



A great start? Sustainability mission statements affect consumer behavior

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Abstract

Sustainable consumption calls for organizations to act responsibly for the future generation. In response, companies are embracing sustainability into their strategy. A great strategy starts with a mission statement as a way to differentiate a company from its rivals. The significance of sustainability mission statements not only informs customers about the commitment of a firm to embracing sustainable development goals, but also creates values for customers who are likely to self-identify with the company of being good and return the company favorably with supportive purchasing actions. The rationale leads to the research objective to investigate the relationships between a sustainability mission statement and the intention of the identification of the consumer to purchase. A quantitative causal and survey methodology was designed and a sample of 245 Taiwanese respondents was collected. The results in the research model one showed that only environmental and economic sustainability have an effect on consumer purchase intention. When model two explored the mediation effect of consumer-company identification, the relationship between sustainability mission statement and consumer purchase intention was significantly strengthened, indicating that consumer-company identification is a complementary mediator, despite the mediation role, environmental sustainability directly and positively affected consumer purchase intention. With mediation, social sustainability became critical to influence consumer behavior, and the relative strength is first environmental sustainability, followed by social and economic sustainability. This research contributes to the gap in the marketing literature by first incorporating corporate sustainability into mission statements and further explores the effect of sustainability mission statements on consumer behavior. Furthermore, the study was the first to examine the mediation role of consumer-company identification based on social identity theory in the field of corporate sustainability. Managerial implications are provided for companies to prioritize and articulate their sustainability statement as their marketing communication strategy to have a head start.

Keywords Sustainability mission statement · Environmental sustainability · Economic sustainability · Social sustainability · Consumer-company identification · Purchase intention

1 Introduction

The United Nations has moved urgently on sustainable development goals (SDGs) since 2015 and has asked that every nation to act for the purpose of a better world for the future generation. Why should a company care about the SDGs? How can SDGs be part of corporate strategy and help the company grow? PricewaterhouseCoopers conducted global research that indicated that 78% of consumers are likely to buy a product/service from companies associated with the SDGs (as cited in 2030 Builders, 2020). Studies have also shown that a growing number of consumers are demanding values rather than the product/service itself (Awan & Raza, 2012). The SDGs are a share value with which consumers are likely to identify with a company that is responsible for their environment and society. As a result, a sustainable strategy taken by a company should encompass environmental, social, and economic sustainability (the triple bottom line) in its mission. A sustainability mission statement as a marketing strategy is likely to gain competitive advantage and win the hearts of consumers. In this study, it answers the question: “Will a company that is committed to a sustainability mission statement attract customers?”.

A mission statement expresses corporate principles and beliefs, establishes corporate philosophy and values, and provides guidelines for business operations (Ackoff, 1987). In essence, it describes the fundamental purpose and exhibits the reason for the existence of a company (Ireland and Hitt, 1992). Being an essential part of corporate and marketing strategy, mission statements reflect and capture the uniqueness and distinctiveness and how it differentiates itself from rivals in an industry (Bart, 1996; Campbell & Yeung, 1991; Zahan & Sultana, 2019).

Apart from the traditional mission, sustainability mission statements are gaining importance in business and marketing strategy. According to a 2011 McKinsey study of approximately 3000 executives from different industries and sizes of companies, firms have interwoven sustainability across many processes internally, and more than two-thirds of the respondents have integrated sustainability into corporate missions (as cited in Bonini & Gorner, 2011). Furthermore, the report of sustainable development from the World Commission on Economic Development (WCED) of the United Nations (UN) has led to the proliferation of issues related to sustainability on a global level in the twenty-first century (Montiel, 2008). The UN has requested the SDGs as a guide to provide directions that help nations, organizations, and society as a whole to implement sustainable practices since 2015 (2030 Builders, 2020). These developments have prompted organizations to develop sustainability mission statements (Bradbury, 2003; King et al., 2010).

Consequently, business leaders have come to realize the importance of embracing sustainability (2030 Builders, 2020; Cornelissen, 2008). For organizations to promote sustainability decisions at all levels, sustainability should become part of their strategic planning process (Awan & Raza, 2012; Galpin et al., 2015; Kantabutra, 2020; Sheth et al., 2011). Since a mission statement has been considered an important step in corporate strategy, a comprehensive approach to address the challenges of sustainable development should be guided by a mission statement. In this context, a mission defines the self-assigned role in relation to society (Galpin et al., 2015). Statements not only serve as a strategic posture of the firm but also demonstrate its commitment to issues related to sustainability (Kent & Chan, 2009).

In the management and marketing literature, scholars have studied the effectiveness of mission statements from different perspectives. Mostly, research linked mission statements to corporate sustainability performance (Lopez & Martin, 2018), mostly on firm

financial performance (Amran, 2012; Bart et al., 2001; Bartkus et al., 2000; Marjanova & Sofijanov, 2014; Pearce & David, 1987; Rarick & Vitton, 1995) and others adopted different approaches to examine the effect of mission statements on nonprofit organizational performance (Macedo et al., 2016; Wang & Lin, 2011; Yazhou & Jian, 2011). A shared sense derived from a mission statement appears to have an impact in shaping employee behaviors (Bart, 1997; Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Klemm et al., 1991). Marketing studies mainly in corporate social responsibility (CSR) have indicated their impact on purchase intention (Bianchi et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2011, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2015), but not for corporate sustainability (CS) and nevertheless to say in integrating the CS with mission statement. Studies of green marketing strategies provide evidence that consumers are willing to pay more for environmental and social sustainability (Amoako et al., 2022; Awan, 2011). In general, the concurrent management and marketing literature has not yet explored sustainability mission statements from the perspective of the external consumer.

Bridging from the internal sustainability mission statements to external consumer behaviors, social identity, and social and organizational identification theories play a mediating role. Based on social identity theory (Turner & Tajfel, 1986) and organizational identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), previous research has shown that an organizational identity built on CSR can develop customer identification with a company due to the association that overlaps with their self-identity as good (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Based on theories and literature, this study provides insight that perceptions derived from sustainability mission statements are capable of forming the message “doing a good thing” to have a positive association with customers. As a result, individuals are likely to support an organization with their purchase intent; this relationship is mediated by the consumer-company identification (c-c identification) (Ahearne et al., 2005). The formation of a self-identification with a company is crucial to purchasing behaviors in the customer decision-making process (Huang et al., 2017; Lii, 2011; Wu & Tsai, 2007). This transition of internal sustainability mission statements linked to external consumer behaviors is possible by c-c identification, which can play a significant role as a mediator.

No doubt, the urgency for corporations to strive for sustainable development to gain competitive advantages is now or never. Research on mission statements has commonly taken an internal perspective to affect organizational performance and employee behaviors, but research on relationships between sustainability mission statements and consumer behaviors from an external aspect is limited. To bridge the view from internal to external, consumer-company identification (c-c identification) plays a significant mediating role. Furthermore, the role of c-c identification between sustainability mission statements and consumer behavior has not been addressed. These are important issues to discuss for better sustainability development.

A study exploring sustainability mission statements and consumer behavior would provide valuable information on how to communicate corporate sustainability to external stakeholders. The knowledge derived from the study could improve the understanding of social, economic, and environmental sustainability that affect and matter to consumers and provide managerial implications regarding an integrated sustainability mission statement that builds a faithful relationship with consumers. Overall, the purpose of the study not only fills the literature gap by exploring the relationship between the sustainability mission statement and consumer behavior, but also connects the sustainability mission statement from an internal to an external view of consumers by linking the mediating role of the c-c identification. Therefore, this study has the following research questions (RQ).

RQ1: Does the sustainability mission statement affect consumer evaluation?

RQ2: For a sustainability mission statement of social, economic, and environmental sustainability, which sustainability has a stronger effect?

RQ3: Does c–c identification mediate the relationship between a sustainability mission statement and consumer behavior? The contribution and novelty of the research not only fills in literature gaps taking a different external perspective but also integrates theories of corporate sustainability and social and organizational identification in the research model. Additionally, in this paper, the mediating role of c–c identification is explored, linking the relationship between sustainability mission statement and consumer purchase intention. The implications of the study can help companies that are strategically off to a great start, from a sustainability mission statement to consumer purchasing behaviors.

2 Literature review and hypotheses

2.1 Mission statement

The idea of mission statements serving as an organizational strategic weapon was originally introduced by Peter Drucker, who is known as “the father of modern management” (Chun & Davies, 2001; Drucker, 1974). The notion that a business is solely defined by its mission has gained popularity ever since (Peter & Donnelly, 1995; Sattari et al., 2011; Sufi & Lyons, 2003). For organizations, challenging business conditions such as consumerism and SDGs call for a mission statement as a starting point of corporate strategic planning processes and to sharpen corporate focus on sustainable business goals (Awan, 2011; Bart et al., 2001; Claro & Esteves, 2021).

A mission statement defines the identity of firms and articulates the objectives that corporations strive to achieve (Daivd & Daivd, 2003). It also provides a sense of direction for organizations (Byars & Neil, 1987) while assisting in the formulation and implementation of business strategies (Bart & Tabone, 1998; Pearce & Roth, 1988). A mission statement sets guidelines for identifying the priorities of an organization and serves as a criterion for allocating corporate resources (Wilson, 1992). Furthermore, the statement depicts the values that an organization holds and drives stakeholders to relate to the purpose of the company and strengthens their sense of unity or belonging to the firm (Campbell & Yeung, 1991; Collins & Porras, 1991; Law & Breznik, 2018).

In terms of what constitutes a mission statement, no consensus has been reached on the structure because different researchers have expressed different views and firms have followed different methods to set their missions (Sufi & Lyons, 2003). However, an analysis using 218 mission statements collected from Fortune 500 companies in 1986 has drawn considerable academic attention and identified mission statement components, which were customers, products/services, markets, technology, concern for survival, philosophy, self-concept, concern for public image, and concern for employees (Pearce & David, 1987). This might offer the basic elements for crafting mission statements.

2.2 Mission statement: an external perspective

The conventional mission statement serves as an internal communication tool that provides strategic directions that guide managers and employee’s behavior (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008). Apart from that, a mission statement communicates the distinctive values and qualities of a company to external stakeholders. Through the expression of corporate identity

and values, a mission statement provides the public with insight into the firm (Pearce & David, 1987; Trivedi et al., 2018) and is made available to anyone seeking information about the company (Darbi, 2012; Klemm et al., 1991; Rajasekar, 2013). This makes it realistic to expect messages from mission statements to reach external stakeholders, especially consumers. Therefore, a mission statement can serve as a public relations tool to portray a favorable firm image to shape the perceptions of stakeholders (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008; Peyrefitte, 2012).

Therefore, mission statements can be viewed as a medium that communicates corporate identity and informs customers about the principles, values, and purpose of the firm (Allison, 2017; Bartkus & Glassman, 2008; Byars & Neil, 1987; Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997). Comparatively, firms would rather not publicize their mission statement if they are concerned that internal usage is more important (Alegre et al., 2018; Klemm et al., 1991), but this may abandon the opportunity to create awareness from external stakeholders of corporate values and develop a connection with them. Yamauchi (2001) stated that the disclosure of corporate policies and plans can maintain good relations with society, and a mission statement provides a platform for the revelation. Similarly, Hackely (1998) proposed that the conveyance of a mission statement to “certain parties” acts as a catalyst to advance its usefulness. In this case, mission statements must be filtered through and understood not only by internal but also external stakeholders (Amato & Amato, 2002; Rajasekar, 2013).

2.3 Corporate sustainability

Society at large has begun to question business leaders and ask them to take responsibility in their conduct to meet the challenges of sustainable development (Cornelissen, 2008; Hoffman & Bazerman, 2007). Among business executives, responses to sustainability challenges are understood to have an impact on business competitiveness or even the survival of the organization (Lubin & Esty, 2010). The term corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been interchangeably used with the concept of corporate sustainability; however, scholars have argued and tried to clarify the meanings (Sheehy & Farneti, 2021). The concept of sustainability is defined as having the goal of balancing and achieving the best social, economic, and environmental consequences for humankind (Salas-Zapata & Ortiz-Muñoz, 2019). Toward the goal of sustainable development, the converging view of sustainable development centers on the model of integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Ancell, 2016; Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002; Hoffman & Bazerman, 2007). That is to say, the triple bottom line principle must be integrated into business policies and practices to satisfy sustainability standards (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014; Montiel, 2008).

The economic aspect refers to the ability to create value through the production of goods that improve quality of life while enhancing financial performance (Bansal, 2005; Sheth et al., 2011). Economic prosperity is gained through value creation (Bansal, 2005). The social aspect concerns the role of the business in relation to society and the effects of business practices on the well-being of people (Kim et al., 2015; Sheth et al., 2011). This indicates the need to fulfill corporate social responsibility to meet the expectations of stakeholders (Bansal, 2005) and add value to the community in which businesses operate (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). The environmental aspect confronts businesses with ecological problems brought on by business actions, which signifies engagement in activities regarding the responsible use of resources and the mitigation of negative impacts on the environment (Bansal, 2005; Park & Kim, 2016). In general,

the evaluation of business performance should incorporate the three facets of sustainability to reflect a balance of economy, environment, and society (Kim et al., 2015; Sheth et al., 2011).

2.4 Sustainability mission statements and sustainability performance

In the context of strategy development, a mission statement provides the basis for the development of corporate sustainability initiatives (Baumgartner, 2014). The development of a sustainability mission statement reflects the pursuit of balancing financial and social performance (Brønn, 2001; Galpin et al., 2015). A growing number of companies are merging sustainability into their business practices to achieve process efficiency and foster corporate growth (Bonini & Gorner, 2011).

In particular, firms have attempted to align sustainable approaches with corporate goals by introducing sustainability into mission statements (Galpin et al., 2015). According to White (2005), more than 80% of senior executives in US-based companies have regarded sustainability as an important element of the strategic mission in considering the way a company manages its sustainable responsibilities that impact its financial success. One study compared mission statements for the top performing listed companies in Fortune 500 between the years 2000 and 2008; the results indicated that the percentage of firms addressing environmental issues doubled, while the inclusion of the community and the identification of ethical behaviors expanded nearly fivefold and tenfold, respectively (King et al., 2010). Currently, an empirical study applied content analysis and investigated the sustainability mission statement in different industries and countries during 2011–2018 and found that 83% of 103 industry leaders expressed their concerns about the sustainability mission. Furthermore, the commitment was the first in social sustainability, representing 33%, followed by 25% and 21% in economic and environmental sustainability, respectively (Zahan & Sultana, 2019). Another study also used content analysis and indicated that the more sustainable terms used in the university mission statement have the higher sustainability ratings (Lopez & Martin, 2018). This growing trend of sustainability mission statements is overwhelming.

In the management literature, research linked mission statements to firm financial performance (e.g., Amran, 2012; Bartkus et al., 2000; Marjanova & Sofijanova, 2014), and others adopted different approaches to examine the effect of mission statements on nonprofit organizational performance (Macedo et al., 2016; Wang & Lin, 2011). A shared sense derived from a mission statement has appeared to have an impact on shaping employee behaviors (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Klemm et al., 1991).

In the marketing literature, studies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) have indicated their impact on purchase intention (Bianchi et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2011, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2015). Studies of green marketing strategies provide evidence that consumers are willing to pay more for environmental and social sustainability (Amoako et al., 2022; Awan, 2011). In general, a literature gap on corporate sustainability in the marketing and management fields leads to a significant need for research that explores sustainability mission statements on marketing performance from the perspectives of external consumers that no study has investigated before. Examples of businesses that integrate sustainability into mission statements, either in part or entirely, as seen from part of previous research on this topic, are organized in Table 1 (Kemp & Dwyer, 2003; King et al., 2010; Lin & Ryan, 2016; Woolverton & Dimitri, 2010).

Table 1 Examples of mission statements incorporating sustainability

Economic	Social	Environmental
<p>We provide reliable, convenient and consistent air transportation that meets or exceeds customer expectations and earns a sustainable profit. (Northwest Airlines)</p>	<p>We are committed to taking a leadership role in the communities in which we live and work by providing company support and encouraging employee involvement. (Valero Energy)</p>	<p>Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis. (Patagonia)</p>
<p>Qantas is one of the world's leading airlines, operating a domestic and international fleet of 149 aircraft, linking 104 ports in 29 countries... Our aim is to manage our operations, costs and productivity to ensure profitability for our shareholders. (Qantas)</p>	<p>We consider the highest standards of personal and professional ethics as the cornerstone of trust among our customers and ourselves; We deliver on the commitments we make; We recognize our obligation to the communities where we live and work. (Cardinal Health)</p>	<p>The hallmarks of Food with Integrity include things like unprocessed, seasonal, family-farmed, sustainable, nutritious, naturally raised, added hormone free, organic, and artisanal. And, since embracing this philosophy, it's had tremendous impact on how we run our restaurants and our business. (Chipotle)</p>
<p>Perform at increasing levels of productivity and efficiency that will generate rates of profitability to sustain its growth and allow for reinvestment in the development, improvement and well-being of its human resources (Royal Jordanian)</p>	<p>Demonstrate the company's values and good corporate citizenship by supporting community-based organizations and activities in key markets that the company serves, encouraging and providing ongoing opportunities for employee volunteerism (American West)</p>	<p>Prevent pollution by conserving energy and resources, recycling wastes, lowering noise and pursuing more conservation strategies (Cathay Pacific)</p>

2.5 Purchase intention

Purchase intention is a vital marketing indicator that provides a clue about how likely consumers are to prefer to purchase a company's product or/and service over a given period of time. Purchase intention is defined as the level of willingness of a customer to purchase a product or service (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015). When consumers perceive a company's product or service to meet their needs or expectations, they form the perception of a purchase intention. Studies see the term as an essential construct in marketing and the literature has analyzed and utilized it in a variety of ways.

2.6 Sustainability mission statement and purchase intention

Sustainability mission statements are at the forefront of customer communication (Marjanova & Sofijanova, 2014) and are believed to be critical in building customer relationships (Rajasekar, 2013). Sustainability mission statements specify a firm's objective of engaging its business activities in a socially sustainable way, this message given the perception that the firm embraces sustainable development, meets social expectations, and contributes to society. Sustainable behaviors are likely to motivate the intention to purchase.

Management literature provides evidence that a mission statement is capable of influencing employee behaviors (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Klemm et al., 1991) and perhaps consumer behaviors. Furthermore, the marketing literature on CSR has supported a positive relationship between these constructs and purchase intention (Bianchi et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2011, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2015). Green marketing strategy has a positive impact on consumer purchase intention (Amoako et al., 2022). Sustainability mission statements, highly publicized messages that contain socially sustainable and responsible behaviors, are also likely to have an impact on the purchase intention. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1 A sustainability mission statement has a positive effect on the purchase intention.

H1a The economic sustainability of the mission statements has a positive effect on the purchase intention.

H1b The social sustainability of the mission statements has a positive effect on the purchase intention.

H1c The environmental sustainability of the mission statements has a positive effect on the purchase intention.

2.7 Consumer-company identification

Social identify theory (SIT) offers the definition and explains why individuals form a social identity through a cognitive process of categorizing oneself with a positive aspect as a member of a larger social group such as society, community, and organizations, and have impact on the social group (Tajfel et al., 1979; Turner & Tajfel, 1986). Based on SIT, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) further conceptualized the idea of social categorization and

identification into organizational context and extended the identity concept to link the relationship between consumers and organizations. Once individuals' self-interest is identified with a social group as an in-group favoritism (us versus them, out-group member), they tend to adhere to its norms, values, and behaviors (Islam, 2014; Turner & Tajfel, 1986). In the consumer market, consumer evaluation is in accordance with the attractiveness of corporate identity and how it aligns with the self-definitional need (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). In addition, corporate identity, in particular the core value, is reflected in corporate mission (Scott & Lane, 2000). Therefore, social and organizational identity theories provide the foundation as a strategic fit to link sustainability mission statement to consumer purchase intention.

C–c identification determines consumer relations with a company. In essence, customers identify with a company when they perceive the potential of enriching their social identity or when they detect similarities in the self-image presented by the corporation, despite being officially a member of the company (Ahearne et al., 2005; Scott & Lane, 2000). The c–c identification is formed when the company from which one's self-definitional needs are met, resulting in a strong psychologically committed relationship (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Support behaviors toward companies derived from the strong relationship have endowed the concept with great significance, prompting companies to enhance c–c identification and driving researchers to determine its antecedents (Ahearne et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2017). This research argues that sustainability stated in corporate mission is an indication of strategic commitment, the core value of corporate identity that not only meets the urgent need, but also connects with the self-definitional need of consumers to care for the society and willing to act for the good cause. As a result, c–c identification links the sustainability mission statement from the internal corporate perspective to the consumer's purchase intention from an external perspective.

2.8 Sustainability mission statement and consumer-company identification

Shaped by a sustainable mission, corporate identity denotes the enduring characteristics and reflects the distinctiveness of the business (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Pearce & David, 1987; Scott & Lane, 2000). Identification occurs when people perceive an overlapped image between themselves and perceptual organizations or feel attracted to the identity that a corporation exhibits (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). C–c identification assists in building committed relationships with customers; the conveyance of corporate identity through core values of its sustainable mission with which customers identified cognitively and emotionally is to be considerably succeeded (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Through the use of sustainability mission statements, companies lead consumers to form associations between cognitive organizational images and their identity by portraying desired traits, which, in turn, influence customer identification (Scott & Lane, 2000). Consumers decide whether they want to be involved with the company based on their own interpretation of the sustainability mission statement (Bartkus et al., 2000). The desirable traits that stem from the commitment to fulfill societal expectations should resonate with the sense of self and their identification with firms whose engagements in socially sustainable practices serve to enrich their social identity (Lichtenstein et al., 2004).

The existing literature has highlighted the relationship between CSR and c–c identification (Du et al., 2007) but not corporate sustainability. People tend to assign themselves to social categories that display such attributes (Fatma et al., 2018). In other

words, c–c identification is likely to develop due to the self-esteem and social image that is derived from the socially sustainable actions corporations perform (Aquino & Reed, 2002). However, sustainability mission statements present the responsiveness of economic, social, and environmental sustainability to society and signify the concerns that corporations embrace.

A sustainability mission statement with CSR values signals a company that cares about stakeholders' concerns and therefore contributes to sustainable wealth (Amran et al., 2014). A study specifically explored influential factors, such as a lack of understanding of customer needs, which can lead to a barrier to implement social sustainability (Awan et al., 2018). Lin and Ryan (2016) suggested that if customers cognitively agree with a corporate mission statement, positive perceptions are likely to be formed. Extending from SIT and c–c identification theory and the concept of corporate sustainability, this study posits that c–c identification will be triggered by sustainability mission statements due to positive and meaningful messages of social responsibility and sustainable value creation for customers. The following hypotheses are developed:

H2 A sustainability mission statement has a positive effect on c–c identification.

H2a The economic sustainability of the mission statement has a positive effect on c–c identification.

H2b The social sustainability of the mission statement has a positive effect on c–c identification.

H2c The environmental sustainability of the mission statement has a positive effect on c–c identification.

2.9 C–c identification and purchase intention

The intimacy developed from c–c identification leads customers to care about the organization and support its sustainable goals (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Therefore, once c–c identification is formed, loyalty support behaviors (Fatma et al., 2018), word of mouth generation or tolerance to negative information (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) are shaped. Consistent with the notion, two separate studies explored the antecedents to c–c identification (Ahearne et al., 2005) and the effect of different types of CSR initiatives (Lii, 2011) found that c–c identification is positively related to both in-role (buying behaviors) and extra-role (word-of-mouth) behaviors. Furthermore, Wu and Tsai (2007) explored the consequences of c–c identification and observed a significantly positive relationship between c–c identification and three different factors of purchase intention, namely consumer recruitment and loyalty, tolerance of defects, and customer advice and complaints. Based on these results, customer engagement in supportive actions serves “to reinforce an individual’s self-concept by maintaining their feelings of self-worth” (Cornwell & Coote, 2005, p.271). Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H3 C–c identification has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention.

2.9.1 Mediating role of c–c identification

Based on the theory of social identity and organizational identity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Turner & Tajfel, 1986), the literature has shown that an organizational identity built on CSR can involve identification with a company because good deeds overlap with their self-identity. According to social identity theory, a company with sustainability mission statements, and a company with such statements is able to form a strong relationship with customers (as we do in the same social group). With such a relationship, customers are patronized to support an organization when the identification is developed (Ahearne et al., 2005).

According to theories, the concept of c–c identification is a great strategic fit to link an internal sustainability mission statement to external consumer purchase behavior. Supporting behaviors, such as purchasing products from the company, become an act of self-expression as a result of a crucial, identified and powerful connection with customers (Huang et al., 2017). Consequently, c–c identification is expected to mediate the relationship between sustainability mission statements and purchase intention. As a result, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4 The c–c identification mediates the relationship between the sustainability mission statement and the purchase intention.

H4a The c–c identification mediates the relationship between the economic sustainability of the mission statement and the purchase intention.

H4b The c–c identification mediates the relationship between the social sustainability of the mission statement and the purchase intention.

H4c The C–c identification mediates the relationship between the environmental sustainability of the mission statement and the purchase intention.

The following section discusses research methodology. It includes research design and model, sample and procedure, and measurement and scale validation.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

Based on the concept of corporate sustainability, the theory of social identity, and organizational identification, the research model is formed (see Fig. 1). The model starts from a sustainability mission statement, an external communication message exposed to customers as a powerful means of diffusing corporate identity (Pearce & David, 1987) that mirrors the consumer's self-identification of doing good, and then consumers turn into supportive actions for the company. Furthermore, theories of social identity and organizational identity provide the basis for the model as a strategic fit to link the sustainability statement to the intention of purchasing from the consumer. As a result, the relationships between sustainability mission statement, c–c identification, and consumer purchase intention are

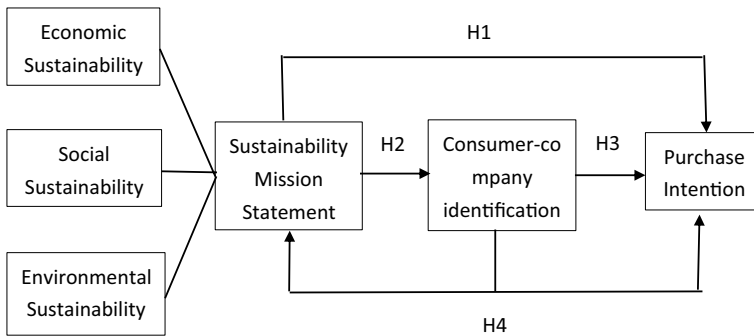


Fig. 1 Research model with mediation effect

investigated. In general, a quantitative causal research design was applied and partial least squares (PLS) statistics were conducted to test the hypotheses in the model.

3.2 Sample and procedure

A convenience sample was used for the investigation. A pretest comprised of 46 students was conducted at a local university in Taiwan to ensure that the items of the sustainability mission statement, the c–c identification and the purchase intention in the questionnaire were clear and understood. Subsequently, 258 surveys of the revised questionnaires in English and Chinese were sent and 245 valid responses were recorded. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of an airline’s sustainability mission statement.

The research was based on the assumption that exposure to a sustainability-centered mission statement would affect the development of customer identification with a company and, in turn, generates the intention to purchase. Therefore, respondents were first given a fictitious mission statement, a paragraph that contains environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The formation of this sustainability mission statement was an integration of mission statements from different sources (see Appendix). After reading the sustainability mission statement, respondents were then asked to complete the questionnaire.

3.3 Measurement and scale validation

The measurement involved a sustainability mission statement (which includes economic, social, and environmental sustainability), c–c identification, and purchase intention. The operational definition of these constructs is arranged in Table 2. The elements of the environmental, social and economic sustainability instruments were an integration adapted from several sources (Crespo & del Bosque, 2005; Kim et al., 2015; Lin & Ryan, 2016; Martínez & delBosque, 2014; Moisescu, 2018). C–c identification was assessed using scales adopted from the work of Huang et al. (2017). Measurement of purchase intention was adopted from Lii et al. (2013). Then, all the questions were modified to fit the context of an airline. All items were measured on 5-point Likert scales. Table 3 shows the measurement and source of items for each variable.

To estimate the reliability of the internal consistency of the elements, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was applied and ranged from 0.684 to 0.875 (Table 4) for all measures

Table 2 Operational definition of construct variables

Constructs	Operational definition	Sources
Economic sustainability	Refers to firms' ability to create value through the production of goods that improve the quality of life while enhancing the financial performance	Sheth et al., (2011)
Social sustainability	Concerns the role of business in relation to society and the effects of business practices on the well-being of people	Sheth et al., (2011)
Environmental sustainability	Refers to engagement in activities regarding the responsible use of resources and the mitigation of negative impacts on the environment	Park and Kim, (2016)
C-c identification	Identification occurs when consumers perceive an overlapping image between themselves and perceptual organizations or feel attracted to the identity that a corporation exhibits	Bhattacharya and Sen, (2003)
Purchase intention	Purchase intention is defined as a level of willingness that a customer will purchase a product or service	Gunawan and Huang, (2015)

Table 3 Measurement of constructs

Construct	Sustainability mission statement (Integration)	Items source adapted
Economic sustainability	The airline ensures its survival and success in the long run by meeting customers' needs The airline tries to maximize profit by providing dependable transport service The airline concerns about economic objectives such as survival, growth and profitability of the company	Martínez & delBosque (2014), Lin and Ryan (2016) Crespo and del Bosque (2005), Lin and Ryan (2016) Moisescu (2018), Lin and Ryan (2016)
Social sustainability	The airline is committed to the community in which it operates The airline concerns about Corporate Social Responsibility	Martínez & delBosque (2014), Lin and Ryan (2016) Kim et al. (2015), Lin and Ryan (2016)
Environmental sustainability	The airline appreciates its employees and treats them fairly The airline applies green technology to business operations The airline uses environmentally friendly materials to enhance its advantage The airline believes the protection of the environment to be an integral part of good business practice	Martínez & delBosque (2014), Lin and Ryan (2016) Kim et al. (2015), Lin and Ryan (2016) Moisescu (2018), Lin and Ryan (2016) Kim et al. (2015), Lin and Ryan (2016)
Consumer-company identification	I strongly identify with this airline This airline fits well to me I feel attached to this airline It's likely that I will fly with this airline	Huang et al. (2017)
Purchase intention	I will consider purchasing tickets from this airline the next time if I need to travel abroad I'll try this airline	Lii et al., (2013)

Table 4 Reliability of constructs

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Economic sustainability mission	3	0.684
Social sustainability mission	3	0.723
Environmental sustainability mission	3	0.762
Consumer-company identification	3	0.781
Purchase Intention	3	0.868

except the economic sustainability of the mission statement, which was very close to the acceptable value of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). In addition, the composite reliability of each construct achieved a score higher than the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2011), with a lowest value of 0.825 for the environmental mission and a highest value of 0.919 for the purchase intention, indicating good internal consistency for further analysis (as presented in Table 5).

Furthermore, the questionnaire items and the designed sustainability mission statements were proofread and examined by experts (three marketing professors) to ensure the validity of the content before the questionnaires were officially distributed. The construct validity of the study was examined by performing convergent and discriminant validity tests. According to the criteria established by Hair et al. (2011), the value of average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than a value of 0.50 for a construct to be considered sufficiently valid. The results in Table 5 showed that all AVE values exceeded the 0.50 threshold and ranged from 0.611 for environmental mission to 0.792 for purchase intention. Furthermore, it was desired that the loading value of each construct be higher than 0.7 ($p < 0.000$) and that all factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Regarding the evaluation of discriminant validity, the Fornell–Larcker criterion recommended that the square root of the AVE of each latent variable should be greater than the correlation of other compared constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The discriminant validity of the constructs was confirmed such that each square root of the AVE for all dimensions, 0.836 for c–c identification, 0.782 for sustainable economic mission, 0.822 for sustainable environmental mission, 0.802 for sustainable social mission, and 0.890 for purchase intention was greater than the correlation of the constructs (see Table 6).

4 Results

First, demographic analysis was performed and revealed that 63% of the sample was female and mainly were students who were enrolled in bachelor or master programs. Their age ranged from around 18–20 (54%) to 21–31 (46%). All means had a value of 3.49–4.17 and the standard deviation ranged from 0.63 to 0.89 for all variables in the study.

To test the proposed model, PLS path modeling was used to estimate the causal relationships between the constructs. Furthermore, a bootstrapping (5000 resamples) was performed to assess a statistically significant level of the structural models. Two structural models were performed, model one without the mediation effect and model two with the mediation model.

Table 5 Convergent validity and construct reliability test

Variable item	Outer Loadings	P-value
<i>Economic sustainability mission (CR=0.825, AVE=0.611)</i>		
1. The airline ensures its survival and success in the long run by meeting customers' needs	0.804	0.000
2. The airline tries to maximize profit by providing dependable transport service	0.809	0.000
3. The airline concerns about economic objectives such as survival, growth and profitability of the company	0.729	0.000
<i>Social sustainability mission (CR=0.843, AVE=0.643)</i>		
1. The airline is committed to the community in which it operates	0.763	0.000
2. The airline concerns about Corporate Social Responsibility	0.798	0.000
3. The airline appreciates its employees and treats them fairly	0.842	0.000
<i>Environmental sustainability mission (CR=0.862, AVE=0.676)</i>		
1. The airline applies green technology to business operations	0.813	0.000
2. The airline uses environmentally friendly materials to enhance its advantage	0.843	0.000
3. The airline believes the protection of the environment to be an integral part of good business practice	0.811	0.000
<i>Consumer-company identification (CR=0.874, AVE=0.699)</i>		
1. I strongly identify with this airline	0.738	0.000
2. This airline fits well to me	0.893	0.000
3. I feel attracted to this airline	0.868	0.000
<i>Purchase intention (CR=0.919, AVE=0.792)</i>		
1. It's likely that I will fly with this airline	0.888	0.000
2. I will consider purchasing tickets from this airline the next time if I need to travel abroad	0.920	0.000
3. I'll try this airline	0.860	0.000

Table 6 Square root of AVE and correlations between constructs

	C-c identification	Economic sustain-ability	Environmental sustain-ability	Purchase intention	Social sustainability
C-c identification	(0.836)				
Economic sustainability	0.264	(0.782)			
Environmental sustainability	0.508	0.232	(0.822)		
Purchase intention	0.679	0.276	0.496	(0.890)	
Social sustainability	0.460	0.321	0.553	0.400	(0.802)

Square root of AVEs is shown on diagonal and other values present the correlations between constructs

4.1 Model without mediation effect

The first construal model without the mediation effect has an R^2 value of 0.299 for the purchase intention, indicating weak explanatory power (see Fig. 2). The variance of consumer purchase intention is positively and significantly explained by the three sustainability mission statements.

Bootstrapping was used to test the significance of the path model. Table 7 summarizes the total effect of the path coefficient, the t -statistics, and the p -value for each causal path. The results indicated that the mission statement for environmental and economic sustainability has a significant positive effect on the purchase intention. Regarding the relative strength of the effect, environmental sustainability had the highest β coefficient of 0.391 ($p < 0.000$), followed by the economic sustainability statement with the β coefficient of 0.152 ($p < 0.000$), followed by the economic sustainability statement with the β coefficient of 0.152 ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, hypotheses 1a and 1c were supported (according to the literature); H1b was not supported. The social sustainability of the mission statement had no significant effect on the purchase intention. This might suggest that a mediator is needed for the construct.

4.2 Model with mediation effect

Regarding the model with mediation effect, the R^2 values for the two endogenous constructs were 0.315 for the c - c identification and 0.519 for the purchase intention, indicating a moderate predictive power (Chin, 1998) (see Fig. 3). The variance in c - c identification was positive and significant, explained by the three sustainability mission statements.

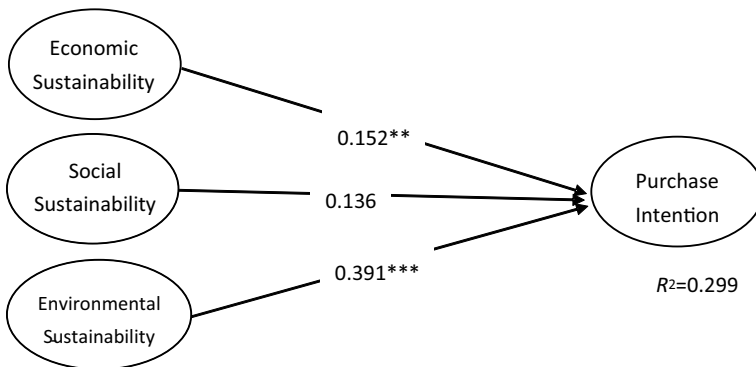


Fig. 2 Research model without mediation effect

Table 7 Total effect of the path coefficients

Hypotheses/Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	t value	P -value	Decision
H1a: Eco. Sus > PI	0.152	0.161	0.054	2.821	0.005	Supported
H1b: Soc. Sus > PI	0.136	0.140	0.076	1.787	0.074	Not supported
H1c: Env. Sus > PI	0.391	0.391	0.068	5.749	0.000	Supported

Eco. Sus, economic sustainability; Soc. Sus, social sustainability; Env. Sus, environmental sustainability

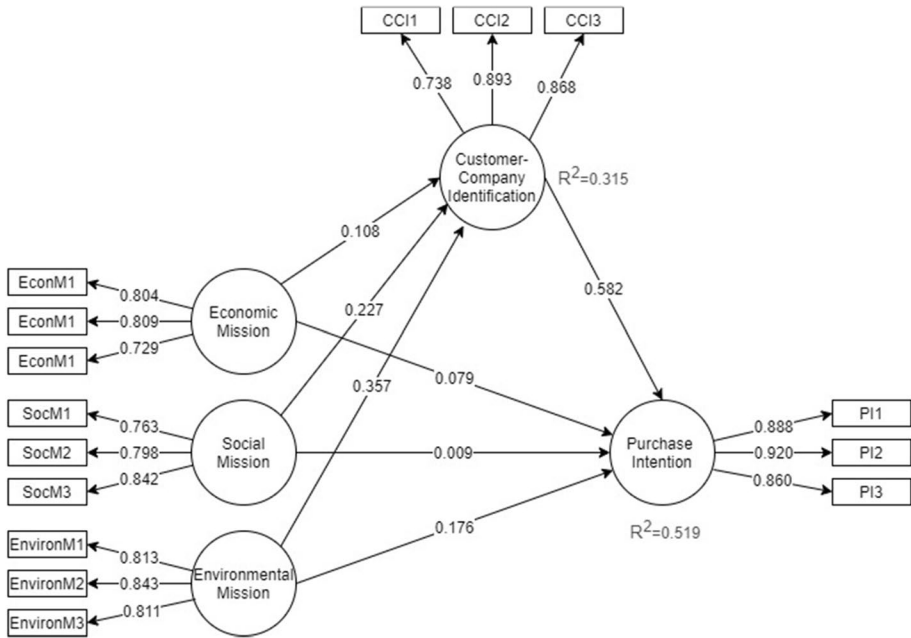


Fig. 3 Model results with mediation effect

Furthermore, the strength of the relationship between the model and the purchase intention was strong, positive, and significant. Furthermore, comparing the R^2 values of the model with the total effect (without mediation) to the model with a mediation effect increased from 0.299 to 0.519 (see Figs. 2 and 3), showing a complementary partial mediation effect, meaning that c-c identification played a significant mediator role in the research model.

Table 8 summarizes the results for the mediation model. The results indicated that only the environmental sustainability of the mission statement has a significant and positive causal relationship (β value of 0.176, $p < 0.004$) directly linked to the purchase intention. When considering the c-c identifications in the structural model, the

Table 8 Total effect of the mediation model

Hypothesis	Original sample (β)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>P</i> -values	Decision
H3: CCI—> PI	0.582	0.579	0.057	10.156	0.000	Supported
H2a: Eco Sus—> CCI	0.108	0.116	0.051	2.107	0.035	Supported
Econ Sus—> PI	0.079	0.084	0.056	1.648	0.099	Not supported
H2b: Soc Sus > CCI	0.227	0.228	0.076	3.002	0.003	Supported
Soc Sus > PI	0.009	0.103	0.077	0.156	0.876	Not supported
H2c: Env Sus—> CCI	0.357	0.359	0.062	5.733	0.000	Supported
Env Sus—> PI	0.176	0.184	0.068	2.864	0.004	Supported

CCI, consumer-company identification; PI, purchase intention

Table 9 Total indirect effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>P</i> -values
CCI—> PI					
Eco Sus—> CCI					
Eco Sus—> PI	0.070	0.084	0.056	1.648	0.099
Env Sus—> CCI					
Env Sus—> PI	0.176	0.184	0.068	2.864	0.004
Soc Sus—> CCI					
Soc Sus—> PI	0.009	0.103	0.054	0.156	0.876

Table 10 Specific indirect effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation	<i>t</i> -statistics	<i>P</i> -values
Eco Sus—> CCI—> PI	0.063	0.067	0.029	2.157	0.031
Env Sus—> CCI—> PI	0.208	0.208	0.042	4.900	0.000
Soc Sus—> CCI—> PI	0.132	0.132	0.045	2.925	0.003

relationship was strengthened with a β value that increased significantly from 0.176 to 0.357. Furthermore, the relative strength effect of three sustainability factors of the mission statements (β value ranging from 0.357, 0.227, and 0.108 for environmental, social, and economic sustainability, respectively) was all significant and positive related to the c–c identification. Additionally, c–c identification has a strong, significant and positive effect on purchase intention with β value of 0.582 ($p < 0.000$), explained 58.2% of the variance of purchase intention (in agreement with Lii, 2011 and Wu & Tsai, 2007). These findings demonstrate that the c–c identification mediated the relationship between the sustainability mission statements and the intention to buy from the consumer. In conclusion, hypotheses H2 (a, b, c) and H3 were all supported.

4.3 Mediation analysis

Total indirect effects and specific indirect effects were also conducted to test and analyze the mediator role of c–c identification. The result of the total indirect effects showed that there were no direct effects between the sustainability mission statement and the purchase intention, except the environmental mission (see Table 9). Additionally, Table 10 indicates that the c–c identification was a significant mediator between the three sustainability factors of the mission statement and the purchase intention. Overall, the specific indirect effect demonstrated that c–c identification has a partial mediation effect (H4 was supported). As a result, c–c identification significantly and positively mediated the relationship between the three sustainability of the mission statements and the purchase intention.

5 Implications

5.1 Theoretical implications

In response to sustainable consumption, recent research has attempted to explore how customer perception of corporate sustainability influences marketing results (Kim et al., 2015; Martínez & del Bosque, 2014; Moisescu, 2018). In sustainability development, the triple bottom line principle has been integrated into business policies and practices to satisfy sustainable standards (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014; Montiel, 2008), but no study has tried to integrate sustainability concepts with mission statements, that is, on a consumer perspective. This research investigated two research models. The first model without mediation contributes to the literature by first incorporating the theory of corporate sustainability into mission statements and then explores its effect on consumer behaviors, an external perspective from consumer perception. The second mediation model based on social identity and organizational identity theories is the first to explore relationships between the sustainability mission statement, c–c identification, and consumer purchase intention. Significantly, the two theories provide a foundation for c–c identification to link corporate sustainability mission statements from an internal view to an external consumer perspective and support that sustainability mission statement becomes a great communication message to align with customer social needs.

5.2 Practical implications

Two research models of with/without mediation were investigated. The first model examined the relationship between the sustainability mission statement and the purchase intention. The mission statement of environmental and economic sustainability was statistically significant in the purchase intention (consistent with CSR studies, e.g., Bianchi et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2011, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2015), but the statement of social sustainability was not significant in the purchase intention. The relative effect of the sustainability mission statements on the purchase intention suggests that environmental sustainability should be a priority. Without the mediation effect, environmental sustainability exerts the strongest effect directly on the purchase intention, followed by the economic statement.

From the findings, several practical implications are recommended for the marketing strategy and implementation. First of all, sustainability mission statements must replace the traditional mission statement as a way to advocate for corporate commitment to sustainability. Second, a sustainability mission statement should be short in nature, and should focus on environmental sustainability, striving to protect the environment, using eco-friendly materials and green technology. As for economic sustainability, company needs to first meet customer needs, provide reliable products / services, and then concern its profitability. As a company commits to do so, consumers are likely to support the company with their purchasing behavior.

For the second research model with the mediation effect, c–c identification significantly mediated the relationship between the sustainability mission statement and consumer purchase intention. The results showed that environmental sustainability has the strongest significant impact on c–c identification, followed by social and economic sustainability, and then c–c identification further influenced significantly on purchase intention. These results provided evidence that c–c identification is critical to connect

the sustainability mission statement with the consumer's purchase intention. According to the relative strength effect, this also pointed to the importance of environmental sustainability that companies should first focus on, no matter with or without the mediation effect. Interestingly, social sustainability became significant and more important than economic sustainability in purchasing intention when arbitrated by c-c identification. Overall, this means that when consumers' self-concept matches with a corporate social identity through its sustainability mission statement, consumers are likely to perceive themselves as a member of the company (social category effect) and support the company with purchasing behaviors. The practical implication provides insight for corporations into how to gain customer identification, not only caring and protecting environment, using green technology, providing reliable products or services, meeting customer needs, but also being socially responsible and a good citizen to its employees and community. Subsequently, consumer support that turns into purchasing behavior is then possible.

Other implication of the study is to treat sustainability mission statements as a starting point of a marketing strategy to send a consistent and persistent communication message internally and externally. As such, companies must be serious about keeping their promise to respond to environmental, social, and economic sustainability and act firmly in line with it. Internally, sustainability mission statements express the concerns of a company for its employees, which may help recruit and retain skilled and talented human resources who share the same values with the company. Furthermore, the content message of a sustainability mission statement provides an effective way for companies to communicate their support of the cause and fulfill their promise to consumers. In turn, consumers are likely to perceive a favorable image and socially identify with the company. As a result, customer identification is formed when the company meets self-definitional needs; then, consumers feel good and are likely to benefit the company by purchasing its products or services, resulting in a strong relationship.

In addition, sustainability mission statements can help articulate the content of sustainability and frame communication messages that benefit a company in gaining the identification and purchase intention of customers. Regarding environmental sustainability, the message should "integrate environmental protection and resource conservation into business" and "exploit innovative technology for sustainable growth." When defining the content of environmental sustainability in this way, customers are likely to perceive the long-term commitment from companies critically related to environmental sustainability. Companies that take good care of the natural environment win customers' identification and are likely to have the intention to purchase in the future. Regarding social sustainability, messages should include "take good care of the most valuable asset, employees, and help them achieve their life goals" and "help and maintain community relations by working in partnership with local markets to grow hand in hand sustainably." These messages frame employees and communities that are primarily affected and closely related to the business of a firm's business; therefore, customers are more likely to perceive the company to be sincere and down to earth in doing what it says. Subsequently, customers are likely to recognize and identify with the company, which will likely be reflected in purchase behaviors later. To frame the message of economic sustainability, the key words are "deliver excellent quality products and services" and "achieve sustained profitability for the benefit of stakeholders." These statements sound clear and basic for customers to agree on and are easy to reconcile with the firm. In general, sustainability mission statements benefit the company in establishing a strong commitment to establish a strong, committed relationship with consumers, as we are together in a social group to make this world a better place.

In particular, c–c identification is a critical and essential mediator that not only bridges but also strengthens the relationship between the company’s sustainability mission statements and the consumer’s purchase intention. A sustainability-focused mission statement offers companies the opportunity to establish an identity that resonates with customers; the more customers perceive sustainability in a mission statement, the more a company benefits from such a communication message. When the mediation model was examined, the direct effects of environmental and economic sustainability on purchase intention were lessened, all three sustainability have to go through c–c identification, and in part social sustainability became significant, showing that c–c identification is a complementary mediator. When customers perceive a company’s conduct as similar to what they are concerned with, they are likely to support the firm with the intention of purchasing behaviors. Overall, sustainable consumption requested by consumers urges companies to engage in sustainable development; a sustainable mission statement gives a firm great start ahead of its competitors.

6 Conclusions

In management literature, the mission statement has impacted firm performance (e.g., Amran, 2012; Macedo et al., 2016; Marjanova & Sofijanov, 2014) and employee behavior (e.g., Brown & Yoshioka, 2003). In the marketing field, CSR has been shown to have an impact on consumer purchase intention (Bianchi et al., 2019; Dodd & Supa, 2011, 2015; Lee & Lee, 2015), and consumers are willing to pay more for environmental and social sustainability for green marketing (Amoako et al., 2022; Awan, 2011). For the corporate sustainability literature, recent research applied content analysis found corporate commitment to social (33%), economic (25%), and environmental (21%) sustainability (Zahan & Sultana, 2019), and other findings showed that the more sustainable term mentioned, the higher the sustainability ratings (Lopez & Martin, 2018). The literature gap leads to the research objective of integrating the corporate sustainability of the triple bottom line model with the mission statement and exploring its relationship with consumer purchase intention with or without the mediation role of c–c identification.

Two research models were tested and analyzed. For model one without the mediation effect, the mission statement of economic and environmental sustainability had impacted on the purchase intention, H1a and H1c were supported, but not H1c (social sustainability). The second model with a mediator, the c–c identification came into the picture, that all three sustainability mission statements were all significantly and positively related to c–c identification. Therefore, H2a, b, and c were all supported, showing that c–c identification was indeed a complementary mediator. Lastly, c–c identification significantly impacted consumer purchase intention, showing support for H3. The result indicates that the sustainability mission statement is important but must first communicate environmental sustainability, followed by social and economic sustainability, to consumers who are likely to identify with the company that has committed to sustainability.

For this study, contributions to the literature are threefold. First, the research model one is a leading study to integrate corporate sustainability with mission statement. Second, the model was the first to explore the relationship between the corporate sustainability mission statement and the intention to purchase from the consumer. Third, the mediation model based on SIT and organizational identity theory provides a foundation for corporate sustainable mission, an internal view, to consumer purchase behavior, an external perspective.

Lastly, the results can provide insights into managerial implications to meet the needs of the stakeholder, accelerating the pace of sustainable development.

6.1 Managerial implications

Scholars advocate for the need to incorporate sustainability of the triple bottom line not only to meet consumer self-defined needs, but also social needs that create sustainable values as differentiators to gain strategic power. Therefore, the findings can assist managers in setting corporate objectives that align with the sustainability mission statement and then commit corporate resources and capabilities that are consistent with it, and the following actions should be implemented. As a result, consumers are likely to perceive the sustainability statement (as communication messages) not only as signals, but also as an indication of commitment to the realization of sustainable development by companies (Galpin & Lee Whittington, 2012). As long as the company does good, consumers will stand up for the company with purchasing behavior.

6.2 Academic implications

The two research models investigated the relationship between sustainability mission statement and consumer purchase intention with and without mediation. The relationships in the two identified models lead to a better understanding of sustainable performance from consumer perspective. When corporate sustainability (triple bottom line model) combined with mission statement, consumers receive sustainability messages and respond positively to purchasing behavior. Furthermore, c-c identification based on social identity and organizational identity theories is a complementary mediator to connect the corporate sustainability mission with consumer behavior, sharing the common feeling that we are together to be good and great. In general, the importance and impact of the sustainability statement and c-c identification on consumer purchasing behavior can offer a new perspective for future research.

6.3 Limitations and future study

The limitations of this study open up opportunities for future study. First, this research may warrant caution against generalizing the findings. In particular, a sample of college and graduate students from a university located in the middle part of Taiwan limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research should enlarge the scope of sample and select a random sampling that may vary across different customer segments, industries, countries, or even races to further verified the current study. The sustainability mission statements used in the study were an experiment combining global airline company, an integrated filler mission statement. As a result, the measurement of sustainability mission statements needs to be verified and validated in the future. Furthermore, this study addresses only from consumer point of view, an external stakeholder, so the future study may test the relationship from different prospects. Finally, finding or adding new mediators or sustainable constructs to test the current models may add values in the field of corporate sustainability.

Appendix

A fictitious sustainable mission statement

Below is a mission statement from an airline company. Please read the mission statement before moving on to the next part.

As a socially sustainable company, we strive to do things right by serving our customers with the best service quality to achieve long-term survival. Therefore, we are dedicated to doing the following:

1. To provide a satisfactory flight experience for every passenger by providing products and services of excellent quality
2. To achieve sustained profitability for the benefit of our stakeholders
3. To integrate environmental protection and resource conservation into our business practices to facilitate the development of environmentally compatible aviation
4. To exploit innovative technology for long-term growth
5. To take good care of the most valuable asset, our employees, and to help them in reaching their life goals
6. To help and maintain our community relations by partnering with local markets to grow sustainably hand in hand

Overall, we are fully committed to becoming a sustainable company that is friendly to the environment and promotes the economic development of society

Source: Extracted from Table 1 (Crespo & del Bosque, 2005; Kim et al., 2015; Lin & Ryan, 2016; Martínez & delBosque, 2014; Moisesescu, 2018).

Data availability Data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article (both in the manuscript and in the supplementary files) and are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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