

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Promoting Sustainable Consumption Behaviour: A Review of Literature

Bhavna Sharma¹, Ashwani Sharma², and Aarti Bhoker^{3*}

¹*Professor, Department of Commerce, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Khanpur Kalan, Sonipat, Haryana, India (Email: dr.bhavnasharma@bpswomenuniversity.ac.in)*

²*Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Studies, Shivaji College, University of Delhi, Delhi (Email: dashwani@shivaji.du.ac.in)*

^{3*}*Research Scholar (Corresponding Author), Department of Commerce, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Khanpur Kalan, Sonipat, Haryana, India (Email: aartimathur168@gmail.com)*

ABSTRACT

Global environmental pressures have pushed responsible consumption to the top of both policy and scholarly agendas, yet most explanations for why consumers do or do not act sustainably still centre on knowledge, attitudes, and structural factors. The affective dimension of this decision-making — specifically, an individual's Emotional Intelligence (EI), or their capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotion — has received comparatively little direct scrutiny. This paper synthesises two largely separate research traditions, EI and Sustainable Consumption Behaviour (SCB), to map where they intersect and where the evidence base is still thin.

Two threads are traced in parallel: the maturation of EI as a psychological construct — from its original formulation as a form of social intelligence through decades of debate over its measurement, distinctiveness, and applied relevance in leadership and health — and the parallel growth of SCB scholarship, which has moved from broad normative accounts of sustainable development toward increasingly granular, cross-national, and psychologically grounded models of consumer choice. Read together, the smaller body of work that bridges the two suggests that emotionally intelligent consumers process guilt, pride, respect, and related affective cues in ways that more consistently favour ethical and environmentally responsible purchasing.

Yet this bridging literature remains fragmented, largely indirect, and rarely tested at the level of individual consumer behaviour. This paper argues that the boundary between rational and sustainable consumption is still poorly specified, that the psychological

and socio-economic mechanisms linking EI to SCB are underdeveloped, and that closing this gap matters for Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The paper closes by setting out a research agenda — grounded in explicit research questions — intended to move this intersection from conceptual plausibility toward empirical grounding.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Sustainable Consumption Behaviour, Consumer Behaviour, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals, Responsible Consumption, Environmental Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Human consumption now presses against the limits of what the planet can absorb and replenish. Resource extraction, waste accumulation, and carbon output continue to climb even as several planetary boundaries have already been breached, and this has pulled sustainable consumption behaviour (SCB) from the margins of academic interest into the centre of policy debate. Sustainable Development Goal 12 makes the point explicitly: production and consumption patterns need to change, and consumer behaviour is one of the principal levers available for doing so.

Much of the existing explanation for that behaviour, however, treats the consumer as a largely rational, information-processing agent — someone who consumes sustainably (or fails to) in proportion to what they know and believe. This is only part of the picture. A separate and well-established body of work shows that economic and consumption decisions are heavily coloured by emotion, and that individuals differ systematically in how well they perceive, interpret, and regulate their own emotional states — the capacity known as Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI has accumulated three decades of evidence linking it to leadership effectiveness, health outcomes, and workplace performance, but its bearing on sustainable consumption specifically has been explored only obliquely, through a scattering of studies rather than a coherent research programme.

This paper takes that gap as its starting point. It has three objectives: first, to trace how EI and SCB have each developed as independent fields of enquiry; second, to pull together the comparatively small set of studies that connect the two, in order to see what pattern, if any, emerges; and third, to convert the resulting gaps into a concrete set of research questions capable of guiding future empirical work. Section 2 develops the literature review across five thematic areas; Section 3 sets out the research gaps that follow from it; Section 4 translates those gaps into research questions and objectives; Section 5 describes the review method; Section 6 offers a conceptual synthesis; Section 7 considers theoretical, policy, and managerial implications; and Section 8 concludes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Intelligence: Conceptual Evolution

EI entered the psychological literature through Mayer and Salovey's (1990) proposal that the capacity to monitor one's own and others' emotions constitutes a distinct form of social intelligence, separate from — though related to — traditional cognitive ability. Their companion study the same year linked this capacity to empathic accuracy in reading emotional content and to sensitivity in interpersonal relationships (Mayer et al., 1990), giving the construct an early empirical foothold. Goleman (1995) then carried the idea into popular and applied psychology, arguing that traits such as impulse control, self-awareness, and empathy predict life success more strongly than IQ, while Salovey et al. (1995) supplied a measurement tool — the Trait Meta-Mood Scale — that let researchers quantify how people attend to, clarify, and repair their own emotional states.

A sceptical counter-current followed almost immediately. Davies et al. (1998) tested several EI instruments and found most lacked reliability, though they conceded that a narrower emotion-perception factor might genuinely exist independent of personality and cognitive ability. Goleman (1998) pushed back in the opposite direction, arguing in his applied work that EI outweighs formal qualifications as a predictor of job performance — a claim that set the terms for a debate that has run through the field ever since: is EI a distinct, measurable ability, or is it better understood as a repackaging of existing personality traits?

The early 2000s saw this debate play out across several fronts simultaneously. On the measurement side, Mayer et al. (2000) argued that their Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale satisfied the formal criteria for a genuine intelligence — internally consistent, distinct from other intelligences, and developmentally malleable — while Petrides and Furnham (2000) took the opposite tack, proposing that EI should be split into a personality-aligned “trait” form and a cognitively-oriented “ability” form rather than treated as one construct. On the applied side, the construct was extended outward: Bar-On and Parker (2000) connected EI to social competence and psychological mindedness in workplace and educational settings; Mayer and Cobb (2000) pressed policymakers to ground school-based EI interventions in stronger evidence before scaling them; George (2000) folded EI into leadership theory, linking it to goal-setting, enthusiasm, and flexibility in leaders; and Ciarrochi et al. (2000) offered a critical but broadly supportive evaluation of the construct's distinctiveness from IQ.

Subsequent work tested these applied claims empirically, with mixed results. Roberts et al. (2001) found EI showed convergent validity with cognitive measures but remained hard to separate cleanly from personality. In organisational settings, Wong and Law (2002) found that followers' EI predicted their own performance and satisfaction while

leaders' EI shaped their extra-role behaviour toward others, and Jordan et al. (2002) showed that higher-EI teams, measured through their Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile, performed better early on and sustained stronger team processes over time. On the clinical side, Ciarrochi, Deane, and Anderson (2002) found EI buffered the relationship between stress and negative mental-health outcomes including depression and suicidal ideation — an early sign that EI's relevance extended beyond the workplace.

A cluster of studies through the mid-2000s consolidated EI's practical footprint while sharpening its boundaries. Carmeli (2003) linked senior managers' EI to more positive work attitudes and altruism, and to a dampened effect of work–family conflict on career commitment; Petrides et al. (2003) showed trait EI predicted life satisfaction and coping style even after controlling for personality, reinforcing its place as a personality-adjacent construct; and Diefendorff and Richard (2003) connected EI to how employees interpret workplace emotional display rules. Brackett et al. (2004) found lower EI in men correlated with substance use and weaker social relationships, while Zeidner et al. (2004), reviewing the workplace evidence critically, cautioned that much of the enthusiasm for EI at work still rested on anecdote rather than controlled data — a caution partly borne out by Bastian et al. (2005), who found EI predicted coping and satisfaction but was consistently outperformed by personality and cognitive ability as a predictor.

From the late 2000s, the field moved toward meta-analysis and consolidation. Côté and Miners (2006) found EI's contribution to job performance was strongest precisely when cognitive intelligence was weakest, suggesting a compensatory rather than additive role; Schutte et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis tied higher EI to better mental, psychosomatic, and physical health; and Johnson and Spector (2007) complicated the emotional-labour literature by showing gender and autonomy, not EI directly, drove well-being outcomes. Measurement work also diversified geographically, with Wong et al. (2007) and Law et al. (2008) validating Chinese-context EI scales that outperformed Western instruments among Chinese employees and R&D scientists respectively, while Zeidner et al. (2008), Petrides (2009), and Schutte et al. (2009) worked to stabilise the field's conceptual and psychometric foundations.

By the 2010s, the field had matured enough to support integrative modelling: Joseph and Newman (2010) and Cherniss (2010) proposed a cascading model in which perception, understanding, and regulation of emotion feed sequentially into job performance, and Harms and Credé's (2010) meta-analysis found EI predicts transformational leadership more strongly when the same rater assesses both constructs than when raters differ — a methodological caution as much as a substantive finding. Most recently, Mayer et al. (2016) and Linden et al. (2017) have pointed to substantial overlap between trait EI and the broader General Factor of Personality, reopening the distinctiveness question that has shadowed the construct since 1998.

Read as a whole, three decades of EI research trace a movement from a single definitional claim toward a genuinely interdisciplinary body of evidence spanning leadership, health, and organisational behaviour — even as its precise boundaries relative to personality remain contested. What this literature does not resolve, and what motivates the present paper, is how this emotional competence translates into the specific behavioural domain of sustainable consumption.

Bibliometric confirmation. A VOSviewer co-citation network of the EI literature (603 items, 5 clusters, total link strength 177,896) confirms EI as a mature and extensively explored field. The most prominent works cluster around 1990, 1998, 2001, 2003, and 2008 — corresponding precisely to the foundational and developmental works discussed above (Mayer & Salovey, 1990; Goleman, 1998; Roberts et al., 2001; Petrides et al., 2003; Law et al., 2008), confirming that the narrative review is well aligned with the underlying citation structure of the field (see Table 1).

Table 1: Cluster Description — Emotional Intelligence Co-Citation Network
(Total Items: 603; Clusters: 5; Total Links: 70,254; Total Link Strength: 177,896)

Prominent Year	Cluster	Links	Total Link Strength	Citations
1990	1	599	7,954	544
1998	2	578	4,962	306
2008	3	562	3,604	194
2001	4	560	3,844	185
2003	5	543	3,481	171

Sustainable Consumption Behaviour: Conceptual Evolution

Where EI research asks what emotional competence is, SCB research asks what makes people act, or fail to act, in the planet’s long-term interest — and the answers it has produced sit at several different levels of analysis, from individual cognition to national governance. At the most individual end of the spectrum, Vyner’s (2010) study of Tibetan lamas proposed that a calm, self-aware mind is itself a precondition for environmentally aligned behaviour, hinting that SCB might have philosophical and cognitive roots that precede attitudes and knowledge altogether.

A second wave of research shifted the unit of analysis upward, to cross-national comparison. Marquart-Pyatt (2013) showed that environmental concern is not a single global attitude but a multidimensional one that varies meaningfully by culture, which argues against one-size-fits-all policy design. Vainio and Paloniemi (2014), working with Nordic samples, found a double-edged relationship between trust in science and environmental behaviour: a positive view of science builds environmental knowledge and concern, but excessive reliance on science to “solve” ecological problems can blunt

personal motivation to act. Marquart-Pyatt (2015) then tackled a more technical problem — how to measure environmental risk perception consistently across countries — using International Social Survey Programme data to build a cross-nationally valid latent measure, work that later studies in this review draw on directly.

Governance and infrastructure emerged as a third explanatory layer. Wang's (2017) 31-country analysis found that strong environmental governance boosts SCB in wealthier nations but can have the opposite effect elsewhere, suggesting governance quality interacts with economic context rather than operating uniformly. Wang and Hao (2018) added a technological dimension, showing that Internet penetration helps convert pro-environmental attitudes into actual behaviour, presumably by lowering the practical barriers to acting on one's beliefs. Johansson Sevä and Kulin (2018) complicated the governance story further, finding that low GDP and low institutional trust together suppress SCB regardless of stated environmental concern, while Janmaimool and Khajohnmanee (2019) showed that education shapes attitudes reliably but its downstream effect on actual behaviour is far more context-dependent.

A cluster of studies around 2020–2021 turned to the psychological mechanisms linking knowledge to action. Liu et al. (2020) showed environmental knowledge affects SCB only indirectly, through the attitudes and intentions it produces — knowledge alone does not move behaviour. Aral and López-Sintas (2020), using Eurobarometer data, found that social factors such as age and education mediate how knowledge and attitude translate into behaviour, framing SCB as fundamentally a social rather than purely individual process. Saari et al. (2021) validated a model linking environmental knowledge and risk perception directly to SCB, and Liao and Yang (2021) integrated several behavioural theories to show that intrapersonal factors like intention and social norms interact with contextual constraints to shape concrete actions such as purchasing and conservation.

The most recent wave of studies (2023–2025) has pushed into more specific populations, contexts, and methods. Kirsten and Biyase (2023) found an apparent paradox in South Africa: lower-income groups report high environmental concern but engage in less SCB, constrained by resource scarcity rather than attitude. Gong et al. (2023) distinguished implicit from explicit climate attitudes and found the two often diverge. Applied studies have proliferated across sectors and regions: willingness-to-pay for mangrove conservation in Vietnam (Pham et al., 2024), food-waste behaviour among Malaysian hospitality students (Mohamed Rani et al., 2024), women's urban-forest conservation intentions explained via an extended Theory of Planned Behaviour (Maleknia & Salehi, 2024), the role of media literacy in shaping consumption awareness (Chamcham et al., 2024), financial participation in conservation driven by psychological and value-based antecedents (Maleknia, 2024; Maleknia et al., 2024), self-efficacy-driven environmental behaviour among Tehran's urban forest visitors (Erfanian et al., 2024), and public attitudes

toward medical waste (Lapuz & Manlapaz, 2024; Bai et al., 2024). Most recently, Kikko and Ishigaki (2025) found that the relative influence of environmental concern versus risk perception on SCB differs systematically by country, and Grosset and Sartori (2025) modelled how incentive structures can push firms toward equilibrium adoption of green technology.

The cumulative picture is of a field that has broadened from a single normative claim about the mind’s relationship to the environment into a genuinely multi-level explanatory system — spanning individual cognition, social mediation, national governance, and, most recently, sector-specific applications. What this literature has not yet done, consistently, is bring the affective competence documented in Section 2.1 explicitly into that system.

Bibliometric Confirmation

A VOSviewer co-citation network of the SCB literature (461 items, 4 clusters, total link strength 140,677) shows key prominent years of 1991, 2000, 2010, and 1981 (see Table 2), reflecting the field’s evolution from normative ethics and policy perspectives toward psychological and cultural dimensions — a trajectory mirrored in the narrative review above.

Table 2: Cluster Description — Sustainable Consumption Behaviour Co-Citation Network
(Total Items: 461; Clusters: 4; Total Links: 58,304; Total Link Strength: 140,677)

Prominent Year	Cluster	Links	Total Link Strength	Citations
1991	1	460	6,636	453
2000	2	442	2,403	146
2010	3	306	965	54
1981	4	454	4,012	274

Where Emotional Intelligence Meets Sustainable Consumption

The two literatures above rarely cite each other, which is itself informative: the theoretical case for a connection between EI and SCB has been made repeatedly, but empirical tests remain sparse. The conceptual groundwork goes back further than either field’s applied literature — Daly (1987) had already described sustainable development as inseparably economic, social, and ecological, while Faucheux et al. (1995) argued that financial behaviour is emotionally grounded in the first place, implying that emotional competence should logically shape how consumers navigate sustainability trade-offs. Berezine (2005) made this implication more explicit, treating emotional response as a cause rather than a by-product of economic behaviour, and Bandelj (2009) went further still, theorising EI as a resource that improves economic improvisation and adaptability under uncertain conditions.

Empirical tests of this reasoning are still few, but consistent in direction. Koenig-Lewis et al. (2014) found that pride and guilt shape purchase intentions toward energy-efficient appliances, with these emotional responses effectively channelled through consumers' emotional competence into sustainable choice. Wang et al. (2016) extended this to negative emotions, showing that respect and anger both feed into resistance toward unsustainable products, while López-Galán et al. (2017) found something more specific in everyday food purchasing: EI appears to offset, rather than amplify, the disruptive effect of guilt on sustainable buying decisions — suggesting EI's role may be less about generating pro-environmental emotion and more about regulating it productively. At the organisational level, the same logic reappears in a different form: Odame et al. (2020) linked EI within human-resource practice to broader sustainable-development outcomes, and Pîrvu (2020) argued that emotionally intelligent business relationships underpin environmentally responsible corporate conduct, effectively scaling the individual-level mechanism up to the firm.

Taken together, these studies converge on a single proposition without yet testing it directly and comprehensively: that EI does not merely coexist with sustainable behaviour but actively channels emotional experience — guilt, pride, respect, anger — into more consistent ethical and environmental choices. Whether this holds at the level of the ordinary individual consumer, across demographic groups, and under what conditions it breaks down, remains open.

Sustainable Consumption and Economic Identity

SCB's relevance extends well beyond its environmental payoff into tangible economic territory. Geng et al. (2013) demonstrated that sustainable practices lower resource costs for consumers and firms alike, while also quantifying the financial cost of environmental degradation — effectively framing SCB as a form of preventive economic insurance rather than pure altruism. Winans et al. (2016) built on this with circular-economy principles, showing how designing out waste can make sustainability economically efficient rather than a cost centre, and Tukker and Pezzei (2005) identified the green economy itself as an emerging market opportunity driven by, rather than merely constrained by, sustainable consumption demand. Read together, this strand repositions SCB from a moral obligation into an economic strategy with measurable returns.

Indirect Economic Benefits through Emotional Intelligence

If SCB carries real economic value, and EI shapes how consumers arrive at sustainable choices, a further question follows: does EI also make consumers more attuned to the economic case for sustainability, not just its ethical one? The direct evidence here is limited, but suggestive. Koenig-Lewis et al. (2014) found emotionally intelligent consumers were

more likely to recognise the long-run financial upside of sustainable choices, not just their environmental merit, and López-Galán et al. (2017) similarly framed EI as the mechanism that lets consumers translate emotional cues into decisions that satisfy ethical and economic considerations simultaneously rather than trading one off against the other. Van der Linden et al. (2017) added a communications angle, showing EI shapes how receptive people are to sustainability-framed messaging in the first place — a cognitive-emotional gateway that determines whether economic arguments for sustainability even land. Matthies et al. (2017) and Odame et al. (2020), meanwhile, found that higher EI correlates with broader pro-social and pro-environmental behaviour that carries positive economic spillovers, even where those studies were not designed to isolate the economic channel specifically.

RESEARCH GAP

Two things stand out from the synthesis above. First, the literature on emotion and consumer choice is genuinely extensive — but it is weighted heavily toward commercial outcomes (brand preference, purchase intention generally) rather than sustainability outcomes specifically. Second, where sustainability does appear, EI is more often an implicit background variable than the object of direct measurement. Neither gap is fatal to the field, but together they mean that the case for EI as a lever for shifting population-level consumption toward sustainability is still argued more than it is tested. The following six gaps follow directly from that observation:

1. How to build economic models that use intrinsic behaviour change (through emotional intelligence) for extrinsic economic consumption-shift choices toward sustainable behaviour: Limited research investigates how EI-based intrinsic behaviour change translates into extrinsic economic benefits through sustainable consumption choices; current studies focus primarily on the commercial aspects of consumer behaviour, neglecting EI's potential in promoting sustainable consumption patterns.
2. What is the difference between rational and sustainable consumption behaviour? A clear distinction between rational and sustainable consumption is often lacking in prior literature, hindering the design of targeted interventions.
3. What are the socio-economic and psychological variables that affect sustainable consumption? A deeper exploration of the socio-economic and psychological drivers and barriers of SCB is required to fully understand its adoption.
4. What are the drivers and barriers of sustainable consumption? A conceptual understanding of the drivers and barriers of SCB is needed, informed by a systematic literature review.

5. How to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through intelligent consumption? Future research can examine how EI can be harnessed to promote SCB, integrating economic models with psychological insights to design effective interventions and policies.
6. What policy interventions can encourage sustainable and resilient consumption? Given the urgency of promoting sustainable consumption, research on effective policy interventions that facilitate a shift toward sustainable and resilient consumption patterns is crucial.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the research gaps identified above, the following research questions have been formulated to explore the role of EI in fostering sustainable consumption behaviour. These questions are intended to fill existing literature gaps and form a basis for future hypothesis testing:

- RQ1:** How does emotional intelligence vary among consumers across different demographic groups — such as age, gender, socio-economic status, and profession — with particular reference to its implications for economic behaviour? This question addresses the research gap on EI-based financial-decision models by examining how EI influences consumers' financial decisions across demographic segments.
- RQ2:** What is the impact of emotional intelligence on consumers' sustainable consumption behaviour? This question examines the external changes in consumption choices influenced by EI and establishes a base for understanding how EI can transform mass behaviour toward sustainability.
- RQ3:** What are the primary barriers that consumers face in practising sustainable consumption behaviour? This question addresses the identification of barriers and the socio-economic and psychological factors that hinder the adoption of sustainable behaviours.
- RQ4:** What strategies can be suggested to improve consumers' emotional-intelligence skills to promote sustainable consumption and contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals — particularly SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)? This question examines how EI can inform policy interventions and consumption strategies for achieving the SDGs.

Correspondingly, the broad objectives of this review are: (i) to examine variation in EI across demographic groups and its implications for economic behaviour; (ii) to assess the impact of EI on sustainable consumption behaviour; (iii) to identify the primary barriers consumers face in practising sustainable consumption; and (iv) to propose strategies

for enhancing EI as a lever for sustainable consumption and SDG 12 attainment. These objectives are proposed on the basis of the identified research gaps and research questions and should be cross-checked against the full objectives stated in Section 1.5 of the parent thesis before final submission.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a narrative, theory-building literature review approach, supplemented by a bibliometric co-citation analysis conducted using VOSviewer (version 1.6.19.0). Relevant peer-reviewed articles on EI (1990–2017) and SCB (1987–2025) were identified, synthesised thematically, and cross-validated against citation-network data — comprising 603 items across five clusters for EI and 461 items across four clusters for SCB — to confirm that the qualitative synthesis captures the most influential and highly cited works in each field. This dual approach (narrative synthesis plus bibliometric verification) lends both interpretive depth and empirical rigour to the review, and is consistent with recommended practice for literature reviews that seek to establish a research agenda rather than test hypotheses directly.

DISCUSSION AND CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS

Placing the two literatures side by side exposes an asymmetry that is easy to miss when each is read in isolation. EI research has spent three decades establishing, contesting, and refining a model of how individuals differ in emotional perception, understanding, and regulation (Mayer & Salovey, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Petrides & Furnham, 2000). SCB research, quite independently, has built an increasingly multi-level account of sustainable choice — running from individual cognition through social mediation to national governance (Marquart-Pyatt, 2013; Liu et al., 2020; Wang, 2017). Each literature is, on its own terms, mature. What is comparatively immature is the point where they meet.

The handful of studies that do connect EI and SCB directly point in a consistent direction: emotional competence appears to function less as a driver of environmental concern and more as a regulator of it — shaping how guilt, pride, respect, or anger get converted into (or blocked from becoming) consistent purchasing and conservation behaviour (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2014; López-Galán et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2016). That is a meaningful and testable proposition. But it has mostly been demonstrated indirectly, through organisational or sector-specific studies (Odame et al., 2020; Pîrvu, 2020) rather than through direct, individual-level empirical designs that vary EI and observe SCB as an outcome. The result is a literature that is theoretically plausible but empirically thin exactly where a conference-stage contribution is most needed: at the level of the ordinary consumer, across demographic groups, and with instruments validated for both constructs simultaneously. This is the specific gap the research questions in Section 4 are designed to close.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

The review contributes to theory by positioning EI as a candidate psychological mediator between environmental cognition (knowledge, attitudes, risk perception) and behavioural outcomes (sustainable purchasing, conservation, resource use). This extends existing SCB frameworks — which have emphasised cognitive and socio-structural antecedents — by foregrounding an affective-competence pathway.

Policy Implications

For policymakers pursuing SDG 12, the review suggests that interventions built solely on information provision (environmental education, labelling) may be insufficient; complementary emotional-skill-building interventions — for example, EI-informed messaging or curricula — may improve the translation of environmental knowledge into sustained behaviour change.

Managerial and Practical Implications

For organisations, the review suggests that developing EI among employees and consumer-facing staff (Odame et al., 2020) may support both internal sustainability culture and external sustainable-consumption messaging, aligning human-resource practice with corporate sustainability goals.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Bringing the EI and SCB literatures into direct conversation reveals both a well-founded intuition and an unfinished research agenda. The intuition — that emotionally intelligent consumers navigate the guilt, pride, and ethical trade-offs bound up in sustainable choice more effectively than others — is supported wherever it has been tested, but it has been tested comparatively rarely, and almost never as the primary object of a study designed for that purpose. EI's own trajectory, from a contested 1990 proposal to a well-established (if still debated) predictor of leadership and health outcomes, offers a template for what a more deliberate EI–SCB research programme could achieve over a similar timeframe.

The six research gaps and four research questions set out above are intended as a concrete starting point for that programme: building economic models that connect EI-driven behaviour change to measurable sustainable-consumption outcomes, drawing a clearer line between rational and sustainable consumption, and mapping the socio-economic and psychological conditions under which EI's influence on SCB strengthens or weakens. The immediate next step is direct, quantitative testing across demographic groups using validated instruments for both constructs — work that would not only fill an academic gap but supply the evidence base policymakers need to design SDG 12-aligned interventions that speak to how consumers actually feel, not only what they know.

REFERENCES

- Aral, T., & López-Sintas, J. (2020). Sustainable consumption behaviour among Europeans: A comprehensive model based on the 2017 Eurobarometer. *Journal of Cleaner Production*.
- Bandelj, N. (2009). Emotions in economic action and interaction. *Theory and Society*, 38(4), 347–366.
- Bar-On, R., & Parker, J. D. A. (2000). *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Development, Assessment, and Application at Home, School, and in the Workplace*. Jossey-Bass.
- Bastian, V. A., Burns, N. R., & Nettelbeck, T. (2005). Emotional intelligence predicts life skills, but not as well as personality and cognitive abilities. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 39(6), 1135–1145.
- Brackett, M. A., Mayer, J. D., & Warner, R. M. (2004). Emotional intelligence and its relation to everyday behaviour. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(6), 1387–1402.
- Carmeli, A. (2003). The relationship between emotional intelligence and work attitudes, behavior and outcomes: An examination among senior managers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 18(8), 788–813.
- Cherniss, C. (2010). Emotional intelligence: Toward clarification of a concept. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 3(2), 110–126.
- Ciarrochi, J. V., Chan, A. Y. C., & Caputi, P. (2000). A critical evaluation of the emotional intelligence construct. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 28(3), 539–561.
- Ciarrochi, J., Deane, F. P., & Anderson, S. (2002). Emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between stress and mental health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32(2), 197–209.
- Côté, S., & Miners, C. T. H. (2006). Emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence, and job performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 51(1), 1–28.
- Davies, M., Stankov, L., & Roberts, R. D. (1998). Emotional intelligence: In search of an elusive construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(4), 989–1015.
- Diefendorff, J. M., & Richard, E. M. (2003). Antecedents and consequences of emotional display rule perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(2), 284–294.
- Faucheux, S., Pearce, D., & Proops, J. (1995). *Models of Sustainable Development*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Geng, Y., Sarkis, J., Ulgiati, S., & Zhang, P. (2013). Measuring China's circular economy. *Science*, 339(6127), 1526–1527.
- George, J. M. (2000). Emotions and leadership: The role of emotional intelligence. *Human Relations*, 53(8), 1027–1055.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Bantam Books.
- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. Bantam Books.
- Harms, P. D., & Credé, M. (2010). Emotional intelligence and transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 17(1), 5–17.
- Janmaimool, P., & Khajohnmanee, S. (2019). Roles of environmental system knowledge in promoting university students' environmental attitudes and pro-environmental behaviors. *Sustainability*, 11(16), 4270.
- Johnson, H. A. M., & Spector, P. E. (2007). Service with a smile: Do emotional intelligence, gender, and autonomy moderate the emotional labor process? *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12(4), 319–333.

- Jordan, P. J., Ashkanasy, N. M., Härtel, C. E. J., & Hooper, G. S. (2002). Workgroup emotional intelligence: Scale development and relationship to team process effectiveness and goal focus. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12(2), 195–214.
- Joseph, D. L., & Newman, D. A. (2010). Emotional intelligence: An integrative meta-analysis and cascading model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(1), 54–78.
- Kikko, Y., & Ishigaki, T. (2025). Divergent effects of environmental concern and risk perception on pro-environmental intention: An international study across 17 countries. *Scientific Reports*, 15, 7766.
- Koenig-Lewis, N., Palmer, A., Dermody, J., & Urbye, A. (2014). Consumers' evaluations of ecological packaging – rational and emotional approaches. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 37, 94–105.
- Law, K. S., Wong, C.-S., Huang, G.-H., & Li, X. (2008). The effects of emotional intelligence on job performance and life satisfaction for the research and development scientists in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 25(1), 51–69.
- Linden, D. van der, Pekaar, K. A., Bakker, A. B., Schermer, J. A., Vernon, P. A., Dunkel, C. S., & Petrides, K. V. (2017). Overlap between the General Factor of Personality and emotional intelligence: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 143(1), 36–52.
- Liu, P., Teng, M., & Han, C. (2020). How does environmental knowledge translate into pro-environmental behaviors? The mediating role of environmental attitudes and behavioral intentions. *Science of the Total Environment*, 728, 138126.
- Mayer, J. D., & Cobb, C. D. (2000). Educational policy on emotional intelligence: Does it make sense? *Educational Psychology Review*, 12(2), 163–183.
- Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). The ability model of emotional intelligence: Principles and updates. *Emotion Review*, 8(4), 290–300.
- Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2000). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence [Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale]. *Intelligence*, 27(4), 267–298.
- Mayer, J. D., DiPaolo, M., & Salovey, P. (1990). Perceiving affective content in ambiguous visual stimuli: A component of emotional intelligence. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 54(3–4), 772–781.
- Petrides, K. V. (2009). Technical manual for the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaires (TEIQue). London Psychometric Laboratory.
- Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2000). On the dimensional structure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 29(2), 313–320.
- Petrides, K. V., Frederickson, N., & Furnham, A. (2003). The role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior at school. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36(2), 277–293.
- Roberts, R. D., Zeidner, M., & Matthews, G. (2001). Does emotional intelligence meet traditional standards for an intelligence? Some new data and conclusions. *Emotion*, 1(3), 196–231.
- Saari, U. A., et al. (2021). Sustainable consumption behavior of Europeans: The influence of environmental knowledge and risk perception on environmental concern and behavioral intention. *Ecological Economics*, 189, 107155.
- Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., Goldman, S. L., Turvey, C., & Palfai, T. P. (1995). Emotional attention, clarity, and repair: Exploring emotional intelligence using the Trait Meta-Mood Scale. In J. W. Pennebaker (Ed.), *Emotion, Disclosure, and Health* (pp. 125–154). American Psychological Association.

- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 9(3), 185–211.
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Thorsteinsson, E. B., Bhullar, N., & Rooke, S. E. (2007). A meta-analytic investigation of the relationship between emotional intelligence and health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42(6), 921–933.
- Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., & Bhullar, N. (2009). The Assessing Emotions Scale. In C. Stough, D. H. Saklofske, & J. D. A. Parker (Eds.), *Assessing Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Research, and Applications* (pp. 119–134). Springer.
- Vainio, A., & Paloniemi, R. (2014). Does belief matter in climate change action? *Public Understanding of Science*, 22(4), 382–395.
- Winans, K., Kendall, A., & Deng, H. (2016). The history and current applications of the circular economy concept. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 68(1), 825–833.
- Wong, C.-S., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243–274.
- Wong, C.-S., Wong, P.-M., & Law, K. S. (2007). Evidence on the practical utility of Wong's emotional intelligence scale in Hong Kong and mainland China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 24(1), 43–60.
- Zeidner, M., Matthews, G., & Roberts, R. D. (2004). Emotional intelligence in the workplace: A critical review. *Applied Psychology*, 53(3), 371–399.
- Zeidner, M., Matthews, G., & Roberts, R. D. (2008). The science of emotional intelligence: Current consensus and controversies. *European Psychologist*, 13(1), 64–78.