Gulf Research Centre Cambridge

Knowledge for All

17th Gulf Research Meeting

Cambridge, 20-22 July 2027

Workshop No. 10

From Sustainability Awareness to Sustainable Action: Behavior, Business, and Policy Pathways for a Sustainable Gulf (Sustainovation)

1. **Directors**

Dr. Sana Arshad
De MontFort University

Dr. Asmat Nizam Abu Talib
University Utara Malaysia

2. **Abstract**

Sustainable programs are being designed by Gulf countries that focus on resource efficiency, food usage, and environmental protection, fostering sustainable actions. The question is how to transform sustainability awareness into sustainable actions among individuals and coherently within organizations moving toward global impact.
This workshop emphasizes impact across the Gulf by focusing on social, behavioral, corporate, and technical applications. An observational and practical lens on food waste connects consumers with components of behaviors, philosophy, generosity, green consumption patterns, and the food-service industry to promote efficiency and conservation. The idea incorporates emerging sustainability trends and activities undertaken by students and academics through experiential education with industry partners to drive solutions into sustainable actions.

The workshop explores persistence awareness among individuals, leading to collective actions. It encourages comparative research across GCC countries on the exploratory aim of sustainable consumption. Food is not waste; technological advancements, hospitality,

and artificial intelligence are all touchpoints. The interdisciplinary knowledge seeks to bring together researchers, young scholars, and enthusiasts from various disciplines, including consumer psychology, sociology, and behavioral and environmental impacts, to promote sustainability transitions in the Gulf. It seeks to provide empirically supported, theoretically grounded research that is useful to companies, communities, educational institutions, and governments throughout the Gulf.

3. Context

The GCC is experiencing a huge transition of around 360+ projects with prominent scale leaders impacting environmental sustainability, circular economy, and responsible consumption observed in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates towards national agendas. Followed by Oman and Qatar, which are considered middle-tier regions and are experiencing a significant sustainability transition towards solar and green hydrogen. Bahrain and Kuwait are in early transitions but aligned with the sustainability impacts. These studies have prompted extensive research on energy conversions, eco-friendly plans, climate change, infrastructure, and the high-tech revolution. However, the shift from sustainability desire to sustained behavioral and structural transformation remains silent.

The Gulf provides a unique context to explore this challenge. Rapid urbanization, high consumption, resource-intensive lifestyles, growing hospitality and tourism demographics, diversity, and distinctive cultural practices create multifaceted sustainability challenges. Meanwhile, the national approaches have shown significant impact on technological and institutional innovation momentum. Research is required to be carried out to understand how macro-level goals transform into everyday behavior and organizational practices.

The purpose of this workshop is to bring the table concept of sustainability into action. Strong environmental concerns are reported by individuals; however, sustainable practices remain ignored. On the other hand, sustainability commitments are emphasized by the business, yet the ability to cope with these practices remain unaccomplished. Similarly, the concept is inculcated through educationists through various practical applications, yet they still doubt the change in the behavior towards sustainability. The concept of “sustainovation” highlights where academia and industry work together on sustainability towards “food is not waste’’ through a practical empirical lens of action. It caters to all aspects of society including everyday consumption patterns to resource efficiency and expectation. It is one of the useful examples of experiential learning which demonstrates collaborative approaches towards sustainability. However, the question arises: Does it limit the process of two university led initiatives to young people only or does it impact lasting changes in behavior and organizations?

Going forward with an intention to bring a change through these initiatives is a core concept where Gulf communities are shedding light driving movements to awareness, enabling actions. A comparative Gulf approach is central to the workshop. While GCC countries share environmental and economic characteristics, they differ in national visions, policy instruments, institutional structures, market conditions, demographic composition, and approaches to sustainability. Comparative research can therefore identify both common regional mechanisms and country-specific pathways.

The workshop further highlights the emerging AI and digital trends. Tools that utilize platforms for messaging, tailored behaviors, smart integrations, and AI-driven decision-making may provide pathways for sustainable and enhanced resource consumption. Though the impact of these approaches requires extensive ethical deliberations and appropriate context in Gulf societies, it involves wide empirical evidence. The proposed workshop consequently brings together researchers across consumer behavior, marketing, management, environmental studies, policy, education, technology, and related disciplines to develop a more integrated understanding of sustainability transitions in the Gulf.

4. Workshop Focus/Objectives

The overarching objective of the workshop is to investigate how Gulf societies can move from sustainability awareness to sustainable action. The workshop will examine the transition through four interconnected dimensions: behavior, business, education/communities, and policy/technology.

Objective 1: Understand the awareness–action gap

The workshop will discover why significant sustainability awareness does not always translate into sustainable behavior. It will include important scholarly perspectives that examine everyday choices, attitudes, social behaviors, personal values, cultural contexts, convenience, and other factors prompting sustainable patterns. A key emphasis will be the intention–behavior gap—how behaviors translate positive intentions into tangible action.

Objective 2: Examine business responses to sustainability

The workshop will observe how firms across the Gulf are responding to growing sustainability prospects and national eco-friendly plans. Significant importance will be given to sectors such as hospitality, tourism, food services, and retail, where consumer behavior and resource use overlap. Research may also emphasize examining green business models, circular economy practices, sustainability communication, ESG, green branding, food-waste reduction, and internal organizational obstacles to sustainability action plans.

Objective 3: Investigate universities and communities as sustainability laboratories
Universities are key platforms for building sustainability awareness and translating it into practical behavioral interventions; student-led initiatives can help bridge academia-industry and, eventually, community collaborations toward sustainable environmental action. The sustainovation – reflecting that food is not waste- had extensive student contribution to provide sustainable solutions to the issues presented by various organizations and resulted in collaborative problem-solving techniques. Significantly,
the goal isn't only to define these efforts but to evaluate the conditions that create lasting behavioral or organizational change.

Objective 4: Examine technology and AI-enabled sustainability
Digital tools and AI have significantly influenced consumers' abilities and operations. The workshop focuses on the ethical use of technologies towards behavioral change approaches. It will also provide a thoughtful look into critical challenges such as trust, ethics, transparency, inequality, and the contextual appropriateness of AI-enabled sustainability interventions.

Objective 5: Generate comparative Gulf evidence
The workshop will extensively focus on comparative research across GCC countries. The research papers will be based on comparative analysis of clear GCC framing objectives based on the country or the Gulf states. This will show which sustainability-related mechanisms appear across the Gulf and which depend on specific institutional, cultural, economic, or policy contexts.

Objective 6: Develop policy and practical implications
The workshop aims to create evidence that can enlighten governments, businesses, educational institutions, and other related organizations. The workshop seeks to identify mechanisms that support real and sustained impact.

5. Paper Focus/Topics

Paper proposals are invited on theoretically grounded and empirically informed research addressing the transition from sustainability awareness to sustainable action in the Gulf.

Potential themes include:
1. Sustainable consumption and consumer behavior across GCC countries
2. Food-waste behavior in households, universities, hospitality and food-service organizations towards food efficiency
3. Sustainability policy and behavioral interventions
4. Cultural and social impacts on ecological behavior in Gulf communities
5. Sustainable branding: a concept of green marketing

6. Circular economy: building sustainable business models
7. Sustainability observations in hospitality and tourism
8. ESG, corporate sustainability and organizational transformation
9. Youth, education and sustainability engagement
10. Community-based approaches to environmental sustainability
11. Academia–industry bridge for environmental innovation
12. Student-led sustainability initiatives and behavioral change
13. Comparative studies across two or more GCC countries (sustainable lifestyles)
14. The relationship between national sustainability strategies and everyday practices

Authors will be encouraged to move beyond descriptive accounts and develop clear theoretical, methodological, or empirical contributions. Comparative GCC studies, mixed-method research and research connecting individual behavior with organizational or policy contexts are particularly encouraged.

6. Publication Plans

The workshop will pursue a coherent joint publication strategy rather than treating the papers as independent contributions. The desired outcome is successful publications in peer-reviewed journals that mainly emphasize sustainability shifts in the Gulf. The framework is based on how transitions have positively increased awareness and integrated sustainable actions.

Four thematic phases are involved:

Part I – From Awareness to Behavior
Research focuses on societal and cultural norms, consumption patterns, and food waste, with the aim of influencing behavior.

Part II – Business and Market Transformation
Research focuses on change initiatives taken by organizations with sustainable strategies in marketing, circular economy, and hospitality.

Part III – Education, Youth and Community Action
Research initiatives taken by universities, including sustainable projects with a strong sense of youth participation, positive outcomes, and strong community impacts.

Part IV – Technology and Policy Pathways
Research focusing on digitalization and addressing the ethical use of AI. The change is behavioral policies towards effectiveness and comparative sustainability strategies across the GCC.

The identification of relevant editors and publishers lies with the directors, which needs to be discussed in the initial development phase to develop a publication strategy. The authors will have time to implement the suggested changes and critical evaluations following the workshop and feedback received from the editorial board. The contributions will be judged accordingly; however, some publications that lack collective fit will be supported appropriately towards working journals.

7. References

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8. Workshop Directors

Dr. Sana Arshad is a Senior Fellow in Higher Education. Associate Professor of Marketing at De Montfort University Dubai, with over 12 years of higher-education experience spanning teaching, academic leadership, research supervision, and programme development. She holds a PhD in Marketing (Consumer and Market Analysis) from Universiti Utara Malaysia, and her research interests include consumer behavior, branding, eWOM, emotional experience, digital marketing, sustainability and responsible business.

Her research and academic engagement also encompass sustainable consumption, innovation and AI in marketing and education. She has contributed to initiatives such as Sustainovation, connecting students, academia and industry to address sustainability challenges, and has participated in research workshops, conferences and international academic forums, including as a GAFAI Global AI Delegate UAE.

Prof. Dr. Asmat Nizam Abdul Talib is an established academic and researcher specialising in international business, strategic marketing, export market strategy, and international marketing. His academic career reflects extensive and diverse research experience, including leadership as Principal Investigator on multiple Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) projects and participation in multidisciplinary national and international research teams. His research portfolio also extends to sustainability, sustainable development, innovation, and responsible business, including research examining the relationship between entrepreneurship and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and work exploring sustainability and innovation in diverse sectors.