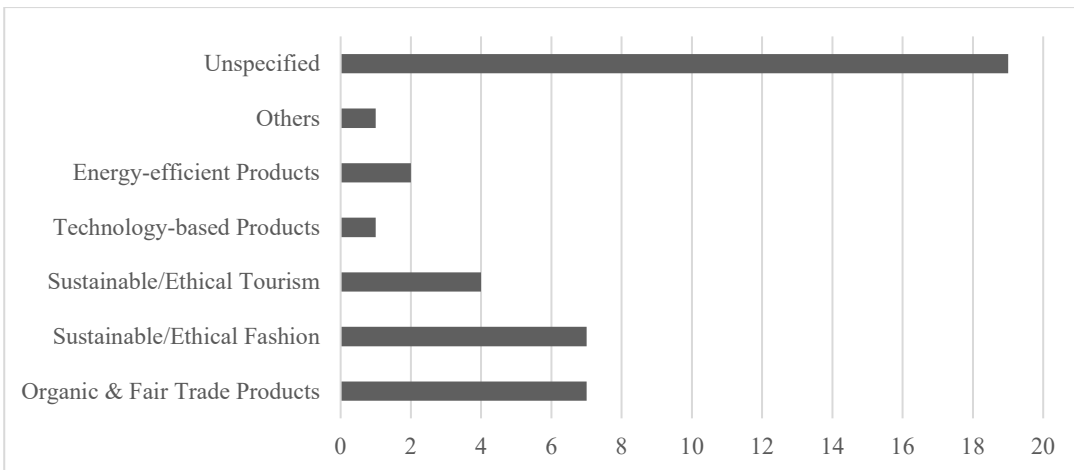
Figure 4*Geographical Distribution*



Note. Countries where the study took place; some studies included multiple countries in their studies.

Figure 5

Types of Green Products Studied



Note. Specific areas of green purchased studied in the selected articles.

3.5.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method used in qualitative research to uncover, examine and interpret recurring patterns or “themes” within the qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme reflects “something important about the data regarding the research question” (p. 82). Utilising thematic analysis allows researchers to interpret findings and draw conclusions about the existing body of knowledge on a topic (Paul et al., 2021). Additionally, Braun and Clarke (2006) established 6 steps to conducting a thematic analysis, as outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Procedures of Thematic Analysis in this SLR

Phases	Overview of the procedures
Familiarise yourself with your data	Highlighting the main ideas in the full-text review process and comparing studies in Covidence software
Generating initial codes	Conducting open coding by identifying codes manually
Searching for themes	Organising the codes with similar patterns and meaning
Reviewing themes	Comparing and reviewing the codes and studies in an Excel spreadsheet
Defining and naming themes	Merging, splitting and renaming the codes
Producing the report	Presenting and writing up the themes and codes (Chapter 4)

With thematic analysis, the researcher initially familiarises themselves with the data by highlighting and comparing the studies. Next, key information is extracted from all the final articles, addressing both RQ1 and RQ2 through open coding. The subsequent step involves organising the codes into conceptually related themes, followed by reviewing, combining, and renaming them to ensure clearer synthesis. In this process, overlapping codes were merged, and the ambiguous ones were reassessed by examining the supporting data across studies. As this was a single author study, reflexivity was maintained by re-reading the coded extracts multiple times and discussing analytical findings with the supervisor multiple times to establish trustworthiness. Finally, a total of 23 codes (4 themes) for RQ1 and 13 codes (2 themes) for RQ2 were identified across the final articles, as shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5*Codes and Themes for RQ1*

Themes	Codes
Knowledge-based Tensions	Scepticism despite green desire; confusion and lack of education; engagement vs disengagement; knowledge vs external barriers; information overload; psychological and geographical distance; and green desire vs consumerism
Sociocultural Tensions	Green identity vs social pressures; care for self vs community; minimalism vs consumerism; family influence on green consumption; intrapersonal vs interpersonal roles; and cultural, generational and demographic factors
Goal-conflict Tensions	Social vs environmental benefits; green satisfaction vs new needs; green attitude vs pleasure-seeking; competing health goals; and green attitudes vs personal costs
Practical and Systemic Tensions	Price and income barriers; product availability; product aesthetics, features and quality; individual desire vs systemic barriers; and government policies

Table 6*Codes and Themes for RQ2*

Themes	Codes
Paradoxical Sensemaking Approach (Both/And Logic)	Acknowledgement of inconsistent behaviour; emotional dimensions; splitting consumption habits; projecting unsustainable behaviours; neutralisation and denial; and belief–social feedback alignment
Sensemaking Through Business Case Framing and “Either/Or” Logic	Dichotomous thinking; prioritising price and affordability; prioritising personal satisfaction; practical vs environmental benefits trade-offs; completely altering habits; self-efficacy and societal stigmas

Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Preface

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings from the thematic analysis of extant literature to address RQ1 (What are the consumer tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap?) and RQ2 (How do consumers make sense of these tensions?). Section 4.1 begins with a detailed report of the findings from the thematic analysis, explaining the recurring patterns and themes in the literature for each research question.

4.1 Findings for RQ1

RQ1: What are the consumer tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap?

For RQ1, the analysis revealed 4 major themes or tensions that contribute to the attitude–behaviour gap in consumers. The details of the findings are presented below.

Theme 1: Knowledge-based Tensions

From the analysis, this theme comprises seven codes that illustrate how knowledge-related conflicts create tensions among consumers. The extant literature suggested that consumers' knowledge-based tensions arise from scepticism despite green desire, confusion and lack of education, engagement vs disengagement, knowledge vs external barriers, information overload, psychological and geographical distance, and green desire vs consumerism.

Firstly, consumers' pro-environmental attitudes were hindered by scepticism and distrust. Consumers expressed confusion regarding the concept of green products (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009) and green claims, such as "25% recycled plastic" and "Water Aid", which appeared vague and challenging to interpret (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018). This scepticism extended to doubting the integrity of corporations' green efforts as consumers were sceptical of profit-driven sustainability initiatives (Bly et al., 2015) and ethical labels (Carey & Cervellon, 2014), viewing such activities as greenwashing (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). Moreover, this is further amplified by the excessive green claims by companies (Longo et al., 2019), as consumers lack knowledge or confidence to navigate sustainable options (Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015). Consumers also questioned the validity of the premium pricing for ethical products, causing tensions regarding whether they benefit the producers or the environment or serve as mere marketing tactics. These

concerns underscored a demand for transparency in ethical certifications and financial flows (Moraes et al., 2012).

As consumers become more health-conscious and engaged in green lifestyles, the value for money increases (Frank & Brock, 2018). Moreover, Burke et al. (2014) discovered that consumers are confused about the information, impact and concept of ethical products; some lack an association between food consumption and environmental degradation (Falcão & Roseira, 2022). Lack of education and pro-environmental capabilities also emerge as factors contributing to the attitude–behaviour gap (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018). Trust and support for local producers also played a role in shaping consumer engagement in sustainability. However, when the producers fail to meet their expectations, they quickly disengage (Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015).

Next, tensions also stem from knowledge versus external barriers, where consumers' willingness to adopt sustainable products is constrained by high costs, financial risks, and lack of universal ethical standards (Bly et al., 2015; Essiz et al., 2023; Frank & Brock, 2018). Frank and Brock (2018) further pointed out that in low-involvement products (e.g., pasta), consumers may opt for green options; however, in high-involvement products (e.g., wine), there are higher financial risk perceptions. Consumers also face tensions from information overload regarding their green knowledge. Knowledge creates confusion for consumers in navigating the complexities (Falcão & Roseira, 2022); individuals deeply committed to sustainability suffer from information overload, causing burdens and restraining effects rather than helping them navigate the green options and attain their sustainability goals (Longo et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Falcão and Roseira (2022) revealed that tensions arise when consumers are psychologically disconnected and geographically distant from problems happening in the world, leading to inconsistencies and reduced perceived responsibility in green behaviours because such issues are not directly visible to them; they cannot see the impact of their actions (Bly et al., 2015; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). According to Moruzzi and Sirieix (2015), consumers who actively engage in organic food consumption feel connected with their local food networks and producers but isolated from broader consumer culture. This entails a tension between consumers adapting their consumption habits and wanting to maintain their sense of self as consumers. Janssen and Vanhamme (2015) added that consumers faced tensions when CSR initiatives challenged their assumptive benevolent world, resisting learning unsettling information about the harms non-green or ethical products cause.

Overall, the literature demonstrates strong convergence around internal, cognitive drivers of the attitude–behaviour gap, particularly in how consumers experience confusion, scepticism, knowledge limitations and information overload. These tensions arise when consumers, despite their pro-environmental values or attitudes, struggle to decode or trust sustainability-related information. On the other hand, divergence appears as researchers also noted an interaction of the cognitive aspects and the external barriers, such as product costs, ambiguous ethical standards, maintaining consumer identity and consumerism. This means that green consumption can be informed yet constrained due to these barriers.

Theme 2: Sociocultural Tensions

The analysis revealed that consumers face sociocultural tensions leading to the attitude–behaviour gap. This theme comprises six codes – green identity vs social pressures, cultural, generational and demographic factors, care for self vs community, minimalism vs consumerism, family influence on green consumption and intrapersonal vs interpersonal roles.

Firstly, a significant tension was the reluctance of individuals to act on their personal concerns about sustainability unless they observed similar green efforts from others. This hesitation is driven by social norms, with consumers being averse to limiting others' freedom of choice (Falcão & Roseira, 2022). The gap between consumers' attitudes and behaviours widened when their sustainable actions were not visible, or they failed to display altruistic behaviour publicly, known as signalling and competitive altruism (Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015). For instance, Johnstone and Hooper (2016) showed that one of the participants stopped using reusable coffee cups as she faced discomfort when she forgot to bring her reusable coffee cup, which would affect his/her positive green image in public.

In sustainable fashion contexts, social pressures make consumers prioritise appearance and peer approval, often at the expense of eco-friendly ideals (Cairns et al., 2022). Moreover, consumers may feel less responsible for their non-sustainable choices in larger group dynamics, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the bystander apathy effect (Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015). This revealed that these pro-environmental behaviours were often performed more as a display of social responsibility rather than a genuine commitment to environmental values.

Meenakshi (2020) studied the adoption of sustainable menstrual products (SMPs) and the sociocultural stigmas surrounding menstruation in India. Their study revealed that since menstruation is

socially constructed as a shameful act associated with secrecy, Indian women were reluctant to adopt them despite caring about the environment. Actions such as washing, drying and reusing menstrual products expose women to potential embarrassment and scrutiny, which is amplified in male-dominated households. They expressed fears about breaking these societal norms and moral boundaries and preferred avoiding conflicts within households.

More cultural differences in sustainability include higher prices, which signifies quality in the UK but also symbolises social status in France. Additionally, in Canada, consumers view sustainable fashion as less accessible (Carey & Cervellon, 2014). In terms of gender influence, Essiz et al. (2023) discovered that the attitude–behaviour gap is more expansive in men compared to women due to women having more green knowledge and lower risk aversion. Generational factors also played a role as a study on Gen Y consumers showed their preference for fast fashion over sustainability as they are cheap, and Gen Y consumers prefer social status and approval (Pauluzzo & Mason, 2022).

Secondly, consumers recognise their individual responsibility for environmental and social change but are compelled by their current life stages where they have to prioritise themselves (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018), causing tensions between care for oneself versus the community (Shaw et al., 2016). Moreover, some consumers want to embrace their green identity by trying to live outside mainstream consumerism culture, but these values conflict with societal pressures (Kropfeld et al., 2018).

Research also suggested that family influence plays a significant role in causing tensions and influencing green consumption behaviours. Family members have to negotiate with their partners and children for their choice of goods. In the research by Szmigin et al. (2009), one consumer tried to purchase ethically but succumbed to the pressures of their significant others. Consumers also face tensions where their individual green identities or desires compete with the multiple roles they play in society and its demands. For this, Longo et al. (2019) mentioned that family influence plays an important factor in influencing individuals' sustainable habits in either adopting or not choosing green options (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016).

As for some consumers, having children led them to care about sustainability with the fear of the future their children would have to live in, but for others, becoming parents led to busier lifestyles, making them prioritise time, convenience and product availability over green options (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018). This is supported by Hales and Caton (2017), as for consumers, providing care for proximal others overshadowed their long-term and environmental considerations. Valor and Carrero (2014) revealed the

intrapersonal and interpersonal roles versus green identity conflict, where consumers have to play multiple roles in society, such as being responsible consumers and competent family members or workers (Frank, 2018; Tanner et al., 2021; Valor & Carrero, 2014), leading to discrepancies between their attitudes and behaviour.

In essence, most studies agreed that sociocultural factors – social norms, cultural values, gender expectations, generational identity, and family dynamics create tensions, causing the attitude–behaviour gap. However, divergence occurred as researchers found that the sociocultural tensions also interacted with practical aspects, such as preferring price, quality, etc. Consumers’ green identity can also conflict with multiple roles they have to play in society (interpersonal vs intrapersonal), which leads to tensions. Moreover, even for the identity vs role conflicts, for instance, parenthood led some consumers to greener lifestyles, while others disengaged or conformed to the expectations. This showed the significance of sociocultural factors in not only shaping tensions but also affecting sensemaking, which RQ2 will detail.

Theme 3: Goal-conflict Tensions

This theme includes five codes that illustrate tensions when consumers predominantly face conflicting goals and priorities. The codes are social vs environmental benefits, green satisfaction vs new needs, green attitude vs pleasure-seeking, competing health goals and green attitudes vs personal costs.

The findings revealed the complexity of navigating between choosing either social or environmental benefits when making responsible purchase decisions, which causes tensions. Longo et al. (2019) mentioned that consumers struggled when choosing Fair Trade beans from Kenya, which benefits the local farmers but damages the environment (long-distance transportation), creating tensions. Likewise, buying one product while leaving another causes confusion (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009) and buying fast fashion is unsustainable, but reducing production of these products means more people will lose their jobs (Ozdamar Ertekin et al., 2020). Frank and Brock (2019) discovered the phenomenon known as “green cannibalism”, where support for one sustainability motive detracted from others. In the research, it was found that consumers motivated by localism prioritised buying local groceries over organic or Fair Trade options, creating internal conflicts between competing sustainability goals.

Next, consumers who are too ecologically aware, are initially satisfied with their sustainable efforts, but this develops new needs and goals which create increasing pressure for them to adopt progressively more

sustainable and environmentally friendly practices (Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015). Additionally, tourists expressed strong support for sustainable tourism but prioritised enjoyment, relaxation and escapism when travelling (Dolnicar et al., 2017). Moreover, Frank and Brock (2018) revealed that health-conscious consumers doubt the quality of low-price green products, showing the conflict between their green goals and health goals.

Additionally, another prominent tension comprised balancing ethical or environmental benefits with personal costs, depicting a tension between personal benefit versus commitment to sustainability.

Consumers' decision to engage in responsible behaviours involves negotiating between their ethical ideals and the perceived sacrifices required to uphold them (Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015). Consumers who engage in responsible consumption recognise their limitations in being consistent; if they do not act sustainably, it is due to reasons such as convenience (Burke et al., 2014; McEachern et al., 2010; Szmigin et al., 2009).

Moruzzi and Sirieix (2015) also revealed that consumers balance time and cost efficiency, perceiving sustainable consumption as time-consuming or expensive. It was also revealed that some green behaviours were more popular than others, as they were less costly (Binder & Blankenberg, 2017). The authors discovered that consumers might engage in low-cost behaviours, such as turning off the tap water while brushing their teeth, while ignoring the environmental aspects of high-cost behaviours, such as taking fewer flights. As these consumers were green in only one specific aspect but not in other areas, McDonald et al. (2012) called them "selectors". This is related to personal benefits, such as consuming irresponsibly because it is the end of the month, the mood consumers are in and convenience (Longo et al., 2019; Szmigin et al., 2009).

In summary, there is convergence in recognising that consumers' tensions arise from competing priorities and sustainability goals (e.g., social vs environmental, sustainability vs personal gratification, ethical ideals vs personal costs). However, divergence emerges in how consumers respond to these tensions, as some escalate their sustainability efforts over time (pressure to do more), whereas others fall back; this is due to having too much green knowledge. This also shows the complexity of how tensions arise and how consumers make sense of these tensions – the latter will be detailed in RQ2.

Theme 4: Practical and Systemic Tensions

This theme underscores the tensions stemming from practical and systematic barriers. In this theme, there are five codes – price and income barriers, product availability, product aesthetics, features and quality, individual desire vs systemic barriers and government policies. The first tension stems from the price of green products. Many consumers expressed a desire to adopt green practices; however, high prices rendered these options inaccessible (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Moraes et al., 2012; Szmigin et al., 2009). Ethical considerations were overshadowed by financial limitations, as affordability remained a top priority for consumers (Carey & Cervellon, 2014). Even for individuals who strongly exhibited eco-friendly behaviours, the cost of green products often led them to prefer conventional and less expensive alternatives (Cairns et al., 2022). The influence of income levels on green consumption further underscored the disparity.

Chowdhury and Samuel (2014) revealed that high-income consumers are more likely to consider energy-efficient products, yet the majority still preferred affordability over environmental benefits. For low-income individuals, it was found that the preference for affordability still existed in both affluent and developing countries, such as Denmark and Thailand (Falcão & Roseira, 2022). Another critical barrier to the adoption of green products was the limited availability despite consumers wanting to act more sustainably (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009). Shaw et al. (2016) pointed out that consumers reported difficulties due to a lack of Fair Trade items across product sectors. For cleaner energy solutions, the absence of credit facilities and long payback periods significantly hindered adoption (Falcão & Roseira, 2022). Product aesthetics and quality considerations further complicated the sustainable consumption. Many consumers prioritised aesthetics and style over ethical considerations, particularly in sectors like fashion (Carey & Cervellon, 2014).

Ethical fashion was often perceived as aesthetically limiting or dull, and its limited sizing and style options deterred consumers (Cairns et al., 2022). Ozdamar Ertekin et al. (2020) discovered that the logic of art and commerce and their heavy reliance on aesthetics, in which fast fashion mimics luxury and trendy designs at low prices, conflicts with the logic of sustainability. Additionally, the quality and practicality of green products, such as overripe Fair Trade bananas or complex labelling systems, further amplified the tensions leading to the attitude–behaviour gap (Carey & Cervellon, 2014; Chowdhury & Samuel, 2014; Falcão & Roseira, 2022; Szmigin et al., 2009). When consumers are unable to purchase sustainably despite

their favourable attitudes due to practical limitations, it causes inner tension as they are torn between their ideals and daily reality (allowing flexibility for green options versus control) (Longo et al., 2019).

Research by Chatzidakis and Shaw (2018) showed that tensions also arise at urban and national levels. In the former, local marketplaces and urban planning failed to facilitate effective consumer-producer coordination, leaving consumers constrained by the prevailing logic of the marketplace exchange. In the latter, neoliberal policies and growth-driven economic models conflicted with environmental preservation, shifting the emphasis from care to efficiency. Capitalism and consumerism also played significant roles in perpetuating unsustainable practices, as many consumers linked their inability to adopt sustainable behaviours to dissatisfaction with the capitalist system, which they perceived as prioritising profit over ecological responsibility (McDonald et al., 2012; Valor et al., 2018).

Furthermore, government policies reinforced these systemic challenges, as consumers noted that policy frameworks fuelled excessive consumption cycles, making it difficult for individuals to break free from the pressures to buy more (Bly et al., 2015). Some consumers wanted to purchase sustainably, but the lack of clear action plans posed more barriers (Kropfeld et al., 2018). These systemic oppositions impeded consumers' ability to align their attitudes and behaviours.

In essence, the literature shows that consumers want to be sustainable but are limited by practical constraints and systemic barriers. Generally, researchers agreed on price, quality, taste, and availability of the products, limiting the greener purchases. However, divergence within the literature occurred as these practical constraints also tend to interact with consumers' green identity, causing tensions. In addition, systemic barriers, such as government policies, capitalism, also play a significant role in contributing to the attitude-behaviour gap. Moreover, it was also found that income level may not be influential, as affluent consumers also tend to prefer affordability. This, once again, showed the complexity of tensions leading to the attitude-behaviour gap.

4.1 Findings for RQ2

RQ2: How do consumers make sense of these tensions?

For RQ2, the analysis uncovered 2 themes or sensemaking mechanisms consumers employ to mitigate the tensions. The details of the findings are presented below.

Theme 1: Paradoxical Sensemaking Approach (Both/And Logic)

The analysis revealed 6 codes that represent how consumers with a paradoxical approach make sense of the tensions. The codes include acknowledgement of inconsistent behaviour, emotional dimensions, splitting consumption habits, projecting unsustainable behaviours, neutralisation and denial, and belief–social feedback alignment. Firstly, consumers excessively acknowledged their inconsistencies in green consumption practices, as they framed their behaviours as part of an evolving journey rather than striving for unattainable perfection (Moraes et al., 2012). Szmigin et al. (2009) mentioned the prominent role of cognitive dissonance as consumers openly accepted the contradictions between their ethical principles and actual behaviours. However, in the study by Longo et al. (2019), one of the participants accepted their repeated unsustainable behaviour, such as purchasing mass-produced clothing, as a step towards gradual improvement. Similarly, consumers acknowledged their behaviours and expressed guilt for not being entirely ethical and continued to live with the inconsistencies (McEachern et al., 2010).

The emotional dimensions are complex, involving guilt, pride, stress and frustration. Most importantly, guilt emerged as the most common emotion, where consumers felt responsible for supporting unethical practices, and they found that it was impossible to avoid all non-environmentally friendly attributes (e.g., plastic packaging) (Cairns et al., 2022; McEachern et al., 2010). Given the scale of environmental issues, consumers were overwhelmed and demotivated to act (Cairns et al., 2022). Valor and Carrero (2014) revealed that being unable to perform their sustainability ideals, consumers also expressed stress and frustration because they felt that their efforts were not enough, resulting in burnout when there is no effective coping mechanism (Valor et al., 2018). The authors added the normalisation of guilt by some consumers, i.e., accepting occasional non-compliance as inevitable due to several systemic constraints. The authors also mentioned that consumers leveraged “moral batteries” – balancing frustration with hope and pride – to align their sustainability goals. Positive emotions, such as pride, reinforced sustainable behaviours by providing a

sense of agency and accomplishment. Moreover, guilt can also serve as a motivator for corrective actions, such as avoiding wasteful consumption or engaging in ethical purchasing (Luchs et al., 2015).

Furthermore, research also discovered that consumers took corrective actions and adopted new habits like participating in production-engaged activities (communal gardening), buying second-hand clothing, prioritising local organic food and purchasing high-quality, durable items instead of mass-produced products (Bly et al., 2015; Cairns et al., 2022; Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Moraes et al., 2012; Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015). Tourists employed methods such as taking overland trips to avoid flying, cycling, walking and opting for low-scale accommodations (Caruana et al., 2020; Hanna & Adams, 2019). Some limited their sustainable consumption efforts to specific products, hence allowing flexibility in their actions (Bly et al., 2015; Valor et al., 2018).

Next, Cairns et al. (2022) revealed that consumers felt that consumerism and capitalist systems limited their abilities to act sustainably, projecting their behaviour on external forces (Bly et al., 2015; McDonald et al., 2012; Valor et al., 2018). Some criticised those who enforce sustainability norms, compared their unsustainable actions to worse behaviours by others, and blamed the victims, denoting them as “unworthy” (Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014; Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015). Others engaged in moral accounting, expecting ethical standards from brands and underscoring the need for collective action, positing that the significance of their individual sacrifices is contingent upon others reciprocating and engaging in similar efforts to reconcile their behaviour (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016).

While generally committed to their values, consumers also expressed the “minimal impact” argument, rationalising that their small actions were inadequate to address the larger systemic problems, or used neutralisation strategies, such as the defence of necessity, framing their non-sustainable choices as unavoidable (Cairns et al., 2022; Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014; Valor & Carrero, 2014). Moreover, individuals adopted distancing and avoidance strategies, such as abandoning unsustainable producers, avoiding perceived threats to their worldview, framing the issues as distant, delaying ethical purchase decisions until informed choices can be made and detaching emotionally by choosing not to feel guilt (Cairns et al., 2022; Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016; Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015; Valor et al., 2018). Hanna and Adams (2019) identified different types of denial – literal, interpretive and implicatory. Literal denial included dismissing the issues as exaggerated, while interpretive denial involved downplaying

the relevance of the problems. Consumers with implicative denial utilised moral licensing, such as flying for eco-friendly holidays, i.e., accepting but minimising their own actions.

Lastly, according to Johnstone and Hooper (2016), sustainable consumption is an alignment of personal goals, beliefs, and social expectations. Misalignment between these values leads to the attitude–behaviour gap (Zollo, 2024). Consumers balanced and integrated their personal sustainability goals with social expectations: for instance, adjusting grocery shopping habits to avoid public confrontation with significant others to maintain household harmony and guilt over forgetting to bring reusable cups, which would affect their green image (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). Similarly, consumers also aligned their personal goals with collective sustainability norms, such as joining sustainability groups for practical and emotional support of their sustainable actions (Valor et al., 2018), observing others’ behaviours to make sense of their own green consumption habits (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016), and peer-to-peer interactions, which created a normalisation of sustainable behaviours while educating and influencing each other’s green behaviours (Moraes et al., 2012).

Through deradicalisation, consumers simplify decision-making, act sustainably occasionally and compartmentalise their green behaviour to maintain the balance between personal values and social pressures (Valor et al., 2018). Moreover, consumers’ upbringing and family influence also played a significant role in shifts from consumerist to sustainable lifestyles (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). Regarding fast fashion, it was revealed that consumers purchase these products in order to gain social validation by posting on social media, choosing social validation over ethical attributes (Cairns et al., 2022).

In summary, the literature has shown that consumers can hold contradictory values. However, rather than cognitively resolving these tensions as the cognitive dissonance theory suggests, consumers chose to live alongside these tensions. This suggests that consumers adopt the paradoxical approach (“both/and logic”) to make sense of these tensions. Moreover, as previously mentioned in RQ1, in this theme, sociocultural factors also play an important factor in helping consumers make sense of the tensions.

Theme 2: Sensemaking Through Business Case Framing and “Either/Or” Logic

In this theme, which is composed of seven codes, consumers predominantly used business case framing and “either/or” logic to make sense of the tensions. The codes consist of dichotomous thinking, prioritising price and affordability, prioritising personal satisfaction, practical vs environmental benefits trade-offs, completely altering habits, self-efficacy and societal stigmas. For the first code, through business case framing, Lu and Sinha (2019) revealed that highly dichotomous consumers adopted a finance-oriented approach, choosing cheaper products over sustainable ones due to social desirability. Similarly, research has also found that affordability is stated as the main reason for choosing non-sustainable items (Cairns et al., 2022). Utility maximisation further shaped sensemaking, with consumers acting responsibly when personal benefits, such as cost savings or convenience, outweighed perceived drawbacks like reduced product performance or higher prices (Luchs et al., 2015).

Consumers’ interests often outweighed sustainability considerations in their purchase decisions. Consumers sought information that validated their existing attitudes and choices while downplaying contradictory evidence (Schlaile et al., 2018). Cairns et al. (2022) revealed that some consumers adopted a narrow and streamlined pragmatic approach, buying non-sustainable products because “I want it, so I bought it”. Despite experiencing inner conflict, consumers justified their unsustainable consumption by preferring personal satisfaction, such as buying farmed salmon (Longo et al., 2019) and prioritising personal or family needs over societal values (Valor & Carrero, 2014). This theme highlights how consumers navigate between environmental attributes and practical limitations despite eco-friendly attitudes.

Furthermore, Moraes et al. (2012) revealed that cost constraints or preferences for taste often took precedence over green attributes. These compromises or trade-offs were evident in the attitude–behaviour gap, where consumers reduced overall consumption but justified increased spending as a means to balance their ethical values without experiencing guilt or anxiety (Hiller & Woodall, 2019). Due to the difficulty of sourcing all their green needs in one place, consumers made compromises between convenience and environmental benefits (McEachern et al., 2010). Bly et al. (2015) discovered that consumers also utilised past knowledge to navigate the trade-offs between product quality, ethical attributes and affordability. Hence, consumers balanced their moral aspirations with economic limitations as a “manageable compromise” (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009).

In addition, research also found that consumers would go to extreme levels, such as switching careers, abandoning groups that conflict with their sustainability goals, and finding new friends or partners who share similar goals (Valor & Carrero, 2014). Additionally, Luchs et al. (2015) revealed that consumers also opted for more costly green items as a form of prioritising others' benefits over themselves. Individuals with high commitment utilise the concept of "green fit", where they purchase products that align with their green motives. These adjustments and problem-solving strategies help consumers achieve their sustainability goals according to Valor et al. (2018), thus aligning their values and actions. Conversely, Mai et al. (2021) discovered that consumers who are motivated by helping others, purchase green products initially but later develop a practical and pragmatic approach (business case framing) due to a decline in self-efficacy (Wang et al., 2023). In a similar manner, consumers might choose the conventional counterparts due to social approval, validation and societal stigmas despite recognising the importance of sustainable products (Meenakshi, 2020).

To sum up, literature shown that consumers can also adopt a streamlined or pragmatic approach ("either/or" logic), preferring price, convenience, personal satisfaction, etc. However, researchers also found that using the same logic, consumers may also go to extreme levels by abandoning their existing social groups to pursue more sustainable habits or using their green knowledge to make purchase decisions. Similarly, sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping consumers' sensemaking mechanisms in this theme.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Preface

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesise the findings presented in the previous chapter alongside theoretical contributions and propositions to answer the two research questions developed in this study. Next, practical implications are detailed based on the findings. The chapter then details the possible research avenues for future researchers based on the gaps identified in the literature. Next, the limitations of this systematic literature review are mentioned. Finally, the conclusion section summarises the purpose, the findings from the literature and the contributions for academics, practitioners and policymakers.

5.1 Discussion of RQ1

RQ1: What are the consumers' tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap in green purchases?

Figure 6

Tensions in the Consumer Attitude–Behaviour Gap

<p>Learning::Belonging</p> <p>The interplay between knowledge and maintaining identities and sense of self.</p>	<p>Learning</p> <p>The conflict between existing green attitudes and scepticism, knowledge gaps and confusion about new knowledge and adaptation.</p>	<p>Learning::Organising</p> <p>Rivalry between systematic barriers and knowledge.</p>
<p>Belonging</p> <p>The conflict between individual identities and collective pressures and norms.</p>	<p>Belonging::Organising</p> <p>Conflict between identities and systemic barriers.</p> <p>Performing::Learning</p> <p>Conflicting demands and knowledge.</p>	<p>Organising</p> <p>The interplay of consumers' desire to be green versus systematic limitations.</p>
<p>Belonging::Performing</p> <p>The rivalry between green identity versus social demands and roles.</p>	<p>Performing</p> <p>Tensions stemming from conflicting priorities and goals.</p>	<p>Performing::Organising</p> <p>The conflict between demands and actual performance.</p>

Note. Adapted from “Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing,” by W. K. Smith and M. W. Lewis, 2011, *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), p. 381–403. Copyright by Academy of Management Review.

The analysis revealed four major themes of tensions that contribute to the attitude–behaviour gap: cognitive and knowledge-based tensions, sociocultural tensions, goal-conflict tensions, and practical and systematic tensions. By applying the paradoxical tensions described by Smith and Lewis (2011) – learning, belonging, performing and organising, this chapter further details the tensions through a theoretical perspective. This SLR has also made several contributions to paradox theory, which is discussed below by summarising the findings.

5.1.1 Contributions to Paradox Theory

One of the first contributions was that this research has extended the paradoxical lens applied in management and organisational behaviour studies into the realm of consumer behaviour, specifically in the attitude–behaviour gap. The paradoxical approach adopted in this SLR implies a new perspective that the inconsistencies between consumers’ attitudes and behaviours can be conflicting yet coexist, rather than a problem to be solved, leading to long-lasting tensions (Farrukh & Sajjad, 2023). Secondly, the existing literature on the attitude–behaviour gap and green consumption is dominated by the decision-making lens, such as the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), theory of reasoned action (TRA) and cognitive dissonance theory. This SLR posits that, through the paradoxical lens, the attitude–behaviour gap is a persistent issue where consumers’ contradictory attitudes and their behaviours co-exist, which leads to tensions, offering a unique approach to the attitude–behaviour gap, thus answering the call by Sharma et al. (2023).

Secondly, this study confirms the presence of all four tensions discussed by Smith and Lewis (2011) and their overlapping nature in the context of green consumer behaviour, enriching the paradox literature. The results of the analysis in Chapter Four revealed that the learning, belonging, performing and organising tensions arise independently but may overlap with one another, forming a complex network of tensions that contribute to the attitude–behaviour gap. The framework application can be seen below.

The thematic analysis has discovered that tensions exist independently among consumers, similar to the tensions in the organisational context. The majority of the literature mentioned consumer scepticism, confusion and knowledge gaps as the main causes of knowledge-based tensions (Bly et al., 2015; Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018). This extended to the concept of geographical and psychological distance, where consumers’ perceived responsibility declines the more geographically and psychologically distant they are from the issues (Bly et al., 2015; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016).

In contrast, research has also found that too much knowledge can lead to information overload and tensions. Knowledge creates confusion for consumers in navigating the complexities (Falcão & Roseira, 2022); individuals deeply committed to sustainability suffer from information overload, causing burdens and restraining effects rather than helping them navigate the green options and attain their sustainability goals (Longo et al., 2019). In such cases, knowing too much leads to tensions rather than knowledge gaps. Thus, consumers face learning tensions where their old knowledge conflicts with new information/knowledge (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

For sociocultural tensions, a recurring pattern was the influence of social approval, such as individuals only performing green behaviours when they enhance their green identities or opting for non-sustainable options for peer approval and product aesthetics (Cairns et al., 2022; Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015). Sociocultural influence is deemed one of the most influential factors causing tensions, as consumers might conform to community norms, practices, and cultural stigmas, including family practices and behaviours (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018; Kropfeld et al., 2018; Meenakshi, 2020; Pauluzzo & Mason, 2022; Szmigin et al., 2009). Thus, these tensions reflect belonging tensions where consumers' individual identities contradict collective pressures and norms (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Goal-conflict tensions tackle the competing priorities, demands and tasks consumers have to perform in society, such as choosing Fair Trade products for ethical benefits but environmental harms (Longo et al., 2019) and wanting to avoid fast fashion but being aware of job opportunities it creates (Ozdamar Ertekin et al., 2020). Hence, Moruzzi and Sirieix (2015) mentioned that sustainable consumption gives consumers a sense of satisfaction but creates new needs or goals. These tensions align with performing tensions where consumers face conflicting demands and priorities (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Structural barriers and economic constraints also contribute to the attitude-behaviour gap. Many studies cited that despite desires for green products, the environmental or ethical product attributes were still secondary to price, affordability and financial limitations (Carey & Cervellon, 2014; Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Moraes et al., 2012; Szmigin et al., 2009). The preference for price was evident in both high-income and low-income individuals (Chowdhury & Samuel, 2014); for the latter, it existed in both affluent and developing countries (Falcão & Roseira, 2022). Studies also mentioned product availability, aesthetics and quality (Carey & Cervellon, 2014; Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009). Conversely, aside from tensions at the consumers' personal levels, broader systemic issues, such as neoliberal policies, government

policies, the logic of commerce, capitalism and consumerism, fuelled these tensions (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018; McDonald et al., 2012; Valor et al., 2018). These express organising tensions, i.e., allowing flexibility for sustainable options but controlled by systemic barriers (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

The interplay between these tensions was also discovered, which also aligns with Smith and Lewis (2011). The interplay of learning::organising tensions occurs when consumers' knowledge of green products conflicts with systemic barriers, such as price (Frank & Brock, 2018). The learning::belonging tensions are evident when consumers change/innovate to more sustainable behaviours but feel isolated from the broader consumerism culture, depicting a rivalry between change and a sense of belonging (Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015) and the influence of gender on the attitude–behaviour gap, affected by risk aversion and green knowledge, i.e., identity versus knowledge (Essiz et al., 2023). For the overlap between belonging and organising tensions, Carey and Cervellon (2014) discovered that national culture can influence how a consumer perceives external and systemic factors. For instance, UK consumers perceive higher prices as higher quality, compared to higher social status for French consumers. If sustainable products do not align with these perceptions, the attitude–behaviour gap occurs.

When consumers face tensions that cause conflicts between maintaining their individual identities and multiple demands in society, performing::belonging tensions arise. For instance, consumers, despite wanting to be sustainable, opt for conventional counterparts due to convenience after becoming parents (Chatzidakis & Shaw, 2018; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016; Longo et al., 2019). The interplay between performing and learning tensions takes place when consumers' knowledge constraints compete with multiple demands, such as doubting the quality of an organic product to align with their health goals (Frank & Brock, 2018). Finally, when consumers face tensions between demands and their actual performance, performing::organising tensions occur. For instance, consumers must navigate between ethical ideals and personal convenience; choosing one over another involves personal sacrifices, hence leading to tensions (Burke et al., 2014; Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015; McEachern et al., 2010).

Based on these findings, the following propositions are developed:

Proposition 1. *Consumers experience learning tensions when their existing knowledge and new knowledge conflict, derived from scepticism, confusion, knowledge gap and information overload.*

Proposition 2. *Consumers experience belonging tensions when their individual identity conflicts with collective values, norms and practices, derived from sociocultural factors, such as social pressures, stigma and cultural factors.*

Proposition 3. *Consumers experience performing tensions when consumers face conflicting demands and priorities, derived from the roles they play in society, such as green customer versus interpersonal and intrapersonal roles.*

Proposition 4. *Consumers experience organising tensions when they desire to enable flexibility for sustainable consumption but are hindered by systemic barriers, such as price, availability, government policies and capitalism.*

Proposition 5. *These tensions can either manifest independently or interplay with each other, such as learning::organising, learning::belonging, learning::performing, belonging::performing, belonging::organising and performing::organising, hence forming a complex network affecting the attitude–behaviour gap.*

5.2 Discussion of RQ2

RQ2: How do consumers make sense of these tensions?

The analysis has revealed two themes detailing how consumers make sense of the tensions arising from the inconsistencies between their attitudes and behaviour: the paradoxical sensemaking approach (both/and logic) and sensemaking through business case framing and “either/or” logic. By applying the paradoxical lens, this research has also made several contributions to the sensemaking logic explored in the paradox literature, specifically the cognitive frames discussed by Hahn et al. (2014), paradoxical frames and business case frames and the defensive mechanisms described by Lewis (2000). The following subsection summarises the findings from Chapter Four and details the contributions to the cognitive frameworks.

5.2.1 Theoretical Contributions to Cognitive Frameworks

The first contribution was that the cognitive frames are predominantly applied in management and organisation studies. Therefore, this research brought the application of these cognitive frames introduced by Hahn et al. (2014) into the realm of consumer behaviour and attitude–behaviour research. Through the application of cognitive frames, this study has also brought sensemaking logic, “both/ and” thinking and “either/or” thinking to consumer sensemaking of the attitude–behaviour gap. In Chapter Two, six defensive mechanisms presented by Lewis (2000) were discussed; this SLR also shed light on how consumers navigate these paradoxical tensions through these defensive mechanisms.

Afterwards, the analysis revealed that consumers with “both/and” thinking adopt paradoxical framing to make sense of the tensions. This leads to emotions, such as guilt, stress and frustration with their actions, and defensive mechanisms – ambivalence, splitting, projection and denial. In contrast, consumers with “either/or” thinking adopt business case framing by prioritising financial outcomes, using defensive mechanisms (reaction formation), and performing trade-offs between personal needs and satisfaction versus environmental and ethical benefits. This SLR also revealed that consumers adopt “either/or” thinking beyond business case framing, indicating that consumers may favour one end of the paradox, not solely due to financial considerations. Additionally, this SLR discovered that consumers also use a hybrid sensemaking approach, i.e., combining “both/and” and “either/or” thinking through regression, answering the call for

studying the interaction between “both/and” and “either/or” thinking by Sharma and Jaiswal (2018). The application of the cognitive frames and defensive mechanisms can be seen below.

The thematic analysis found that consumers mainly adopted paradoxical framing of “both/and” thinking. Firstly, the four defensive mechanisms were discovered in consumers who adopt paradoxical framing. Hanna and Adams (2019) emphasised different types of denial – literal, interpretive and implicatory. These defensive mechanisms involved consumers dismissing the environmental issues, downplaying the consequences of their behaviours and acknowledging but minimising the impact of their actions. Consumers also justified their actions by comparing their behaviours to worse actions by others (Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014), expecting ethical standards from the brands they purchase from (Carrigan & De Pelsmacker, 2009; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016) and neutralising their actions by claiming their small actions were not adequate to solve systemic issues (Cairns et al., 2022; Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014; Valor & Carrero, 2014). Research has also found that consumers employed avoidance and distancing strategies to protect their sense of self by either ignoring the issues or avoiding producers they perceived as unethical (Cairns et al., 2022; Janssen & Vanhamme, 2015; Johnstone & Hooper, 2016; Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015; Valor et al., 2018).

However, from the literature, other defensive mechanisms of ambivalence, splitting and projection were also discovered. Firstly, the SLR identified ambivalence, where consumers acknowledged the inconsistencies of their behaviours and continued to live with them without any resolution (Szmigin et al., 2009). Consumers justified that it was impossible to be consistent all the time, hence regarding their acknowledgement as a “step towards gradual improvement” (Cairns et al., 2022; Longo et al., 2019). Knowing their inconsistencies, consumers expressed emotions such as guilt, stress, frustration, and feeling demotivated, leading to burnout (McEachern et al., 2010; Valor et al., 2018). Valor et al. (2018) added that consumers would balance negative emotions with positive emotions (pride and hope) to align their sustainability goals, known as moral batteries.

Luchs et al. (2015) mentioned that guilt can also serve as a motivator for taking corrective actions. Hence, it was found that consumers used the defensive mechanism of splitting, i.e., performing what they can rather than fully committing to sustainability. For example, consumers would prioritise local and organic foods of high quality, purchase durable items instead of mass-produced ones, participate in production-engaged activities, use alternatives to flying, such as overland trips, engage in more sustainable travelling

options, such as cycling and walking, and limit their sustainable behaviours to specific areas to allow flexibility (Bly et al., 2015; Cairns et al., 2022; Caruana et al., 2020; Hanna & Adams, 2019; Moraes et al., 2012). Projection was also found as consumers blamed external factors, such as consumerism, capitalism and government policies (Bly et al., 2015; Cairns et al., 2022; McDonald et al., 2012; Valor et al., 2018).

On the other hand, consumers with a business case framing adopted “either/or” thinking, with their sensemaking mechanisms being narrow, practical and pragmatic, prioritising financial outcomes (Hahn et al., 2014). Hence, consumers with business case framing opted for the cheaper conventional counterparts rather than green products (Cairns et al., 2022; Moraes et al., 2012). Lu and Sinha (2019) added that individuals with high dichotomous thinking are more likely to adopt business case framing, by choosing cheaper options over sustainable products because they value social desirability.

Apart from business case framing, research has also found that consumers used “either/or” thinking to attain their sustainability goals, which aligned with the defensive mechanism of reaction formation. For example, consumers would often take extreme measures, such as switching careers, abandoning groups and finding new supportive groups to align with their sustainability goals (Valor & Carrero, 2014). Additionally, Luchs et al. (2015) found that consumers would even opt for mostly costly green options, choosing environmental well-being over themselves. Frank and Brock (2019) also revealed the concept of “green fit”, where consumers chose one sustainable product that aligned more with their sustainability goals, such as ethical versus organic products.

Consumers with “either/or” thinking thus perform trade-offs, as they navigate between personal convenience and green attributes. Therefore, consumers, favouring their personal convenience, taste preferences and product quality, compromise on sustainable attributes (Hiller & Woodall, 2019; Moraes et al., 2012). Consumers also purchased responsibly only when their personal benefits outweighed their personal drawbacks (Luchs et al., 2015). Moreover, consumers also prioritised their personal satisfaction without considering the environmental aspects by buying what they want with no careful considerations whatsoever (Cairns et al., 2022).

Additionally, Mai et al. (2021) discovered that consumers, motivated by the desire to help others, might purchase responsibly initially but later develop pragmatic approaches, buying the cheaper options (business case framing) as they believe their individual actions are not sufficient to make a difference (i.e., lack of self-efficacy). Moreover, consumers might choose the conventional counterparts due to social

approval, validation and societal stigmas despite recognising the importance of sustainable products (Meenakshi, 2020). Hence, it can be seen that consumers employed a hybrid of “both/and” and “either/or” thinking, which involved balancing sustainability and practical concerns (both/and) but choosing one side of the paradox (either/or) due to self-efficacy, societal stigmas, etc. This approach aligns with the defensive mechanism of regression, where individuals revert back to their old habits (Lewis, 2000). Moreover, Zollo (2024) mentioned that misalignment between consumers’ personal goals, beliefs, social expectations, and feedback can create tensions; making sense of these involves aligning these factors (Johnstone & Hooper, 2016). This highlighted the role of social factors in not only contributing to tensions but also in serving as a sensemaking mechanism for consumers.

Based on these findings, the following propositions are developed:

Proposition 1. *Consumers using paradoxical framing (both/and) will lead to emotions, such as stress, frustration and feeling demotivated, and defensive mechanisms – denial, splitting, projection and ambivalence to make sense of the tensions.*

Proposition 2. *Consumers with business case framing (either/or) will adopt a pragmatic approach, prioritising financial benefits over sustainability. The “either/or” thinking can extend beyond financial reasons, such as personal convenience or extreme green activism behaviours. This will lead to performing trade-offs and a defensive mechanism of reaction formation.*

Proposition 3. *Consumers do not rigidly adhere to either “both/and” or “either/or” thinking but instead shift between both approaches depending on contextual factors, such as perceived self-efficacy and societal influences.*

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this SLR have given several valuable insights to practitioners and policymakers in mitigating the consumers' tensions that contribute to the attitude–behaviour gap. To alleviate the knowledge-based tensions stemming from scepticism, confusion and knowledge gaps, businesses should standardise simplified and transparent eco-labelling systems and public awareness campaigns to increase consumer education on green products. Marketers are encouraged to promote mainstream cultural acceptance of sustainable behaviours through social influence, such as celebrity endorsements and community-driven initiatives to overcome sociocultural tensions. These approaches can foster a sense of belonging and normalise more sustainable lifestyles. Since green options are perceived to have premium prices and are less accessible, businesses are recommended to make sustainability the default choice, such as prioritising eco-friendly options in marketplaces, hence encouraging circular economy practices.

This SLR also revealed that consumers' desire to act sustainably was constrained by systematic barriers. Hence, policymakers should implement stronger regulations to ensure accurate sustainability claims. Government incentives, such as tax benefits or subsidies for green products, can reduce financial barriers consumers predominantly face. Policymakers are recommended to invest in green infrastructure, such as sustainable urban planning and public transportation, that can facilitate eco-friendly choices at a structural level. This research also encourages co-creation between businesses and consumers, allowing consumers to influence product design and sustainable practices and providing workplace sustainability programmes as they can aid in making greener habits part of consumers' everyday professional lives. Governments and NGOs should also implement personalised sustainability pathways to guide consumers based on their level of knowledge, financial capacity and lifestyle needs.

Additionally, the findings have also provided numerous implications for practitioners and policymakers to leverage the sensemaking mechanisms consumers employ to reconcile the tensions. From the insights provided earlier, marketers may employ incremental sustainability efforts, emphasising that every small act of green consumption contributes to a bigger impact. Given the negative emotions consumers face, marketers can implement positive reinforcement strategies rather than guilt-driven messages. Practitioners are also encouraged to provide flexible green solutions, such as tiered reward systems.

Despite these valuable implications for marketers and policymakers, the complexity of the implementation of these actions needs to be acknowledged. Translating consumer-level tensions into

effective strategies requires navigating financial constraints, systemic inertia and consumer resistance. For instance, given the significance of the systemic barriers discussed in this SLR, the suggested marketing initiatives may not be effective if these barriers remain unaddressed. Businesses may also hesitate to adopt the green initiatives if they conflict with short-term profit motives, particularly in competitive markets. Furthermore, the paradoxical nature of consumers navigating the attitude–behaviour gap also indicates that change efforts must move beyond simple nudges, and instead it requires long-term strategies that can mitigate the paradox.

In addition to these, this SLR also offers wide academic value for marketing education and theory building through the application of paradox theory and cognitive frames to green consumption. The paradoxical perspective to the attitude–behaviour gap can inform curriculum design, encouraging students and practitioners to consider the persistent competing values that requires long-term negotiation, rather than consumers' failure to act green. This work also offers value for interdisciplinary research, bridging consumer behaviour with organisational behaviour, as well as psychology, sociology, and public policy. Agenda for future research are detailed in the next section.

5.4 Future Research Directions

While this study advances the understanding of the attitude–behaviour gap by exploring consumer tensions and sensemaking mechanisms through the lens of paradox theory, several areas remain underexplored. Future researchers can build upon the findings of this SLR by addressing the following gaps.

5.4.1 Empirical Investigations of Paradox Theory in the Attitude–Behaviour Gap

This study synthesises the current knowledge of the attitude–behaviour gap using paradox theory through a systematic literature review. In Chapter Three, the descriptive analysis revealed that the research on the attitude–behaviour gap mainly employs theories from the decision-making lens (Theory of Planned Behaviour, Theory of Reasoned Action, Cognitive Dissonance Theory, etc.). Moruzzi and Sirieix (2015), in their qualitative study, identified the paradoxes of organic food consumption and consumer coping strategies. However, the paradox theory, applied in this SLR and management studies, emphasises managing the persistent tensions over time (Smith et al., 2017), framing the attitude–behaviour gap as a persistent

phenomenon rather than a problem to be solved; this is a new approach to this gap. Therefore, future researchers could use empirical data and build on the framework created by Smith and Lewis (2011) and sensemaking mechanisms to frame the paradoxical tensions, i.e., the cognitive frames identified by Hahn et al. (2014), hence enriching the literature on both paradox theory and the attitude–behaviour gap.

Longitudinal studies could track how consumers manage these constant tensions over time. Cross-cultural studies could explore how these tensions arise across cultures and different demographic contexts, specifically in relation to belonging tensions. Since this SLR also found the relevance of sociocultural influences, more studies could explore how consumers of different sociocultural backgrounds approach the sensemaking mechanisms. While this SLR identified a few cross-cultural studies (Carey & Cervellon, 2014; Moruzzi & Sirieix, 2015), the majority of the studies were conducted in developed markets (UK and Germany across all selected articles). Little is known about the tensions and consumer sensemaking in developing markets.

5.4.2 Paradox Resolution Strategies in the Attitude–Behaviour Gap

Poole and Van de Ven (1989) proposed three paradox resolution strategies to manage paradoxes in workplaces: opposition, separation (spatial and temporal) and synthesis strategies. Future research can build on the findings of this SLR on tensions and sensemaking mechanisms and explore how these resolution strategies can benefit businesses in mitigating these tensions in consumers regarding the attitude–behaviour gap. Researchers can also explore how consumers with paradoxical and business case framing respond to these resolution strategies. This will not only enrich the literature on paradox theory and the attitude–behaviour gap but also provide numerous valuable insights for marketers.

5.4.3 The Interaction of Paradoxical and Business Case Framing

One of the contributions of this SLR is the identification of the hybrid sensemaking mechanism. This research found that this approach can stem from consumers' lack of self-efficacy and societal stigmas (Mai et al., 2021; Meenakshi, 2020). Future research can explore more factors influencing the interplay between paradoxical and business case framing. Researchers can explore how product type influences the sensemaking mechanisms consumers employ, the role of prior green purchase experience in hybrid sensemaking mechanisms and the influence of cultural and demographic factors on hybrid sensemaking

mechanisms. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess the stability of the hybrid sensemaking mechanism over time. Experimental studies could reveal whether consumers tend to gravitate towards either/or framing due to factors such as decision fatigue.

5.4.4 Attitude–Behaviour Gap Studies in More Contexts

The SLR revealed that the attitude–behaviour gap has been explored across different sectors, from traditional retail environments to sustainable fashion and travelling, as detailed in Chapter Three. However, the knowledge about the attitude–behaviour gap in the digital environments remains scarce. Future research could explore how tensions and sensemaking mechanisms manifest in e-commerce, algorithm-driven recommendations and digital marketing spaces. Moreover, the SLR revealed that there was no link between learning tensions and sensemaking mechanisms. Hence, future studies could explore how consumers make sense of tensions stemming from knowledge gaps, scepticism and confusion around green purchasing. Studies can also explore the impact of influencer marketing in mitigating these tensions.

5.4.5 More Quantitative and Mixed-Method Research on the Attitude–Behaviour Gap

This study identified the dominance of qualitative studies (21) in the attitude–behaviour gap literature. Quantitative studies (13) were thus found to be less common than qualitative approaches. This indicates the need for more quantitative insights in the attitude–behaviour research. Moreover, only a few studies applied the mixed-method approach (3), as revealed by this SLR. Future research could employ various mixed-method approaches, such as experimental designs combined with consumer interviews to fully capture real-world purchasing decisions. This helps create a more comprehensive understanding of the attitude–behaviour gap.

5.4.6 More Knowledge of Other Sensemaking Mechanisms

This study detailed paradoxical (both/and) and business case framing (either/or) as found by Hahn et al. (2014) and defensive mechanisms identified by Lewis (2000) to investigate consumer sensemaking. Moreover, this study also revealed “either/or” thinking beyond business case framing. Li (2014) introduced more approaches, namely, “neither/nor”, “both/or” and “either/and”. Specifically, the author noted that the “either/or” thinking can be regarded as the Yin-Yang approach where one end of the paradox dominates,

whereas the other is subordinate and balancing the contradictions occurs dynamically over time. By applying this approach to consumer behaviour and the attitude–behaviour gap, researchers could provide a more holistic approach to managing the duality of paradoxes, hence enriching the literature on paradox theory.

5.5 Limitations

While this SLR provided valuable insights into tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap and consumer sensemaking in green purchasing, there are several limitations that need to be acknowledged. These limitations arise from the database bias, selection criteria, methodological scope, and the nature of SLRs. The review was conducted using three databases: SCOPUS, Emerald Insight and Business Source Complete. Although the selected databases cover a broad range of studies across several disciplines, the study did not include articles that did not appear on these databases, reflecting a database bias. Inclusion of only A*, A and B journal articles according to the ABDC standard ensured only high-quality peer-reviewed articles were reviewed. However, these selection criteria could have prevented valuable insights from relevant studies published in lower-ranked journals, allowing a publication bias.

Another limitation is that this review only included articles written in English, which may have introduced Western-centric and language biases to the findings. Given that most studies in the final sample were conducted in the UK, this restriction may have limited the representation of non-Western consumer segments and affected the generalisability and theoretical universality of the findings, particularly in regard to sociocultural factors. Moreover, the study did not conduct forward and backward citation tracking, meaning that only the articles directly retrieved from the database were selected for the review. Therefore, other influential studies that influenced the selected articles and new articles that build on the reviewed articles were left out. This could have hindered the ability to fully map the various theoretical perspectives in the field.

In addition, the inclusion of only peer-reviewed academic papers ensured academic rigour and theoretical depth. However, grey literature, such as industry reports, government policies and white papers, often capture real-time trends and metrics that may not yet be reported in academic research. Lastly, it is also crucial to acknowledge the reflexive position of the researcher. While efforts were made to ensure academic

rigour through the steps detailed in Chapter Three, the researcher's academic background and interpretive lens inevitably influenced how findings were reported.

5.6 Conclusion

This systematic literature review investigated the current knowledge on the attitude–behaviour gap of green purchases, where consumers claim they are pro-environmental yet do not purchase green products, through the lens of paradox theory. Hence, the SLR uncovered the tensions that cause the attitude–behaviour gap in consumers and how they make sense of these tensions by synthesising the existing literature. Aligning with the paradoxical tensions framework (Smith & Lewis, 2011), this SLR found 4 main tensions causing the attitude–behaviour gap: knowledge-based (learning), sociocultural (belonging), role-based (performing) and systemic (organising) tensions. These tensions either manifest independently or overlap with each other as a complex network affecting the attitude–behaviour gap.

This SLR detailed paradoxical (both/and) and business case framing (either/or) (Hahn et al., 2014) as sensemaking mechanisms. The SLR also revealed that the either/or logic can also be non-financially-motivated in consumers. Additionally, consumers also adopt a hybrid approach, i.e., combining “both/and” and “either/or” logics as a sensemaking mechanism. All six defensive mechanisms identified by Lewis (2000) are present. Consumers with the “both/and” (paradoxical) approach lead to showcasing emotions, such as stress, frustration and feeling demotivated, and defensive mechanisms – denial, splitting, projection and ambivalence. Likewise, “either/or” and business case framing lead to trade-offs and reaction formation, and the hybrid approach leads to regression.

Using paradox theory, this SLR framed the attitude–behaviour gap as a persistent and long-lasting issue where opposing attitudes and behaviour co-exist rather than a problem to be solved. Thus, this SLR also contributes to paradox theory and cognitive frames by exploring the tensions and sensemaking in the realm of consumer behaviour. The findings also provide several valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers in fostering greener consumption behaviours.

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