

Beyond Attitude-Behavior Gap: How Value Co-Creation Translates Selfcongruity Into Pro-Environmental Behavior

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Abstract

In the context of global environmental challenges, promoting pro-environmental behavior (PEB) among consumers has become an essential focus of sustainable marketing and behavioral research. This study investigates the mediating role of value co-creation in linking self-congruity—the alignment between an individual’s self-concept and brand identity—to pro-environmental behavioral responses. Extending the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, the research positions value co-creation as the internal cognitive and emotional process (the “organism”) that transforms psychological congruence into behavioral outcomes. Using a quantitative approach supported by structural equation modeling (SEM), the study analyzed survey data collected from environmentally conscious consumers actively engaged in green product and service initiatives. The findings demonstrate that self-congruity is a strong and significant predictor of pro-environmental behavior, both directly and indirectly. The mediation analysis reveals that value co-creation partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that consumers who actively participate in collaborative, sustainability-oriented interactions with brands experience stronger identity alignment and greater behavioral commitment to environmental causes. The implications of this study are both theoretical and managerial. Theoretically, it contributes to extending the S-O-R framework by incorporating value co-creation as a key mediating construct in the psychology of sustainable consumption. Managerially, the findings emphasize the need for organizations to design co-creation platforms and engagement mechanisms that reinforce consumers’ sense of identity and purpose in sustainability efforts. By enabling collaborative green experiences, firms can strengthen long-term consumer relationships and accelerate the transition toward sustainable behavior and environmental stewardship.

Keywords: self-congruity, value co-creation, pro-environmental, self-expression, environmental program.

INTRODUCTION

Self-congruity constitutes a pivotal determinant in forecasting consumers’ pro-environmental behavior, as it is underpinned by the psychological need for self-expression and internal consistency (Amin et al., 2025). Individuals tend to experience a heightened degree of congruence among the actual self, ideal self, and social self when assessing a brand’s image or values such as sustainability and environmental ethics that are consistent with their self-concept (Sirgy, 2018). Such congruence functions as a symbolic manifestation of one’s pro-environmental identity, thereby fostering a stronger intention to actively participate in pro-environmental consumption and behaviors (Confente et al., 2020). Engagement in pro-environmental behavior through the purchase of environmentally friendly products is further associated with increased brand loyalty, as these brands are perceived to embody the individual’s actual self, ideal self, and social self within the context of pro-environmental identity.

Based on the publication by de Silva et al., (2025), it is revealed that the ideal self does not have a direct influence on pro-environmental behavior. Although individuals may demonstrate a

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strong alignment between their ideal self and environmental values, a gap often persists between intention and actual behavior (Al Mamun et al., 2024). A strong intention to engage in pro-environmental behavior is often constrained by situational barriers (Cleveland et al., 2020), lack of education (Ajaps & McLellan, 2015), or habitual patterns that inhibit actual behavioral expression (Chawla & Lugosi, 2025). Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of self-congruity on pro-environmental behavior with value co-creation as a mediating variable (Amin et al., 2025). The study is conducted with respondents who are actively involved in environmental activities, with the objective of gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of collaboration in enabling individuals to contribute actively to environmental conservation programs.

An individual's active participation in various environmental management initiatives represents a transformative stage in which a high level of self-congruity is translated into collaborative behavior (Suh et al., 2018). The identity-driven motivation to embody a consistent green consumer identity compels individuals not merely to purchase environmentally friendly products but to actively integrate themselves into the brand's value creation process (Alam et al., 2025). Such individuals evolve from passive consumers to active co-creators of value by engaging in the brand's environmental initiatives, providing constructive feedback on product sustainability, and voluntarily disseminating green messages within their communities. This active involvement in co-creation serves as a mechanism through which individuals validate and actualize their pro-environmental identity, transforming passive environmental commitments into concrete actions that are innovative, large-scale, and capable of generating long-term impact.

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory is used to explain the mechanism of an individual's attitudinal and behavioral response based on their internal state, which emerges from the influence of stimuli, both from the external environment and from within the individual themselves (Mishra et al., 2022). The theory utilized in this research is an extension of the S-O-R Theory by Zhang (2025), which focuses solely on environmental stimuli. It is known that the S-O-R theoretical approach regarding environmentally friendly product consumption explains that self-congruity functions as the Stimulus (S) identified as a causal antecedent factor that triggers an internal psychological response. The Stimulus is the perceived fit between an individual's self-concept (actual, ideal, and social) and the external image of the consumer of environmentally friendly products. This Stimulus arises when consumers perceive a strong congruence between their self-concept, such as personal values, expertise, or desired identity, and activities that encourage active collaboration and involvement (Bartoli, 2022). High Self-Congruity will activate the Organism (O) by creating ideal psychological conditions, such as a sense of ownership, trust, and internal motivation to contribute. In other words, activities relevant to one's self-identity (S) make an individual feel obligated and eager to contribute their ideas, feedback, or time, which is the essence of Value Co-Creation (O) (Nariswari & Vargo, 2024). This internal condition (O) ultimately results in a Response (R) in the form of pro-environmental behavior as their self-identity, demonstrating an individual's loyalty to environmental activity programs, such as bringing their own shopping bags, saving electricity usage, and actively participating in product recycling programs (Chawla & Lugosi, 2025).

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of self-congruity on pro-environmental behavior with value co-creation as a mediating variable, using the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory as the theoretical foundation. Specifically, the research aims to identify how the alignment between an individual's self-concept (actual, ideal, and social self) and environmental values encourages active participation in value co-creation and ultimately fosters sustainable behavioral responses. By focusing on individuals who are actively engaged in environmental

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activities, this study seeks to deepen understanding of how identity alignment translates into collaborative action in environmental programs.

The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by expanding the application of the S–O–R framework through the integration of value co-creation as the “organism” mechanism that links self-identity to pro-environmental behavioral outcomes. Practically, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers, green marketers, and sustainability-driven organizations to design participatory platforms that strengthen individuals’ self-congruity with environmental goals. Such initiatives can enhance engagement in environmental management, stimulate long-term behavioral change, and promote a culture of active collaboration in sustainability practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes an approach employing the purposive sampling method, wherein respondents are required to satisfy the criterion of being an active member of an environmental community (Hair et al., 2016). Respondents were mandated to participate in a sustainability program and to have regularly performed actions that support pro-environmental behavior within the last six months. This requirement serves to minimize bias from respondents who may possess only the intention but lack sufficient experience, thereby aiming to enhance the accuracy in measuring the key variables. The prerequisite for prospective respondents was to ensure they already exhibit self-congruity, defined as the reflection of identity upon tangible actions, and a genuine value co-creation experience. By restricting the population to actors actively engaged in pro-environmental activities, the study aims to ascertain the individual experience of value co-creation as a mediator between self-congruity and pro-environmental behavior. For the purpose of measurement, the self-congruity construct employs the scale developed by (Bartoli, 2022), value co-creation utilizes the scale from (Botti et al., 2018), and environmental behavior is measured using the scale by (Kautish & Sharma, 2020).

Hypothesis Development

Self-congruity refers to an individual's choice of brands that align with their self-concept, specifically encompassing the actual self, ideal self, and social self (Bartoli, 2022). Pro-environmental behavior is the conduct of individuals who express themselves by selecting brands and activities consistent with their self-identity. The influence of self-congruity on pro-environmental behavior can be elucidated through the propensity of individuals to act in a manner consistent with their self-image or self-concept (Amin et al., 2025). Self-congruity denotes the perceived fit between what an individual believes about themselves (self-concept) and the image of a product or brand that is pro-environmental. When an individual perceives pro-environmental behaviors—such as recycling, energy conservation, or purchasing eco-friendly products—as aligned with their own values, attributes, or self-identity, high self-congruity will motivate and strengthen the intention and subsequent execution of these behaviors (Rasool et al., 2024). Individuals who view themselves as environmentally-oriented will select actions that support this self-image to maintain cognitive consistency and enhance their self-esteem or social image. Conversely, incongruity can lead to dissonance and impede the adoption of pro-environmental behavior. Therefore, establishing a self-narrative in which sustainability is an integral component of one's identity can serve as a potent driver for the sustained and consistent adoption of pro-environmental behavior.

H₁ : Self-congruity influences pro-environmental behavior.

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Self-congruity refers to an individual's selection of brands that align with their self-concept, specifically encompassing the actual self, ideal self, and social self (Sirgy, 2018). Value co-creation describes the behavior of an individual who actively collaborates with a brand to jointly establish value based on the congruence of the actual self, ideal self, and social self (Rasool et al., 2024). The influence of self-congruity on value co-creation is demonstrated when an individual perceives that co-creation activities—such as joint efforts between private institution and government, providing feedback to actively participating in campaigns for environmental awareness. This activity aligning their actual, ideal, and social self-identity and their personal values, which generates intrinsic motivation for individual to become pro-environmental activities. Active involvement enables an individual to utilize the co-creation process as a means of self-expression, facilitating the creation of pro-environmental products or services that reflect their preferences and personality. A heightened sense of ownership and emotional connection to community activities and movements concerning environmental care will increase an individual's intention to participate and contribute actively (Chen & Liu, 2022; Korfiatis & Petrou, 2021). The investment made by an individual through participation and engagement in establishing their self-value as an environmentally conscious person serves to reinforce their self-image.

H₂ : Self-congruity influences value co-creation.

Value co-creation exerts an influence on an individual's pro-environmental behavior by actively engaging them in environmental awareness campaign activities, thereby enhancing their involvement with stakeholders in the process of creating sustainable solutions (Almeida et al., 2021). This active engagement, termed green value co-creation, serves to reinforce an individual's cognitive and emotional connection to environmental issues. An individual's active collaboration with stakeholders elevates the implementation of eco-friendly product ideas or sustainability initiatives (Yu et al., 2020). This collaborative process fosters a deeper understanding of ecological benefits and instills a sense of ownership over the resultant outcomes. The collaborative process encourages the intention for pro-environmental behavior and increases the probability of them consistently choosing specific eco-friendly products or services in every aspect of their life.

H₃ : Value co-creation influences pro environmental behaviour.

Value co-creation serves as the key mechanism that transforms the alignment of self-congruity into pro-environmental behavioral actions (Padthar & Ketkaew, 2024). An individual who perceives a high degree of self-congruity with environmental consciousness activities will experience an increase in their motivation across various activities related to the use of eco-friendly products. These environmental activities encourage individuals to participate by sharing ideas for greener products, offering feedback on recycling programs, or voluntarily adopting sustainable consumption practices (Deane et al., 2025). Through this interaction and co-creation, the individual is positioned not merely as a passive consumer, but as an active partner in the generation of sustainability value. This active involvement in pro-environmental organizations or activities prompts them to consistently exhibit pro-environmental behaviors, both in brand interaction contexts and in their daily lives (Chang, 2019). Consequently, self-congruity provides the initial motivation, while value co-creation furnishes the necessary pathway for involvement and reinforcement to actualize pro-environmental behavior.

H₄ : Value co-creation mediates the influence of self-congruity on pro-environmental behavior.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

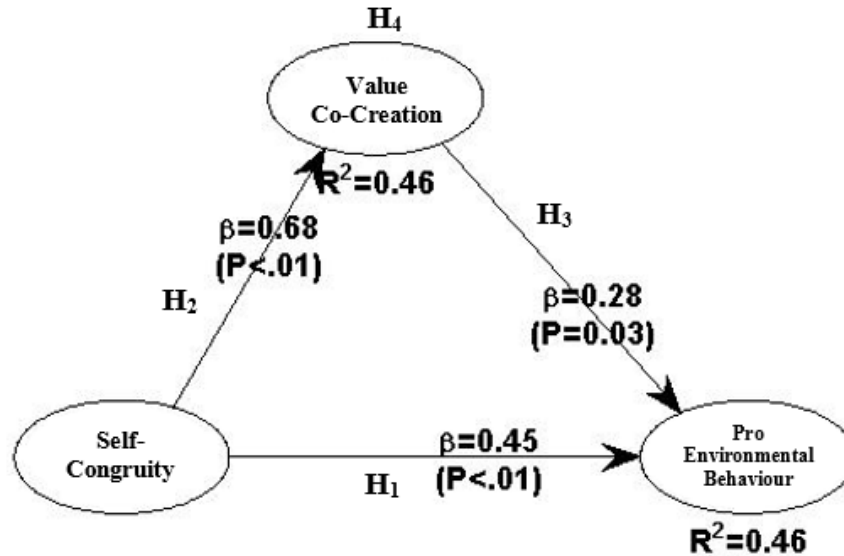


Figure 1. Research Model

Table 1. Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Relational Pathway	Path Coefficient (β)	P-Value	Results
H ₁	X→Z	0.679	<0.001	Accepted
H ₂	X→Y	0.455	<0.001	Accepted
H ₃	Z→Y	0.284	0.030	Accepted
H ₄	X→Z→Y	0.193 (Indirect Effect)	0.041	Accepted

Sources: analyzed data

The model quality diagnostic data from the 110 respondents indicate that the tested structural model possesses excellent fit and validity (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2017). Average Path Coefficient (APC) result 0.473 with $P<0.001$ signifies that the average path coefficient within the model is statistically significant and demonstrates substantial relationship strength. The model's predictive power is also strongly confirmed, as evidenced by the Average R-squared (ARS) 0.459 and Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS) 0.434, both are significant in $P<0.001$, implying that the independent and mediating variables collectively account for nearly 46% of the variability in dependent variable. Furthermore, the model is free from issues of multicollinearity and estimation bias, given that the Average Block VIF (AVIF) 1.731 and Average Full Collinearity VIF (AFVIF) 1.909 are well below the acceptable limit (≤ 5) and close to the ideal value (≤ 3.3). The overall quality of the model is evaluated as very high, with the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) reach 0.495, surpassed the threshold for large classification (≥ 0.36), indicates the model has superior goodness-of-fit. Moreover, consistency and causality ratios such as the Simpson's Paradox Ratio (SPR), R-squared Contribution Ratio (RSCR), Statistical Suppression Ratio (SSR), dan Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio (NLBCDR) all register a perfect value of 1.000 (exceeding the ideal limit of ≥ 0.7), This confirms the absence of confounding paradoxical or statistical suppression

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phenomena, and affirms that the model's direction of causality is accurate and consistent. Overall, these diagnostic results provide high methodological confidence in the validity and reliability of the model's findings.

Based on the results of the mediation model analysis, where X is Self-Congruity, Z is Value Co-Creation, and Y is Pro-Environmental Behavior, the findings show strong support for both the direct and mediating relationship paths. Specifically, Self-Congruity (X) has a positive and highly significant influence on Value Co-Creation (Z) with a path coefficient of (0.679) and P-value (<0.001), and simultaneously demonstrates a large effect size ($ES=0.462$). This indicates that the alignment of individual identity is a primary driver for involvement in joint value creation. Furthermore, the model reveals that X has a significant direct effect on Y (koefisien 0.455, $P<0.001$, $ES=0.291$), while Z also makes a positive and significant contribution to Y (koefisien 0.284, $P=0.030$, $ES=0.165$). Significant support for the mediation hypothesis confirms an indirect effect of Self-Congruity (X) on Pro-Environmental Behavior (Y) through Value Co-Creation (Z), with an effect value 0.193 and p-value 0.041.

Both of direct path with coefficient 0.455 and indirect path coefficient $a \times b = 0.193$ are significant ($p < 0.05$). Direct effect $X \rightarrow Y$: P-value <0.001 and indirect effect $X \rightarrow Z \rightarrow Y$: P-value 0.041, the findings support the conclusion that Value Co-Creation (Z) partially mediates the influence of Self-Congruity (X) on Pro-Environmental Behavior (Y). This implies that Self-Congruity (X) retains a significant direct influence in predicting Pro-Environmental Behavior (Y). However, the role of Value Co-Creation (Z) as the organism mechanism within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory significantly facilitates and strengthens the manifestation of that behavior."

The strong and significant inter-latent variable correlation coefficients (0.573 to 0.659) ($P<0.001$) coupled with the absence of statistical paradoxes (Path-Correlation Signs = 1 and R-squared Contributions positif) further strengthen the validity of these structural findings. Collectively, this model demonstrates that Self-Congruity not only influences Pro-Environmental Behavior directly, but also substantially operates through the encouragement of Value Co-Creation participation. These research results reinforce the understanding that an individual's pro-environmental behavior is not solely determined by attitude (Juma-Michilena et al., 2024), but also underscore the importance of value co-creation (Wang et al., 2024) rooted in self-congruity.

These findings are consistent with and further extend several previous studies that have emphasized the importance of self-congruity and value co-creation in shaping sustainable consumer behavior. According to Sirgy (2018), self-congruity serves as a psychological mechanism that aligns an individual's self-concept with external stimuli such as brands or social causes, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation for behavior consistent with one's identity. The present study's finding that self-congruity significantly influences pro-environmental behavior directly supports the Self-Congruity Theory, which posits that individuals are more likely to engage in behaviors that affirm their self-identity (Amin et al., 2025). Moreover, the mediating role of value co-creation aligns with the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) framework proposed by Vargo and Lusch, which views consumers as active participants in the value creation process rather than passive recipients. In the environmental context, Rasool (2024) found that collaborative participation in eco-friendly initiatives enhances individuals' emotional connection and perceived ownership of sustainability outcomes. Similarly, Alam et al. (2025) reported that when consumers engage in co-creative activities, such as contributing feedback or sharing sustainable practices, their commitment to environmental goals significantly increases.

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This supports the present study's result that value co-creation acts as a bridge between identity-driven motivation and behavioral manifestation. Furthermore, the findings correspond with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Theory, where self-congruity functions as the stimulus, value co-creation as the organism (mediating psychological state), and pro-environmental behavior as the response. This theoretical alignment confirms that identity congruence stimulates intrinsic motivation, which, through collaborative interaction, translates into concrete pro-environmental actions. Collectively, these insights highlight that fostering opportunities for consumer co-creation such as participatory environmental programs or community-based sustainability projects can effectively transform pro-environmental attitudes into sustained behavioral engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the extended S-O-R model effectively explains how Self-Congruity influences Pro-Environmental Behavior through the mediating role of Value Co-Creation. The results show that self-congruity acts as a dominant stimulus with both direct and indirect effects on pro-environmental behavior, while value co-creation functions as a significant organism mechanism that partially mediates this relationship. This indicates that identity alignment not only directly motivates environmentally responsible actions but also becomes more powerful when individuals actively engage in interactive, co-creative sustainability practices. The findings answer the research objective by demonstrating that value co-creation strengthens the transformation of pro-environmental identity into tangible behavior, thereby bridging the attitude-behavior gap. Theoretically, this research contributes to extending the S-O-R framework by integrating value co-creation as a psychological process connecting self-identity and behavioral response. Managerially, it highlights the need for policymakers and green organizations to develop participatory platforms that enable consumers to express their environmental identity through collaboration and shared experiences. For future research, longitudinal and experimental studies are recommended to examine the long-term stability of the mediation effect and to explore distinctions between actual and ideal self-congruity, providing deeper insights into how different forms of identity alignment influence sustainable consumer engagement.

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