From Sustainable Supply Chain Practices to Brand Loyalty: The Mediating Roles of Brand Legitimacy, Operational Efficiency, and Customer Trust

Dr. Rikkee Mishra[1], Dr. Saurabh Singh[2], Dr. Nitesh Rawat [3], Dr. Aashi Rastogi[4], Ms. Arachana Mohanty[5]

[1]Assistant Professor, SRM, Department of Management, Delhi-NCR Campus, Delhi- Meerut Road, Modinagar, Ghaziabad

[2]Assistant Professor, School of Management and Liberal Arts, IMS Unison University, Dehradun. Email id - saurabh33.singh@gmail.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5851-6259

[3]Assistant Professor, School of Business Management, T S Mishra University, Lucknow ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3898-3988

[4]Associate professor, School of Business Management, T.S.Mishra University ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5594-4067

[5]Assistant Professor, School of Business Management, T.S Mishra University ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6177-2062

Abstract

The organized retail coffee sector in India has expanded rapidly over the past decade where it powered by economic growth and rapid increase of coffee lovers those consuming coffee regular basis through cafés or outlets this picture if more popular in metro cities or tier 1 cities where stat of consumers is in the age of 20-25 years. While competitive pressures increasing stakeholder scrutiny over ethical sourcing environmental responsibility and operational transparency. It creates a new domain name as Sustainable supply chain management, SSCM which concern from both consumers and firms where firms are treated as heightened social and environmental scrutiny by consumers in this study used a sample of 220 respondents on a conceptual model on SSCM practices and its relational aspect on customer loyalty in a coffee retail sector. SSCM practices know as organisational capabilities where its efficiency enhances operational and relational outcomes through improvement in brand legitimacy and customer trust which affect brand loyalty positively while Sustainability awareness functions as an enabling antecedent where it shows that consumers recognise and interpret firms SSCM initiatives. In emerging economies brands operating ethically perceived legitimate and responsible by customers and enhance trust on them. Such trust will become more stronger with efficient operations that assure consistent quality and dependable service to customers it driving repeat purchases and brand loyalty. Study also shows that Consumers awareness on sustainability issues is better able to recognise and value firm sustainability efforts. findings highlight that sustainability creates value not only through ethical behaviour but through stronger customer relationships. In emerging markets customers rewarded sustainability if they experienced as genuine and operationally embedded. Study used theoretical back ground of Natural Resource-Based View and stakeholder theory with Covariance-based structural equation modelling while Mediation analysis confirms trust fully transmits the effect of sustainability practices to loyalty outcomes, while brand legitimacy serves as a critical interpretive mechanism in trust formation. The findings indicate that sustainability programs provide relational and behavioural value mainly through trust-based processes, underscoring the strategic significance of authentically integrating sustainability into supply chain operations and communication strategies.

Keywords: Sustainable supply chain management, Brand legitimacy, Operational efficiency, Customer trust, Brand loyalty

JEL: M31, M14, L21, Q56

1.Introduction

Coffee retailing is inherently supply-chain dependent. SCM of coffee linking agricultural procurement, processing, logistics and high-frequency service delivery. Where Sustainability has gradually shifted from a peripheral moral obligation to a defining strategic concern shaping contemporary supply chain management. Growing regulatory intervention also motivates heightened societal scrutiny along with this firms required to re think their strategy related to Supply chain management because of the concerning voice against exposure to climate related disruptions. So

multinational consumer-facing firms are increasingly expected not only to implement sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices but also to ensure that such practices translate into economic and reputational outcomes (Seuring & Müller, 2008; Zhu, Sarkis, & Lai, 2008). In this context sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices have emerged as a strategic mechanism through which coffee brands seek to reconcile efficiency imperatives with growing legitimacy expectations. So, adaptation of natural resource-based view (NRBV) along with sustainability capabilities in supply chains are known as competitive advantage when they enhance operational efficiency while remaining difficult to imitate (Hart, 1995). SSCM practices perform a function by signalling ethical alignment with consumer and societal expectations, thereby strengthening brand legitimacy (Freeman, 1984). Responsible sourcing, waste minimisation, and process standardisation not only improve cost discipline and service consistency but also enhance stakeholder perceptions of credibility and trustworthiness (Mangla et al., 2020; Köksal et al., 2017).

In service-intensive retail settings, operational efficiency and brand legitimacy jointly influence customer trust by reinforcing perceptions of reliability, fairness, and value congruence.In emerging market a smaller number of empirical evidence available addressing sustainability driven capabilities of firms and its translation into consumer-level relational outcomes. where institutional uncertainty and heightened consumer skepticism are some major issues. Prior study examines how SSCM practices influence operational efficiency and brand legitimacy and collectively shape customer trust, brand loyalty in urban retail coffee market. Some studies are focusing on manufacturing intensive difference is evident in emerging markets where institutional conditions, cultural norms and consumption routines are major factor to shaped consumers sustainability concept (Busse, Meinlschmidt, & Foerstl, 2017). comparatively limited attention to the perceptual and relational mechanisms through which sustainability initiatives generate value for external stakeholders. (Gualandris, Klassen, Vachon, & Kalchschmidt, 2015). Agricultural good like Coffee production and distribution considered and

connected to environmental vulnerability, labour dependence and institutional asymmetries which make making sustainability issues operationally critical and reputationally are salient. (Bansal & Roth, 2000). In light of recent developments, prominent companies in this sector have progressively embraced ethical sourcing frameworks, implemented supplier monitoring systems, and integrated digital traceability technologies to address social and ecological risks. Despite the prominence of this uncertainty in between consumers point where they sceptical on as genuine capabilities of firm that contribute to organisational competence or simply as symbolic actions aimed at obtaining legitimacy. This research presents an empirical investigation into the impact of consumer perceptions regarding SSCM practices on both operational and behavioural outcomes. Where this study used a natural resource-based theory and stakeholder theory to conceptualises sustainability not only as an operational resource but also as a socially mediated capability whose value is related to brands legitimacy and trust. Study adopted covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) to test mediation mechanisms that remain theoretically asserted but empirically underexamined.

Literature Review

Sustainability is deeply rooted in the seminal articulation provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development in *Our Common Future*. A sustainable development is defined meeting present needs without constraining the capacity of future generations to meet their own (WCED, 1987). So, Sustainability has progressively evolved from a normative environmental concern. A modern debates on corporate sustainability among economic performance, environmental stewardship and social responsibility is also based on how firms are following their ethical, environmental suitable practices. Sustainability discourse with corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a primary vehicle which translate sustainability into actionable strategies. CSR-oriented strategies and their implementation in business foster accountability, bolster stakeholder relationships, augment investor trust, and reinforce market legitimacy (Schultz & Gordon, 2012). Ethical sourcing, emissions reduction, and waste minimisation transcend

regulatory compliance to foster long-term value creation (Cowan et al., 2010). Sustainability is widely acknowledged as a driver of innovation and organisational resilience in contexts characterised by economic volatility and institutional transformation. Gerner, 2019. Studies shows a link between sustainability strategies and variables such as organizational structures, governance mechanisms and operational processes. Adapting these strategies makes them work better when there are structures in place for accountability, coherence, and governance. This makes business models more sustainable (Del Baldo & Baldarelli, 2017). Businesses that integrate sustainability into their operating logic do better over the long run (Lloret, 2016). The main point of contact between businesses and the environmental or social externalities they confront is SCM Organisations integrating sustainability into their operational framework exhibit enhanced long-term performance (Lloret, 2016). SCM functions as the principal interface between organizations and the environmental or social externalities they encounter. Studies have shown that sustainability-oriented supply chain practices can reduce waste, stabilize production processes (Maletic et al., 2015). Organizational legitimacy is known as perception that actions are socially appropriate and desirable, has been identified as a critical outcome of sustainability engagement (Suchman, 1995). Firms adopting visible and credible sustainability practices are perceived as legitimate can influences stakeholder trust and support (Bansal & Clelland, 2004). In consumer facing industries, legitimacy operates as a reputational signal consistently highlighted as a key mediator linking ethical and sustainability practices to behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and advocacy (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Empirical studies demonstrate that consumers perceive firms as both ethically responsible and operationally competent trust intensifies leading to stronger brand loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Sustainability awareness influences individuals process consumers with higher awareness are more likely to notice sustainability initiatives and attribute operational outcomes to responsible management practices rather than opportunistic cost-cutting (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Peattie, 2010).

Research Gap

This study address issues which is related to how sustainability and relational mechanisms operate in emerging market where institutional conditions, consumer awareness consumption routines differ substantially. Because available sustainability and supply chain literature shows firm-level performance indicators in which cost reduction or environmental efficiency are prioritized. SSCM practices focus on responsible sourcing, supplier development, and logistics optimisation to mitigate climate risks (Seuring & Müller, 2008).

Hypotheses Development

H1: Sustainable supply chain management practices positively influence brand legitimacy.

SSCMP signal a firm commitment to ethical conduct, environmental stewardship social responsibility across its value chain. Stakeholder also admire practices because aligning corporate behaviour with societal norms and expectations enhance organisational legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). sustainability oriented supply chain initiatives function works as reputational signals that reinforce brand credibility and social approval under consumer facing industries. (Delmas & Toffel, 2008).

H2: Sustainable supply chain management practices positively influence operational efficiency.

SSCMPs and operational improvements are co related like waste reduction process standardisation and enhanced supplier coordination. The Natural Resource-Based View posits that environmentally embedded capabilities help to improve operational efficiency (Hart, 1995). sustainability integration into supply chain operations achieve efficiency outcomes and improved forecasting, quality consistency and logistics optimisation (Zhu et al., 2008; Klassen & Vereecke, 2012).

H3: Brand legitimacy positively influences customer trust.

When firm action is perceived as appropriate and desirable within a socially constructed system of norms know as brand legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). Legitimacy is a foundational antecedent of trust where it reduces perceived opportunism and uncertainty between firm and consumer relationships. When consumers view a brand as legitimate, they are more inclined to trust its claims,

including those related to sustainability and ethical sourcing (Eisingerich & Bell, 2008).

Studies consistently shows legitimacy enhances stakeholder trust by signalling credibility, integrity, and long-term commitment (Deephouse et al., 2017; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

H4: Customer trust positively influences brand loyalty.

Customer trust represents a critical relational asset integrate commitment repeat purchase along with resistance to competitive offerings. Relationship marketing theory advocates that trust provide base to loyalty through reducing perceived risk and strengthens emotional attachment to the brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In case of sustainability and sensitive consumption where consumers rely on firm disclosures and reputational cues to evaluate ethical claims where trust make it possible for brands (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). If a customer trust is higher, it will make stronger brand loyalty and long-term relational commitment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005).

H5: Operational efficiency positively influences customer trust.

Operational efficiency signals organisational competence and reliability make a base for customer trust. Efficient operations are related to service consistency product availability and delivery reliability and it also reduces consumer concern which is related to transaction uncertainty. Prior studies indicate that operational excellence

strengthens trust by demonstrating managerial capability and process reliability (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002; Wu et al., 2014). In efficiency in sustainability is based on responsible supply chain practices.

### H6: Operational efficiency positively influences brand loyalty.

Operational efficiency connected with brand loyalty where service quality standard reducing risk of service failures this ensuring consistent consumer experiences. Efficient firms are better positioned to deliver value reliably and strengthening customer satisfaction and repeat patronage (Homburg et al., 2009). operational efficiency is perceived as an outcome of responsible and sustainable practices it reinforces positive brand associations and long-term loyalty intentions.

H7: Sustainability awareness positively influences perceived operational efficiency.

Consumer sustainability awareness reflects how individuals recognise and value environmental and social responsibility initiatives undertaken by firms. Higher sustainability awareness shows consumers ability to interpret operational outcomes and results of sustainable practices which is against the old norms where mere cost-cutting strategies are prioritizes (Peattie, 2010). So, sustainability and consumers awareness are perceived as operational outcomes where efficiency and reliability showing legitimate results of responsible management practices (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Testa et al., 2015).

Figure 1 shows the proposed model used in this study where all hypothesis is connected

Figure1 Proposed model
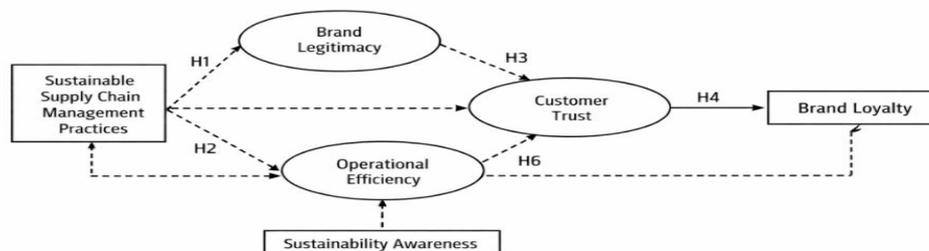
Source: author's own framework

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Natural Resource-Based View and Sustainable Supply Chains

Resource based theory suggested to position environmental and social capabilities as potential sources of sustained competitive advantage (Hart, 1995). The Natural Resource-Based View shows a sustainability-oriented capabilities required dynamic organisational routines, cross-firm coordination and institutional alignment with ethical sourcing programmes, and digital traceability systems represent such capabilities in supply chains. SSCM practices enable firms to internalise environmental externalities, stabilise input quality and reduce exposure to reputational and regulatory risks (Seuring & Müller, 2008). NRBV perspective shows such practices enhance ecological performance and operational efficiency through waste reduction, improving forecasting accuracy and supplier reliability. In other words, to generate economic value it is required that capabilities must be strategically integrated rather than symbolically adopted.

2.2 Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy, and Trust

NRBV explains sustainability capabilities generate competitive advantage generate while how these values are socially realised is explained by Stakeholder Theory complements this limitation emphasising that firm performance is contingent upon the perceptions, evaluations and support of key stakeholder groups (Freeman, 1984). consumers play acritical role in where brand meaning and moral legitimacy shape purchasing behaviour. Sustainability initiatives align with stakeholder expectations and enhance moral and pragmatic legitimacy. Consumers are in a driving seat in contemporary markets where consumers evaluate brand through moral and functional point. Now purchasing behaviour of consumer is no longer driven solely by price and quality, perceptions of whether firms act responsibly within their broader socio environmental context are also important where sustainability initiatives operate as symbolic and substantive signals that align organisational conduct with stakeholder expectations (Suchman, 1995; Bitektine & Haack, 2015). studies demonstrates that well-articulated sustainability practices positively increase consumer evaluations of firm legitimacy where practices are embedded within core operations rather than peripheral CSR activities (Du & Vieira, 2020; Martínez & del Bosque, 2021). Legitimacy is functions as a cognitive foundation upon which trust is built (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Contemporary studies reaffirm legitimacy perceptions significantly lower consumer scepticism towards sustainability claims. (Nyilasy et al., 2023; Torelli et al., 2020). Trust enables consumers to internalise sustainability narratives, converting abstract values into actionable responses such as repeat patronage with positive word-of-mouth (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Wang et al., 2022). Trust mediates the relationship between perceived sustainability performance and loyalty outcomes (Kumar et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2023). Study supports a sequential mediation logic in SSCM practices and organisational legitimacy, which fosters trust. Studies emphasising that sustainability driven competitive advantage arises not from isolated ethical actions, but from the cumulative relational effects of legitimacy and trust (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2021; Rhou et al., 2023)

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional research design is used where study examine the relationships between sustainable supply chain management practices, brand legitimacy, operational efficiency, customer trust and brand loyalty. A covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) approach is employed.

3.2 Sampling Frame and Study Context

The study focuses on urban coffee consumers residing in tier-1 urban areas through in-person intercept surveys near coffee outlets and structured online questionnaires distributed. Population comprises regular coffee drinkers who consume coffee at least once per day and frequently visit branded coffee outlets such as Starbucks and comparable specialty coffee chains.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

220 responses were collected from which satisfies minimum sample size requirements for CB-SEM given the complexity of the proposed model (Hair et al., 2019). A purposive sampling technique was employed.

3.4 Measurement of Constructs

All constructs were operationalised as latent variables measured using multi-item Likert-type scales. Respondents indicated their agreement on a

five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree

3.5 Measurement Scale Development

Table 1: Constructs and Measurement Items

Construct	Latent Variable Code	Item Code	Measurement Item	Adapted From
Sustainable Supply Chain Management Practices	SSCM	SSCM1	This coffee brand sources its coffee beans in an environmentally responsible manner.	Zhu et al. (2008); Seuring & Müller (2008)
		SSCM2	The brand ensures ethical treatment of farmers and suppliers.	Zhu et al. (2008)
		SSCM3	The brand is transparent about where and how its coffee is sourced.	Gualandris et al. (2015)
		SSCM4	The brand actively reduces waste and environmental impact in its supply chain.	Seuring & Müller (2008)
Brand Legitimacy	BL	BL1	This brand behaves in a socially responsible manner.	Suchman (1995); Deephouse et al. (2017)
		BL2	The brand's actions align with societal expectations.	Deephouse et al. (2017)
		BL3	I believe this brand genuinely cares about ethical and environmental issues.	Bansal & Clelland (2004)
Operational Efficiency	OE	OE1	This brand delivers consistent service quality across visits.	Klassen & Vereecke (2012)
		OE2	The brand operates efficiently without compromising service quality.	Zhu et al. (2008)
		OE3	The brand manages its operations in a reliable and organised manner.	Homburg et al. (2009)
Customer Trust	CT	CT1	I trust this brand to keep its promises.	Morgan & Hunt (1994)
		CT2	This brand is honest about its products and practices.	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
		CT3	I feel confident relying on this brand.	Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán (2005)
Brand Loyalty	BLoy	BLoy1	I intend to continue visiting this coffee brand regularly.	Oliver (1999)
		BLoy2	I would recommend this coffee brand to others.	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
		BLoy3	I prefer this coffee brand over other competing brands.	Oliver (1999)
Sustainability Awareness	SA	SA1	I am aware of environmental issues related to coffee production.	Maignan & Ferrell (2004)
		SA2	I pay attention to sustainability practices of coffee brands.	Peattie (2010)
		SA3	Sustainability influences my choice of coffee brands.	Testa et al. (2015)

Source: author's adaptation from different sources

4. Data analysis

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	105	47.7%
	Female	115	52.3%
Age Group	18-25 years	65	29.5%
	26-35 years	98	44.5%
	36-45 years	42	19.1%
	46+ years	15	6.8%
Education	Undergraduate	72	32.7%
	Graduate	118	53.6%
	Postgraduate	30	13.6%

Monthly Visits to Coffee Shops	2-3 times	85	38.6%
	4-5 times	92	41.8%
	6+ times	43	19.5%
Preferred Coffee Brand	Starbucks	132	60.0%
	Local specialty chains	88	40.0%
Monthly Coffee Expenditure	<₹1,000	45	20.5%
	₹1,000-₹2,500	102	46.4%
	₹2,500-₹5,000	58	26.4%
	>₹5,000	15	6.8%
Sustainability Awareness Level	Low	52	23.6%
	Moderate	108	49.1%
	High	60	27.3%

Source: author's calculation

Table 2 shows Demographic Profile of Respondents where sample reflects a balanced gender composition and is concentrated within economically active age groups, particularly 26–35 years, consistent with the core clientele of organised urban coffee chains. High educational attainment and frequent café visits indicate an informed and engaged consumer base. Moderate expenditure patterns and predominantly moderate-to-high sustainability awareness provide a suitable behavioural setting for examining sustainability-oriented supply chain perceptions.

Table 3: Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Standardised Loading	CR	AVE
SSCM Practices	SSCM1	0.78	0.89	0.67
	SSCM2	0.84		
	SSCM3	0.82		
	SSCM4	0.83		
Brand Legitimacy	BL1	0.76	0.86	0.68
	BL2	0.86		
	BL3	0.85		
Operational Efficiency	OE1	0.81	0.88	0.71
	OE2	0.87		
	OE3	0.85		
Customer Trust	CT1	0.79	0.87	0.69
	CT2	0.86		
	CT3	0.84		
Brand Loyalty	BLoy1	0.83	0.91	0.77
	BLoy2	0.91		
	BLoy3	0.88		
Sustainability Awareness	SA1	0.74	0.84	0.64
	SA2	0.83		
	SA3	0.82		

Source: author's calculation

Table 3shows Construct Reliability and Convergent Validity The measurement model demonstrates strong reliability and convergent validity. All item loadings exceed accepted thresholds, while composite reliability and AVE values confirm internal consistency and adequate variance capture by the latent constructs, supporting the soundness of the measurement framework.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

Construct	SSCM	Legitimacy	Operational Efficiency	Trust	Loyalty	Sustainability Awareness
SSCM	—					
Legitimacy	0.42	—				
Operational Efficiency	0.38	0.46	—			
Trust	0.51	0.58	0.44	—		
Loyalty	0.47	0.52	0.49	0.73	—	
Sustainability Awareness	0.66	0.39	0.31	0.47	0.41	—

Source: author's calculation

Table 4 shows that Discriminant validity is confirmed where HTMT ratios below conservative cut-offs. Shows that sustainability awareness is closely related to SSCM indicating conceptual clarity without overlap and constructs remain empirically distinct.

Table 5: Goodness-of-Fit Statistics

Index	Threshold	Obtained Value
χ^2/df	< 3.0	2.14
CFI	> 0.90	0.93
TLI	> 0.90	0.92
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.06
SRMR	< 0.08	0.05

Source: author's calculation

Table 5 Goodness-of-Fit Statistics is based on Overall model fit which is satisfactory indicates that the proposed structural relationships align well with the observed data.

Table 6: Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Std. β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	SSCM → Operational Efficiency	0.38	4.21	<0.001	Supported
H2	SSCM → Brand Legitimacy	0.42	4.85	<0.001	Supported
H3	Brand Legitimacy → Trust	0.45	5.12	<0.001	Supported
H4	Trust → Brand Loyalty	0.58	7.34	<0.001	Supported
Additional Paths Tested:					
	Operational Efficiency → Trust	0.31	3.67	<0.001	Supported
	Sustainability Awareness → SSCM	0.66	8.92	<0.001	Supported

Source: author's calculation

Table 6 shows a significant positive effect of SSCM practices on operational efficiency and brand legitimacy while Sustainability awareness emerges as a strong antecedent of SSCM perceptions, reinforcing the proposed causal sequence.

Table 7: Mediation Analysis (Bootstrapping)

Mediation Path	Indirect Effect	95% CI	Result
SSCM → Legitimacy → Trust	0.189	[0.112, 0.267]	Significant
SSCM → Trust → Loyalty	0.296	[0.194, 0.398]	Significant
SSCM → Operational Efficiency → Trust	0.118	[0.054, 0.182]	Significant
Legitimacy → Trust → Loyalty	0.261	[0.168, 0.354]	Significant

Source: author's calculation

Table 7 shows Mediation of SSCM on trust and loyalty where Significant indirect effects underscore the role of these mechanisms in translating sustainability practices into relational outcomes. The path modelling in Figure 2 is shown in the structural model figure.

Figure 2 path modelling
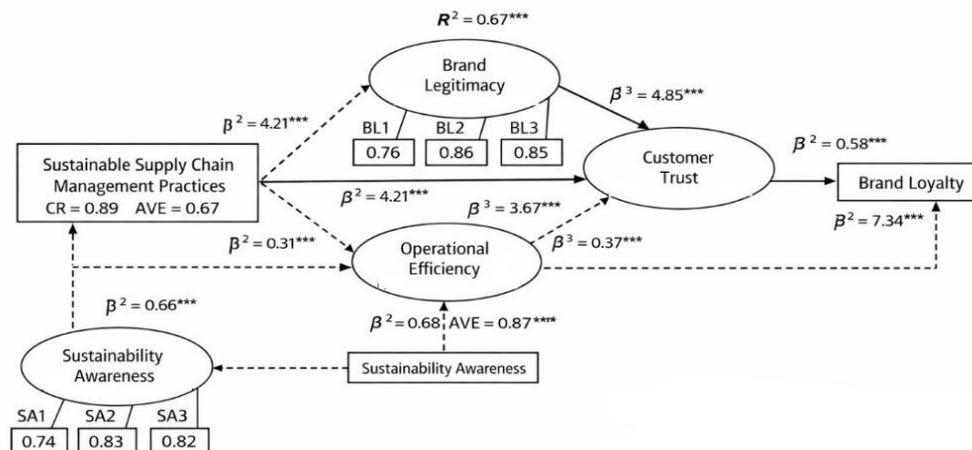
Source: author's calculation through python

4.1 Results and Discussion

The structural equation modelling results support proposed framework linking sustainable supply chain management practices to key brand-related outcomes. Model demonstrates strong explanatory power and statistical adequacy. Findings reveal that sustainable supply chain management practices exert a direct and substantial influence on operational efficiency indicates that consumers associate responsible sourcing and waste reduction with superior operational execution. Natural Resource-Based View also suggest that environmentally embedded capabilities can enhance efficiency through better coordination and process optimisation (Hart, 1995; Klassen & Vereecke, 2012). Strong positive effect on brand legitimacy shows that ethical sourcing, transparency with environmental responsibility functioned as a legitimate building mechanisms aligned with societal norms and moral expectations. (Suchman, 1995; Deephouse et al., 2017).

Brand legitimacy works as significant predictor of customer trust legitimacy is a psychological precursor which forming trust whereas consumers perceive that if brand socially and ethically it strengthening trust. (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Eisingerich & Bell, 2008).

Customer trust is a determinant of brand loyalty A Trust-driven loyalty in the coffee retail where consumption is habitual and brand choice is influenced by relational and symbolic cues rather than functional differentiation alone (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).Beyond the primary hypothesised paths, operational efficiency also exerts a direct positive effect on customer trust where reliability and smooth service delivery act as tangible manifestations of managerial competence this reinforcing trust (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002).The mediation analysis shows that indirect effect of SSCM practices on trust through brand legitimacy significant where sustainability initiatives are translated into relational outcomes. Customer trust fully mediates the relationship between sustainable supply chain practices and brand loyalty. (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004).

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the sustainability and supply chain. NRB shows value of SCM capabilities are based on consumer perceptions of legitimacy and trust along with internal operational outcomes. Brand legitimacy works as central mediating construct between sustainability initiatives and trust formation. Stakeholder theory applied in study shows consumers are active evaluators of supply chain practices.

5.2 Practical Implications

Managerial implications on sustainable supply chain initiatives should be more focused to functioning as strategic investments. Brand legitimacy as a trust-generating mechanism. Managers must recognise that sustainability claims derive their persuasive power from transparency and verifiability. stakeholder confidence strengthens if firms disclose sourcing standards, traceability mechanisms,

environmental impact metrics. This develops trust in operational reliability. Ethical positioning is required and it cannot compromise for service failures or supply disruptions inconsistencies. Managers should ensure that sustainability narratives are reinforced by flawless execution at the operational level. strong moderating role of sustainability awareness highlights t importance of consumer education as a strategic lever. Firms can amplify the returns on sustainability investments by actively informing consumers about the scope mechanisms and outcomes of their responsible practices.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research Directions

A cross-sectional research design restricts causal inference. longitudinal or experimental approaches can be more feasible to get more in sights while examination of sustainability perceptions over time can be a potential research area a closed sample restricted to urban coffee consumers also limits generalisability of this study while other outcomes can be possible if rural populations or other service industries adopt this framework where SSCM and trust can be evaluated in to a different prospective Research framework of this study can apply into different cultural contexts, product categories or B2B supply chains to assess boundary conditions.

6.2 Conclusion

Sustainable SCMP shaping brand which can be easily seen under beverage industry like coffee sector. Operational efficiency and brand legitimacy enhancement along with customer trust and loyalty are also a positive outcome of SSCMP. This study shows trust required a pivotal relational mechanism through which sustainability practices of firms can translate into consumer loyalty, while sustainability awareness operates as a conditioning variable determines the salience and interpretability of such initiatives. Sustainability does not function under isolation it embedded with supply chain architectures and communicated with transparency it will generate durable relational capital and defensible competitive advantage. In the case of branded coffee firms integrated supply chain principles across procurement and production innovation gives advantage in operational efficiency and demand responsiveness. Multi-tiered and geographically dispersed supply chain has

horizontal and vertical complexity. Investment in product and process innovations aimed at reducing environmental impact (Starbucks Corporation, 2022).

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