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Bridging Regional Corporate Sustainability Differences With Diasporic Insights: A Case Made by the Indian Diaspora in Australia

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are often developed in the Global North and applied in the Global South with minimal input from local Southern stakeholders. This may lead to a limited understanding of Southern cultural contexts, making CSR programs less effective. Despite growing calls for more culturally contextualized approaches, few studies explore CSR perceptions from the perspective of a Southern public. This paper addresses this gap by exploring the role of Southern diasporas as possible intermediaries in evaluating corporate sustainability efforts. The mixed-method study—comprising focus groups and an online survey conducted in Australia in 2022/23—focuses on the Indian Australian diaspora's evaluation of corporate sustainability and, more specifically, Porter and Kramer's Creating Shared Value (CSV) strategies. Through triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative findings, the research reveals that trust in corporate sustainability remains fragile but that the CSV model can offer a compelling and legitimate approach. It shows that certain CSV strategies, particularly those aligned with cultural and institutional frameworks, resonate more strongly with participants. This study underlines the value of culturally attuned corporate sustainability approaches and positions the active engagement with diasporas as a potential pathway to more effective, culturally informed, and locally relevant corporate sustainability practices.

1 | Introduction

Diverging interpretations and prioritizations of sustainability issues and practices make realizing sustainable futures challenging (Thompson and Norris 2021). A key reason for the lack of consensus is the fact that sustainability is a global endeavor, largely piloted by the Global North[1], rather than one that consistently assimilates local and cultural diversity (Purvis et al. 2019). Moreover, Southern voices are remarkably absent in global sustainability considerations and frameworks (Barkemeyer 2011; Sénit and Biermann 2021), making the alignment with public expectations in Southern regions questionable. Calls for greater involvement of Southern actors (Sénit and Biermann 2021) and locally grounded approaches (Struckmann 2018) that help redress this imbalance are thus growing.

The Northern predisposition can also manifest in businesses' sustainability agendas (Rim et al. 2024; Vertigans 2021). Many Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are developed within a Northern context, that is, the location where the multinational corporations (MNCs) operate (Vertigans and Idowu 2021) and are, therefore, founded within a Northern CSR paradigm (Al-Mamun and Zaman 2023; Rim et al. 2024). Yet, the programs are increasingly applied in the South (Vertigans and Idowu 2021) and with minimal input from Southern stakeholders (Voola and Voola 2019). This lack

of Southern engagement not only undermines the understanding of local, cultural and institutional settings in which the programs take place (Rim et al. 2024) but ultimately limits the transformative potential of corporate sustainability efforts (Borghesi et al. 2025).

In addition, research indicates that sustainability issues and priorities vary between the Global North and the Global South (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Vertigans and Idowu 2021). Scholars argue that while actors in the North focus on environmental concerns, Southern actors are primarily concerned with socioeconomic issues such as gender inequalities and poverty (Barkemeyer 2011; Yazdani and Dola 2013). These conflicting stakeholder interests complicate prioritizing the sustainability parameters—society, environment, and economy. The complexity is further exacerbated by the parameters' interdependency and interconnectedness (Breuer et al. 2019; Chabay 2020), which can lead to both synergies and tensions in their achievement (Mensah 2019). Consequently, businesses must balance conflicting sustainability choices and trade-offs with their corporate strategies (Voola and Voola 2019), while ensuring their efforts align with the expectations and needs of diverse publics. However, guidance on how to manage the disentanglement and prioritization of different sustainability goals remains critically absent (Barbier and Burgess 2017; Breuer et al. 2019). This undoubtedly leads to short-term winners and losers (Mensah 2019), particularly since budget constraints and resource allocations make prioritization unavoidable in decision-making (Breuer et al. 2019). As a result, CSR programs in the South may be ineffective in promoting sustainability (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Vertigans 2021) or even counterproductive (Barkemeyer 2011).

Despite these issues, CSR scholarship is primarily drawn from a standardized Northern perspective with little attention given to the diverse contexts and needs of the Global South (Al-Mamun and Zaman 2023; Rim et al. 2024). Few studies have examined how different cultural contexts influence the perceptions of corporate sustainability initiatives from a Southern (Kim 2018) public point of view (Munro 2020) and fewer still have explored the potential role of diaspora communities in mediating these processes.

Diasporas originating from the Global South represent a unique but underutilized perspective in this space. As international migrants, they have inevitably been exposed to transnational values and lifestyles, enhancing their intercultural skills and enabling them to negotiate multiple value systems (Brannen et al. 2009; Chand and Tung 2014). Their unique bicultural positioning allows them to act as cultural intermediaries between their host and homeland (Pradhan and Mohapatra 2020) and between local and global dimensions (Cohen 2008). These qualities make Southern diasporas well suited to contribute to more culturally attuned sustainability strategies for implementation in Southern regions.

However, the role of diasporas as intermediaries in translating or adapting CSR approaches between the Global North and South has received little scholarly attention. This represents a significant gap in both the CSR literature and broader sustainability studies. To date, few frameworks consider how diasporic insights might reshape sustainability practices or make them more responsive to the priorities of diverse publics.

To address this gap, this paper explores how diasporic perspectives might contribute to reimagining CSR in a way that better reflects Southern realities. It focuses on the Indian Australian diaspora as a case study to examine how members of this community prioritize the three core components of sustainability—society, environment, and economy—and how they perceive the role of businesses in achieving sustainable futures. In doing so, this study seeks to advance the understanding of how CSR can move beyond Northern-centric models and become more responsive to culturally diverse contexts.

1.1 | Creating Shared Value (CSV)—Enabler or Imposter of Sustainability?

CSR is broadly defined as society's expectations of the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic activities performed by businesses (Carroll 2015). It functions as an umbrella term for conceptions of business–society relations (Angelova 2019; Matten and Moon 2008), with the shared principle being that business supports societal well-being while generating profits (Carroll 2015). As such, it is closely linked to sustainability and its three pillars (Abad-Segura et al. 2019; Dubreta et al. 2010), with businesses progressively incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda into their CSR and shared value strategies (Scott and McGill 2019). Indeed, some refer to CSR as "Corporate Sustainability" (Abad-Segura et al. 2019, p. 24).

That said, in the last decade, the premise that businesses can support sustainable development by creating shared value has gained significant momentum. Porter and Kramer first introduced the principle of shared value (SV) as a form of strategic CSR in 2006 (Porter and Kramer 2006; Rendtorff 2019). Five years later, they developed the principle into the persuasive and provocative concept: "Creating Shared Value" (CSV) (Dembek et al. 2016).

While CSV arguably builds on the philosophy of CSR, it represents a strategic evolution, redefining how businesses align economic performance with social progress (Angelova 2019; V. Munro 2020; Wójcik 2016). In contrast to CSR's often peripheral and externally motivated initiatives (Yang and Yan 2020), CSV is embedded within the organization's core business model and driven by internal imperatives (Crane et al. 2014). CSV reframes social problems as opportunities, elevating social progress from a philanthropic interest to a source of long-term value creation (Angelova 2019; V. Munro 2020; Yang and Yan 2020).

Traditional CSR programs are often referred to as short-term efforts in risk mitigation rather than long-term endeavors to benefit society (Angelova 2019; Wójcik 2016). Such programs tend to function at the margins of an organization's business model and are driven by external pressures and actors (Yang and Yan 2020). Indeed, critics question the role of an organization's shareholder interests in profit maximization in the development of CSR programs (Al-Mamun and Zaman 2023) and label CSR

as a public relations platform that serves to minimize and greenwash wrongdoing rather than to do good for greater society (Wójcik 2016).

CSV, on the other hand, relies on a proactive, internal strategy instead of a reactive response to external pressure (Wójcik 2016; Yang and Yan 2020). The concept is considered more inclusive (Munro 2020), and practical and concrete (Wójcik 2016), both in terms of its managerial language (e.g., creating value versus responsibility) (Beschorner and Hajduk 2017) and approach.

The CSV model allows organizations to enhance their competitiveness while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions of the communities in which they operate (Porter and Kramer 2011). To achieve this Porter and Kramer (2011) propose three strategies—(1) reconceiving products and markets, (2) redefining productivity in the value chain, and (3) building support clusters to systemize CSV—within the business structure. First, an organization can reinvent their products and markets by finding opportunities in social issues and ensuring the products are fundamentally doing good for the customer. Second, the output of an organization's value chain can be redefined by reducing internal costs of externally induced challenges (e.g., reducing energy use, more collaborative procurement practices, and innovative distribution channels). Last, an organization can build local support clusters by facilitating transparent, fair markets and geographic concentrations of expertise. This can be achieved in cooperation with, for example, suppliers, service providers, governments, and non-government organizations (NGOs). Building on this, Pfitzer et al. (2013) identify five criteria to produce scalable SV systems. Organizations must firmly insert the social cause into their core process and strategy, delve deeply into the social condition to identify the underlying sources thereof, monitor their progress through, for example, increased profits or business markers in conjunction with social advancement, design entrepreneurial structures that facilitate SV initiatives, and recruit a diverse, external stakeholder group to co-create SV solutions.

However, despite these commendable intentions, CSV is not without critique. Some scholars call it an opportunistic concept that thwarts conscious capitalism (Crane et al. 2014; Rendtorff 2017). They contend that CSV detracts from responsible business practices due to its focus on value creation (Beschorner & Hajduk, Beschorner and Hajduk 2017) and its efforts to grow collective prosperity (Dembek et al. 2016). Striving to reach social and economic goals inevitably leads to trade-offs and ultimately promotes greenwashing (Crane et al. 2014).

Another persistent criticism of CSV is the difficulty of measuring its performance, with CSV attempting to quantify social impact considered a mostly arbitrary endeavor (Kettner, Kettner 2017). Hence, businesses are increasingly incorporating the SDG framework as a measurement tool for CSV initiatives (Hoek 2017; Munro 2020).

Further, despite businesses shifting the focus of their role in society, a notable gap persists between businesses' good intentions and implementing sustainable practices (Pucker 2021). A 2019 PricewaterhouseCoopers study found that only 14% of 1141 organizations incorporated specific SDG targets, and only 1% provided measurable progress. Those that did typically chose relatively generic corporate governance targets, like target #8.5, which focuses on full employment and decent work (Scott and McGill 2019). Additionally, businesses often "cherry-pick" SDGs that best promote their economic growth and align with their areas of expertise (Asvànyi and Zsóka 2021, p. 14) while neglecting social issues like hunger and poverty (Scott and McGill 2019). Conversely, these issues rank high in public opinion (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2015). This incongruence and failure to understand public priorities can lead to ineffective sustainability strategies (Auger et al. 2007).

Therefore, while CSV offers transformative potential, it faces challenges in finding social issues that can be translated into viable CSV opportunities (Pfitzer et al. 2013) and in understanding social issues that align with public preferences (Dembek et al. 2016). These challenges are further complicated by diverse regional needs and demands that require additional local adjustments (Kim 2018; Munro 2020). As businesses grapple with these complexities, understanding the role of culture in sustainability becomes increasingly pivotal.

1.2 | Culture, Biculturalism and Diasporas

Research indicates that globalization and rising migration have transformed cultural influences over recent decades (Pekerti and Arli 2015; Schwartz et al. 2010). Culture today is no longer essentialist, static, or bound by origin and geography. Rather, it is fluid and dynamic (Vahed 2007), making it complex and multi-faceted. Modern pluralistic societies often include diverse ethnic and cultural groups living within the same social and political framework. The logical change that emanates from the contact between these diverse cultural groups is often explained by the acculturation process, whereby the focus of change lies in the subculture (Berry, 2010; Schwartz et al. 2010). Traditionally, acculturation was viewed as a linear continuum, with assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization representing the four different forms of change. Within assimilation, subcultures are entirely absorbed by the dominant culture. Within integration, subcultures maintain the original cultural values and nurture strong relations with the host society. Within separation, subcultures retain the values of the original culture but reject the values of the dominant culture, and, lastly, within marginalization, subcultures reject both the original cultural values and those of the dominant culture (Berry, 2010; Ogden et al., 2004).

More recently, a post-assimilationist perspective has challenged this linear model. The assimilationist perspective of acculturation and its notion of the melting pot has long been debunked (Brubaker, 2005). Equally, the prospect of complete marginalization occurring on the other end of the spectrum is unlikely (Schwartz et al. 2010). The linear approach has thus been replaced by a view that acculturation is multidimensional and that subcultures can assimilate in some respects but maintain their cultural identities in others (Brubaker, 2005; Mathur, 2012;

Schwartz et al. 2010). By identifying with one heritage culture and one receiving culture, individuals espouse a bicultural acculturation strategy (Meca et al. 2020).

The bicultural identification model is considered the most endorsed acculturation strategy in the 21st century (Huynh et al. 2011; Lakha and Stevenson 2001). Bicultural individuals have experienced and internalized at least two cultures (Huynh et al. 2011; Nguyen et al. 2009), and their cognitive and emotional processes are shaped by their attachments to these cultures (Hong et al., Hong et al. 2016). As a result, bicultural individuals are deemed highly skilled and proficient at an intercultural level and able to operate fluidly within and across two cultures (Brannen et al. 2009).

Cultural duality is also integral to the contemporary notion of the term *diaspora* (Faist 2010; Sheffer 2003). Scholars agree that the concept of diaspora has evolved from its classic reference to the forced Jewish exile to a broader social process and condition (Alexander 2017; Brubaker 2017). This social process is built (and rebuilt) on continually shifting memories and histories in the here and there (Hall 1994), "de-territorializing" the diasporic cultural identity (Sheffer 2003, p. 116). The polycentric, bicultural nature of diasporas thus not only leads to a distinct set of shared meanings, values, and behaviors that differ from other cultures but also expands beyond the diaspora's home and host land.

As such, the unique bicultural position of diasporas enhances their intercultural competency (Brannen et al. 2009) and makes them a potent force in the spread of values and ideologies (Ho 2020; Sheffer 2003). This transmission of social capital by diasporas is increasingly seen as highly impactful in advancing development in low- and middle-income countries; even more so than financial remittances (Kapur 2010). As agents of social and financial change, understanding the motivations of diaspora members is crucial for understanding the intricacies of contemporary culture.

1.3 | The Indian Australian Diaspora

The modern Indian diaspora, including in Australia, is marked by its diversity, with members practising different religions, speaking various languages, and working in a range of professions (Cohen 2008; Varghese 2018). The Indian diaspora includes both long-established populations in places like Fiji and South Africa and newer communities in countries such as Canada and Australia. Attributing a single ethnic, national, or religious identity to this vastly heterogeneous group is thus unfeasible. However, its members' views and practices are founded in India (Vahed 2007), fostering a shared sense of "Indian-ness" (Dufoix 2008; Pradhan and Mohapatra 2020) that extends beyond India's national borders (Ho et al. 2015).

With approximately 30 million non-resident Indians, overseas citizens of India and persons of Indian origin living across 146 countries, the Indian diaspora is the largest globally (Edmond 2020; Pradhan and Mohapatra 2020). In Australia, it is the second-largest and fastest-growing diaspora (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021). This expansion reflects a shift from the reserved Indo-Australian relations in the decades following India's independence to more open ties since the early 2000s (Jaishankar 2020; Varghese 2018).

Since the mid-1970s, Australia's skilled migration policies have significantly influenced the socio-demographic profile of its Indian diaspora (Baas 2018). India is now Australia's largest source of skilled migrants and its second-largest source of international students (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Further, akin to other industrialized countries, such as Canada, most Indian Australians are highly educated, hold managerial and professional roles, and earn above-median incomes (Pradhan and Mohapatra 2020; Varghese 2018). This elite position enables them to shape social, political, and industrial ideas and behaviors, in a manner that is reflective of Joseph Nye's concept of soft power—the ability to influence behavior through values and policies rather than force (Kapur 2010; Mohapatra and Tripathi 2021; Singh 2017). As such, exploring the Indian Australian diaspora's views on sustainability and CSV provides valuable cultural insights that contextualize the global sustainability approach on a localized, yet multinational level, while also offering a valuable model of inquiry that can be adapted to other regions and diasporas.

The objective of this study is, therefore, to explore:

1. How a community with Southern cultural origins—in this case, members of the Indian Australian diaspora—values sustainability and prioritizes the three sustainability components (society, environment, and economy) and
2. How members of the Indian Australian diaspora evaluate the role of business and CSV initiatives more specifically in achieving sustainable futures.

The key here is the need to encourage a more culturally nuanced sustainability approach that offers businesses and policymakers guidance for trade-off decisions between the three parameters and enhances the resonance of CSV interventions.

The next section of this paper presents the study's methodology, followed by the findings, discussion, and conclusions.

2 | Methodology

Based on the study's objectives, a mixed-methods research (MMR) approach was adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Specifically, focus groups and an online survey were implemented in a qualitative–quantitative sequence. The data from the two phases were collected and analyzed separately, and then connected during the interpretation stage (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). This design enabled the researcher to gain both depth (e.g., contextual insights) and breadth (e.g., prevalence measures) of understanding (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). It allowed the researcher to measure the preferences and priorities of sustainability dimensions numerically as well as gain an understanding of their cultural underpinnings. As such, the qualitative phase helped answer why and how participants respond the way they do (Guest et al. 2013), while the quantitative phase offered larger-scale, objective measures,

reducing concerns about the representativeness of the qualitative findings (Kelle 2006).

The qualitative data was collected in 2022 through seven 75-min mini-focus groups (dyads and triads) conducted in Sydney. Focus groups were chosen due to their effectiveness in exploring shared values and collective standards (Guest et al. 2013), making them well suited to this study's aims.

The quantitative data was gathered in 2023 through a national Australian online survey, which included a best-worst scaling (BWS) task. BWS was used to help mitigate potential cultural biases associated with traditional rating scales by providing a simple, paired comparison approach (Auger et al., 2006), aligning with the study's cross-cultural context.

Participants were recruited through social media posts on Indian community Facebook pages and university Facebook pages. For the focus groups, advertising flyers were also displayed in central locations such as food courts and university notice boards. In addition, snowballing was used, with already recruited group participants asking others to join. The objective of the purposive sampling method for the focus groups was to select participants who were central to the subject of investigation and, therefore, able to offer meaningful information (Guest et al. 2013).

Moreover, the group recruitment strategies also served to mitigate social desirability and self-selection bias. Social desirability bias is caused by a respondent's conscious or subconscious tendency to provide responses that may seem socially desirable but are inaccurate (Zikmund et al., 2014). Socially sensitive research topics (e.g., income levels) or topics that involve entrenched social norms (e.g., sustainability) run the risk of a social desirability bias (Bispo Júnior, 2022). However, the relative homogeneity of the groups (age, gender, time of settlement, type of profession) and inclusion of friendship groups enabled a sense of commonality and familiarity, increasing the likelihood of more authentic responses (Bispo Júnior, 2022). Equally, the inclusion of friendship groups reduced the presentation of self-selection bias. Self-selection bias occurs when participants choose to participate in research because they have strong feelings and/or opinions about a topic (Zikmund et al., 2014). The friends of participants who joined the groups agreed to do so because of their friendship rather than their values about the topic. An incentive in the form of a $50 voucher was offered to focus group participants and a "Chance to win $200" to survey participants.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from group participants through consent forms during the recruitment process. Participants who chose to complete the online survey provided their consent upon commencement of the survey. All participants had the right to discontinue the process without prejudice at any time. The process of this research project was approved by the University of Technology, Sydney, Ethics Committee (Identification numbers: Qualitative Phase: ETH21-6029, Quantitative Phase: ETH22-7414).

2.1 | Qualitative Phase

The qualitative stage involved 17 participants spread across seven relatively homogenous groups. Participants were between 19 and 36 years old. All were either enrolled in or had finished an Australian tertiary degree. Five of the groups consisted of Indian-born individuals who were living in Australia. Two groups, consisting of second- and third-generation Australians, served as a control. The aim of the control groups was to improve the ability to isolate the influence of Indian diasporic culture on the perception of sustainability, the SDGs, and related CSV interventions (Godby 2022). The Indian groups were broadly split into groups of new migrants (arrival to Australia within the last year) and more established migrants (arrival between five to 14 years ago).

The size of this purposive sample was based on a common guideline that theoretical saturation—where additional participants contribute minimal new information—is typically reached with six to 12 participants or as few as three focus groups (Guest et al. 2013). This threshold for saturation was further supported by the study seeking overarching, deeper insights across a relatively uniform sample rather than establishing intricacies and variations within a heterogeneous group (Guest et al. 2013). In addition, the use of a semi-structured discussion guide combined with the triangulation of diverse data sources (e.g., metaphorical associations, individual photo narratives, and group activities) further contributed to the necessary understanding of the issues at this point (Creswell 2014).

The group process was outlined by a semi-structured discussion guide (see Appendix A) that was built around three key themes: the value of sustainability, the prioritization of sustainability issues as defined by the SDGs, and the evaluation of six CSV examples selected from articles by CSV scholars (e.g., Porter and Kramer (2011); and Pfitzer et al. (2013)). The CSV examples were shown in random order to minimize the fatigue order effect.

Elements of the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) were incorporated into the group discussion. This technique uses visual, metaphorical material relevant to the research topic and serves as the basis for the discussion. Participants gathered the visual material ahead of the group sessions, which promoted a more personal expression of their stories in the groups (e.g., illustrations of: "What does sustainability mean to you?") (Coulter et al. 2001). It also helps uncover deeper thought processes and emotive connections while minimizing biases (e.g., social desirability) that the researcher and other participants could impose (Coulter et al. 2001).

The discussions were divided into six general sections constructed around the project's research topics. The first section included participants' introductions, metaphorical sensory connections with the concept of sustainability (e.g., what sustainability smells or sounds like?) and basic definitions of the concept. In the second section, participants explained the visual material they had posted on a sharing platform before the group

TABLE 1 | CSV Concept Summaries.

CSV labels	CSV strategy	Description
CSV 1—Spice supplementation	Reconceiving products & markets.	A company adds essential nutrients to a commonly used spice product to help combat nutritional deficiencies, such as anemia.
CSV 2—Mobile banking	Reconceiving products & markets.	Through mobile phone technology, a company offers banking services to people living in poverty, who have no access to financial services, thus increasing their employability.
CSV 3—Supporting coffee farmers	Redefining productivity in the value chain—improved procurement processes.	A company helps poor coffee farmers by guaranteeing bank loans and providing advice on sustainable farming practices, which leads to higher yields, better-quality production, and less environmental impact.
CSV 4—Reduction of waste and CO_2	Redefining productivity in the value chain—improved energy use and logistics.	A company reduces packaging waste and CO_2 emissions by providing packaging guidelines to suppliers, cutting delivery routes, and buying from local farmers.
CSV 5—Female distribution network	Redefining productivity in the value chain—creative distribution.	A company provides women in impoverished villages with skills and income by creating a direct distribution system of hygiene products, thereby also reducing communicable diseases in the villages.
CSV 6—Government partnerships	Local cluster development.	In partnership with local governments, a company helps develop an infrastructure program that improves ports and roads, thereby facilitating access to agricultural inputs for local farmers and supporting employment.

discussions, which reflected their thoughts and interpretations of sustainability. The next section introduced various visual representations of the individual SDGs, each symbolizing one of the three sustainability dimensions: society, environment, and economy. Participants selected those illustrations that contributed to their sustainability story and resonated with them the most, as well as those they considered irrelevant to the topic.

In the fourth section, participants collaboratively placed the SDGs in order of importance. Next, participants evaluated the six CSV interventions summarized in Table 1, each illustrating one of the CSV strategies outlined by Porter and Kramer (2011). Participants discussed the effectiveness of the interventions in supporting sustainable development and potential improvements. Finally, the sixth section explored the participants' diasporic cultural connection in steering the discussion.

The data was analyzed thematically following the widespread six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarize yourself with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes, and produce the report. Clarke and Braun (2017) emphasize that thematic analysis includes structured procedures and evaluative steps that enhance the analytical rigor of the qualitative research. As such, the raw data (e.g., fieldwork notes, audio recordings, participants' visuals) was first organized, labeled, and transcribed. It was then assessed manually for a more holistic impression of outcomes, with emerging patterns related to the research aims noted in the margins and transferred as codes into the qualitative software tool NVIVO. Subsequently, the codes were re-evaluated, defined and grouped into themes. The themes were then reconsidered in relation to the codes and connected to the research topics with the help of a theme map. This was an iterative process. Once thematic patterns became clear and little new knowledge was gained regarding the research topic, the meaning of the data was translated into research outcomes. The coding process was conducted by the lead researcher with a sample of the themes, codes, and their description and interpretation available in Appendix B.

The accuracy and authenticity of the findings were enhanced through validity strategies such as data triangulation and member checking (Creswell 2014). During the group discussions, the research problem was addressed through various sources of input, including metaphorical associations, personal stories, group activities, and conversations. This diversity of sources provided different perspectives on the same topic, which were merged to establish the themes of the findings. In addition, during the discussions, the researcher regularly reiterated and confirmed the participants' feedback to ensure the correct understanding of the participants' contributions.

2.2 | Quantitative Phase

A total of 192 eligible participants were recruited for the national online survey. To participate, respondents had to be over 18, living in Australia, and born in India. However, not all 192 participants completed the entire survey, with 145 respondents answering the final question. Nonetheless, uncompleted surveys ($n = 47$) were retained to preserve as much data as possible and maintain statistical power for analysis. In addition, the

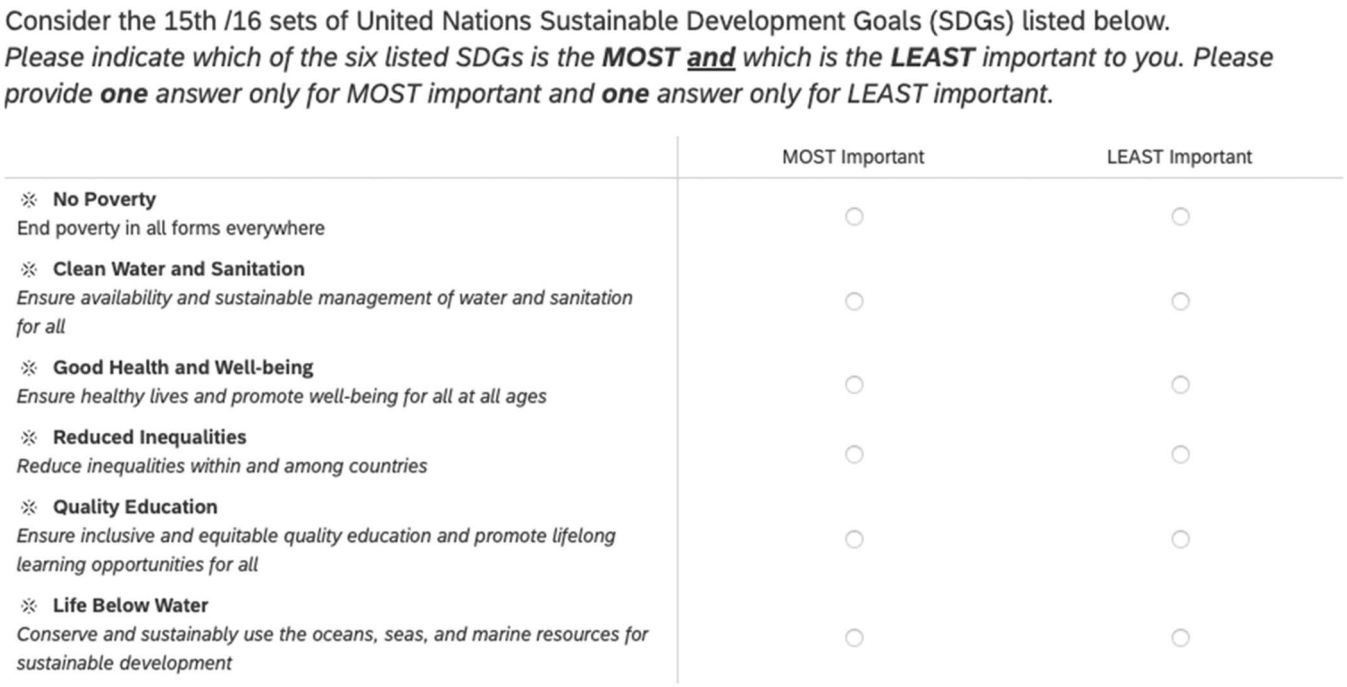

FIGURE 1 | A Best-Worst Scale Sample Set.

latter part of the survey was primarily related to demographic profiling rather than the research questions.

The size of this convenience sample was based on the Central Limit Theorem (CLT), which requires a minimum sample of 30, provided the level of variance is finite (McLeod 2019). However, since this project generally needed three subgroups for a constructive overview, the minimum size was multiplied accordingly. A target sample of 100 was set, aiming to exceed this number for a more intricate evaluation of more independent variables.

The survey was conducted online using Qualtrics, with the survey flow structured around the themes from the focus groups. The prioritization of sustainability issues via the SDGs was investigated using a Best-Worst Scaling (BWS) task with 16 sets of six items. The number of sets and items was predetermined by existing BWS designs, whereby the 16 sets were the closest number to the 17 SDGs but meant one goal needed to be excluded. Based on the focus groups' findings and the Barkemeyer (2011) study, goal # 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) was excluded.

BWS measures the relative importance of issues by asking respondents which parameter best meets a criterion and which of the remaining parameters is the worst match (Burke et al. 2013). The advantage of this trade-off mechanism is that respondents cannot make all parameters equally relevant (Burke et al. 2013), a high risk here, considering the interconnectedness of the SDGs. Figure 1 illustrates the trade-off mechanism in a sample set used in the survey.

Within the BWS task, a Balanced Incomplete Block (BIBD) and Youden Design were applied. In the BIBD, each item (i.e., SDG) appears the same number of times as the other items and in a

Set	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Example
1	12	8	15	13	14	4	
2	16	11	14	7	3	13	Goals 11 and 13 co-occur twice
3	6	13	2	16	15	10	
4	9	15	1	14	16	5	
5	4	16	8	9	10	11	
6	10	12	7	3	9	15	
7	11	14	9	2	6	12	
8	13	5	10	11	12	1	Goals 11 and 13 co-occur twice
9	7	4	16	12	5	6	
10	5	3	6	15	11	8	
11	14	10	5	8	7	2	
12	8	7	13	6	1	9	
13	3	2	12	1	8	16	
14	15	1	11	4	2	7	Goal 11 appears 6 times (once in each position)
15	1	6	3	10	4	14	
16	2	9	4	5	13	3	Goal 13 appears 6 times (once in each position)

Properties of BIB and Youden design	
	16 items
	16 rows (i.e., sets)
	6 Repetitions (how often each item appears)
	6 Blocksize (how many items presented in each set)
	2 Pair-frequency (how often each item co-occurs with another item)
Youden	Each item appears once in each column

FIGURE 2 | Properties and Example of the BIB and Youden Design.

predetermined co-occurrence. In this BIBD and Youden Design, each block included six different SDGs, and each SDG appeared six times throughout the BWS section. Additionally, each SDG was paired with another SDG twice. Last, the Youden Design ensured that each item appeared once in each block position (i.e., first, second, third, etc.). Figure 2 shows the properties applied in this BIB and Youden Design using SDGs 11 and 13 as examples.

The general perceptions of businesses' sustainability contributions and the CSV examples were rated using 5-point Likert scales, ranging from "I agree" to "I disagree" or "Extremely effective" to "Not effective at all." The order of the CSVs was randomized by the Qualtrics system.

Once the data were exported to the software program SPSS 28, the quality of the data was verified. Eligibility criteria, response consistency, and time spent were assessed. Following the data cleaning process, the analysis occurred at three levels: descriptive, inferential, and the evaluation of the Best-Worst scores. Descriptive analysis used frequency tabulations for categorical variables (e.g., education levels) and measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean and standard deviation) for continuous variables such as the BWS scores.

The inferential analysis involved various parametric tests (Independent T-Test, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)) based on the number of variables, the type of data, and the information sought. Significance was tested at $p \leq 0.05$, and a 95% confidence level. The inferential techniques were primarily used to examine potentially meaningful group differences and relations.

The BWS scores were calculated by totalling the number of best counts (most important SDG) and the number of worst counts (least important SDG) and then subtracting the sum of the worst counts from the sum of the best counts for each SDG. These sums were divided by their respective sample size. However, because the decreasing sample size potentially led to inconsistent frequencies of the individual items, the scores were normalized by dividing the individual best-worst scores by the number of times each item appeared, resulting in a range of −1 to +1 for the individual scores.

The focus of the quantitative phase was to numerically describe the prioritization of sustainability concerns in terms of SDG importance and CSV evaluations. The intent was to offer larger-scale, objective measures to mitigate concerns about the representativeness of the qualitative phase (Kelle 2006), rather than test predefined hypotheses. This approach is consistent with the objectives of exploratory quantitative research to generate initial ideas and identify patterns for further hypothesis testing later (McNabb 2010; Stead and Struwig 2001). The numerical evaluation was achieved using BWS for the SDG priorities and Likert scales for the CSV contributions.

The widespread usage of BWS suggests it's a strongly endorsed, dependable method. BWS has been implemented in various contexts, such as food safety, cross-cultural product values and personality research (Massey et al. 2015). Its foundations are considered mathematically rigorous and well validated (Palmer et al. 2017). Repeating items across contexts enables more reliable comparisons, particularly when following the BIBD (Massey et al. 2015). Moreover, studies have shown that the binary nature of BWS reduces cultural response biases in cross-cultural contexts and offsets positive response bias, better than other rating scales. It also performs more effectively in assessing preferences and achieving predictive validity (Massey et al. 2015), thus making BWS a methodologically strong and reliable choice.

The varied material of the Likert-scale items did not allow for the clustering of the scales into one unidimensional, multi-item scale (Vaske et al. 2016). Standard reliability measures, such as Cronbach's Alpha, were thus not available to estimate the internal consistency of the scale items. Instead, construct validity was addressed through conceptual alignment and coherence with existing frameworks and constructs provided by the CSV literature and outcomes of the qualitative phase. Moreover, the mixed-method structure allowed for data triangulation not only through diverse data sources but also through two distinct research methods. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods and sources, the data gained additional richness and strength to support its accuracy. The triangulation of the data, therefore, contributed significantly to the findings' authenticity and validity (Creswell 2014). The consistency of the findings across the qualitative and quantitative phases further supported the data's credibility.

3 | Findings

3.1 | Research Participants

The survey and focus group participants had a similar profile. All focus group participants were 18–36 years old; most survey participants were also within this age range: 60%, ($n = 115$) were 18–35 years old, 36% ($n = 69$) were 36–55 years old, and only 4% ($n = 8$) were over 56. All focus group participants had completed or were enrolled at a university. Similarly, most survey respondents held university degrees (71%, $n = 103$), with fewer than 30% ($n = 42$) having completed school or vocational training as their highest level of education. A Chi-Square Test of Independence revealed a significant relation between the age of participants and their highest level of education. Specifically, the 18–25 age group more commonly completed a school finish or vocational training as their highest level of education, while participants over 36 years were more likely to have a postgraduate degree, $x^2(4, 145) = 34.7, p < .001$.

Gender distribution was relatively balanced between the female and male genders, with ten out of the 17 focus group participants identifying as female and seven as male. In the survey, 43% ($n = 62$) of respondents identified as female, while 54% ($n = 78$) identified as male, and 3% aligned their identity with another gender or preferred not to say.

In terms of settlement times, the Indian focus group participants were evenly divided between those who arrived in Australia less than five years ago ($n = 6$) and those who arrived over five years ago ($n = 6$). The survey participants' settlement time was also spread relatively evenly, with 36% ($n = 52$) having been in Australia for less than five years, 21% ($n = 30$) for five to ten years, and 43% ($n = 63$) for over ten years. The settlement time was significantly related to the participants' age, with most participants 35 years and younger having settled less than ten years ago, while those 36 and over had arrived over ten years ago, x^2 (4, 145) = 34.7, $p < 0.001$. Thus, age, education level, and settlement time were significantly related. Moreover, these traits frequently created meaningful differences in the respondent feedback.

3.2 | Prioritization of Sustainability Parameters

The outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative phases principally complemented each other regarding the sustainability

priorities and CSV preferences. The prioritization task in this study demonstrated that making trade-offs between the social, environmental and economic sustainability dimensions was challenging for participants. The normative tensions surrounding sustainability prioritizations involved reconciling multiple value systems; decisions included both practical and moral considerations.

The drawn-out, passionate discussions in the focus groups and the clustering of results around the zero point in the BWS highlighted the participants' underlying struggle in disentangling sustainability issues. For them, it was a morally fraught process, where prioritizing one component could compromise another. Indeed, one focus group respondent compared the task to making "Sophie's choice," that is, determining the most important sustainability issue was just as insufferable as choosing the favored child in the family. Participants recognized that while environmental, social, and economic sustainability parameters are intended to work as a whole and are tightly entwined, meeting their respective objectives often entails trade-offs.

In both research phases, the tensions centered around the social and environmental dimensions. The economic component, while an enabler of the other two dimensions, was less germane and not central to the objectives of sustainable development. Focus group participants who advocated for ecological sustainability argued that the Earth's life is regulated by the climate and that climate challenges are urgent because they are irreversible. Conversely, supporters of the social dimensions argued that the very tenet of sustainability is superfluous without the existence of people. For them, human survival and providing basic human needs, such as food, water, and health, took precedence. This created a moral divide, with no clear resolution between prioritizing people or the planet.

Education emerged as an effective compromise. Not only could it advance the awareness and comprehension of sustainability's complicated interrelations and mechanisms, but it could also help alleviate other critical social issues, such as poverty and gender inequality. Participants explained that, in an Indian context, equal access to education—particularly for girls and rural communities—was a foundational step toward reducing inequalities. Crucially, this form of grassroots education functioned as cultural capital, equipping individuals with socially valuable knowledge and competencies that could be mobilized across generations. When introduced early, education helped shape children's identities and behaviors, positioning them as transformative agents within their families and communities. The participants' stories of inspiring family and friends to adopt sustainable practices were illustrative of such transformative processes. Participants believed these identity-shaping experiences, when replicated and reinforced socially, had the potential to evolve into culturally embedded sustainability norms. In this sense, education was the fundamental and necessary mechanism that enables sustainability behaviors and practices to take root. As such, prioritizing education offsets ranking other issues, like reducing inequalities, at the bottom, and positions it as a cross-cutting enabler rather than a competing priority.

TABLE 2 | SDG Best-Worst Scaling Results.

SDGs	Rank	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
BWS4: Quality Education	1	178	0.168	0.404
BWS3: Good Health	2	168	0.142	0.36
BWS2: Zero Hunger	3	167	0.139	0.418
BWS6: Clean Water/Sanitation	4	167	0.078	0.291
BWS13: Climate Action	5	179	0.073	0.465
BWS15: Life on Land	6	178	0.065	0.346
BWS1: No Poverty	7	161	0.027	0.454
BWS 16: Peace, Justice, strong Instit.	8	169	0.007	0.369
BWS7: Clean Energy	9	168	−0.016	0.296
BWS12: Responsible Cons./ Production	10	179	−0.032	0.393
BWS11: Sustainable Cities/ Communities	11	170	−0.036	0.313
BWS8: Decent Work/Economic Growth	12	178	−0.054	0.376
BWS9: Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure	13	162	−0.109	0.389
BWS5: Gender Equality	14	161	−0.110	0.402
BWS14: Life Below Water	15	179	−0.120	0.364
BWS10: Reduced Inequalities	16	166	−0.167	0.384

Note: The green-to-red color scale is a visual representation of the descending order of BWS scores, whereby the goal perceived as the most important goal is dark green, and the one perceived as least important is dark red.

The prioritization of education and the tensions around the social and environmental parameters were also reflected in the BWS outcomes. Table 2 presents the BWS scores of the SDG prioritizations, ranked from most important to least important in relative terms, with a potential minimum and maximum score range of −1.000 to +1.000. The outcomes indicate that goals related to social sustainability factors, such as Quality Education, Good Health, and Zero Hunger, were most important. In contrast, goals involving economic factors, such as Reduced Inequalities, were least important, followed by Life Below Water and Gender Equality.

Environmental sustainability factors, namely Climate Action and Life on Land, were positioned at the top of the second quartile of the 16 ranked goals. Further, the extent to which Quality Education was considered most important ($M = 0.168$, SD = 0.404) mirrored the extent to which Reducing Inequalities was judged least important ($M = -0.167$, SD = 0.384). That is, all scores were clustered closely around zero.

TABLE 3 | Significant Differences in SDG Prioritization: Age, Education Level, Settlement Time.

Measure	*M*	SD	*F*	df	*p*
Reducing Inequalities					
Age					
18–25	−0.070	0.333	7.685	(2, 163)	< 0.001
26–35	−0.085	0.372	7.685	(2, 163)	< 0.001
36+	−0.308	0.392	7.685	(2, 163)	< 0.001
Gender Equality					
Age					
18–25	0.025	0.392	4.088	(2, 158)	0.019
36+	−0.188	0.348	4.088	(2, 158)	0.019
Reducing Inequalities					
Education Level					
No university	0.082	0.258	3.710	(2, 136)	0.027
With university degree	−0.272	0.364	3.710	(2, 136)	0.027
Gender Equality					
Education Level					
No university	−0.004	0.298	4.077	(2, 137)	0.019
With university degree	−0.218	0.374	4.077	(2, 137)	0.019
Reducing Inequalities					
Settlement time					
< 5 years	−0.097	0.374	3.859	(2, 136)	0.023
> 5 years	−0.264	0.354	3.859	(2, 136)	0.023

The age of participants significantly impacted the SDG prioritizations, both directly and indirectly (i.e., through the correlated education level and time of settlement). While low on the BWS ranking, a one-way ANOVA revealed that Reducing Inequality was considered significantly more important by the 18–25 and 26–35 age groups than the 36+ age group. Similarly, 18–25-year-old participants attributed significantly more relative importance to Gender Equality than the 36+ age group.

Further, the prioritizations were also influenced by education levels. Younger participants, who more commonly had not completed a university degree, considered Reducing Inequalities and Gender Equality significantly more important than their older, university-educated counterparts. Equally, younger participants who had settled more recently (i.e., less than five years ago) found Reducing Inequalities to be significantly more important than those who came over ten years ago (see Table 3 for a summary of means, standard deviations and ANOVA statistics).

In addition, gender differences also played a role in SDG prioritizations. An Independent *T*-test showed that females attributed more importance to Gender Equality than males. Conversely, males gave more weight to economic goals, such as Decent Work and Economic Growth and Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure Build, compared to females (see Table 4 for a summary of means, standard deviations, and *T*-test statistics).

3.3 | The Role of Business in Sustainability

To assess the participants' perceptions of the general effectiveness of businesses' contributions to sustainable development, they were asked several Likert-scale questions. Participants were asked to rate their agreement (from 5 = agree to 1 = disagree) to statements asking whether they thought businesses were increasingly engaged in sustainable development, whether they thought business initiatives were getting results, how sure they felt about the business contributions and if they thought business initiatives were marketing ploys. While respondents largely acknowledged the increased engagement of businesses in sustainable development ($M = 3.99$, SD = 0.947), they were more ambivalent about the outcomes and motivations of this engagement. Key outcomes are summarized in Figure 3

Most (78%, $n = 115$) agreed that businesses were progressively engaged in sustainability initiatives. However, when asked if business initiatives were delivering results for sustainable development, only 61% ($n = 89$) agreed, while 40% ($n = 57$) were unsure or disagreed with this statement ($M = 3.68$, SD = 0.908).

TABLE 4 | Significant Differences in SDG Prioritizations: Gender.

	Female		Male			
Measure	***M***	**SD**	***M***	**SD**	***t*(133)**	***p***
Gender Equality	−0.041	0.350	−0.078	0.317	−2.638	0.009
Decent Work & Economic Growth	−0.204	0.365	0.041	0.312	2.192	0.030
Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure	−0.191	0.395	−0.040	0.366	2.303	0.023

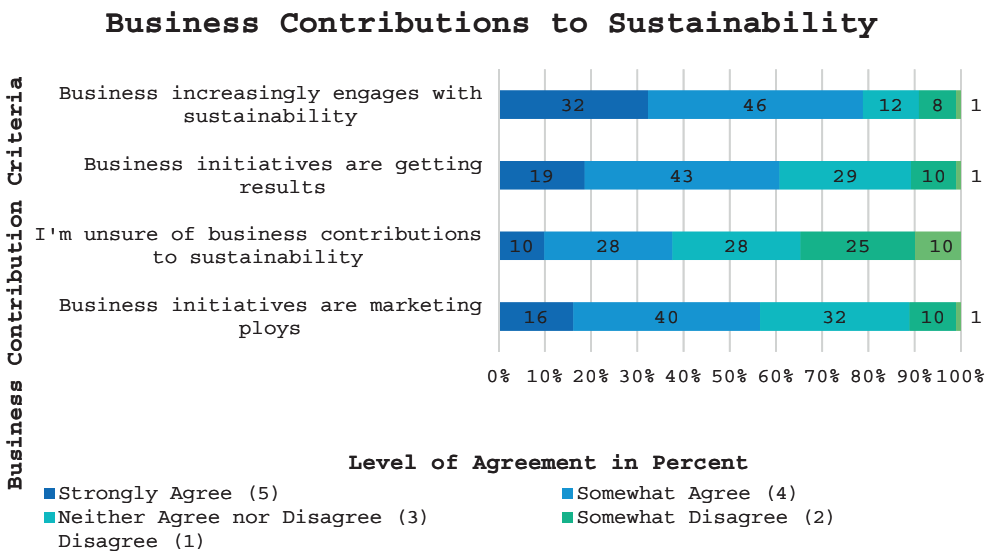

FIGURE 3 | Perceived Business Contributions to Sustainability.

In addition, over one-half (56%, $n = 83$) concurred that businesses' sustainability initiatives were marketing ploys ($M = 3.60$, SD = 0.926), which further underscored the doubt in businesses' engagement. Finally, the spread of responses regarding the level of confidence in businesses' contributions to sustainability confirmed the respondents' uncertainty, with an almost equal number of respondents agreeing (38%, $n = 56$), disagreeing (35%, $n = 52$), and being non-committal (28%, $n = 41$) ($M = 3.02$, SD = 1.150). No significant differences were found based on education, age, gender, or settlement time.

3.4 | CSV Assessments

The response to businesses' specific sustainability engagement was consistently more positive ($M = 3.67$, SD = 1.023, lower bound $M = 3.28$, upper bound $M = 4.02$) than to general business involvement. In line with the outcomes of the discussion groups, survey respondents felt that all CSV examples effectively supported sustainability, albeit to varying degrees. Focus group participants explained that interventions were most effective at progressing sustainable development if they had long-lasting intentions, were scalable and provided local communities with agency.

Teaching women business skills in CSV 5 (Redefinition of productivity in the value chain through a creative, female distribution network) and advising coffee farmers on sustainable agricultural practices in CSV 3 (Redefinition of productivity in the value chain through improved procurement processes) were thus favored. These initiatives validated the participants' prioritization of education in sustainable development. Likewise, the scalability and longevity associated with reducing waste and CO2 in CSV 4 (Redefinition of productivity in the value chain through improved energy use and logistics) and the local government partnerships in CSV 6 (Local cluster development) were recognized as strengths.

CSV 4 stood out as the only indisputable one among the six. The environmental focus in CSV 4 delivered clear sustainability indicators. It embodied the Three Rs model—reduce, reuse, recycle, which represents the essence of sustainable development for many. Similarly, the collaboration with local governments and the proposal of infrastructure development in CSV 6 promised a more successful, long-term outcome. In addition, as in CSV 3, it offered support to the farming community, a community that participants considered fundamental for society.

Conversely, initiatives that were considered incongruous with local ground realities, too superficial or emphasized economic outcomes, were less favored. For instance, participants felt that adding nutritional value to a spice product through supplements in CSV 1 (reconceiving products and markets) did not resolve the underlying social issue of malnutrition. Similarly, devising mobile phones as banking services for people living in poverty in CSV 2 (reconceiving products and markets) seemed impractical without educational support. Participants expressed doubts that people living in rural India would trust using phone technology to do their financials, understand the applications of advanced mobile technology, and have the necessary infrastructure to allow for phone banking.

Survey results on the perceived effectiveness of CSVs mirrored these focus group opinions. CSV 3 (redefinition of productivity through improved procurement by supporting coffee farmers), CSV 4 (redefinition of productivity by reducing waste and pollution), CSV 5 (redefinition of productivity through a creative, female distribution network), and CSV 6 (cluster development through government and local partnerships) were considered highly beneficial by about two-thirds of respondents (62%–67%, $n = 91$–99). In contrast, CSV 1 (reconceiving products and markets via spice supplementation) and CSV 2 (reconceiving products and markets via mobile banking) were considered beneficial by only about half of the participants (48%–51%, $n = 70$–77) (see Figure 4).

Further, a one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference between the means of CSV 2 (reconceiving products and markets via mobile banking) and almost all other CSV initiatives, whereby CSV 2 was judged considerably less effective than CSVs

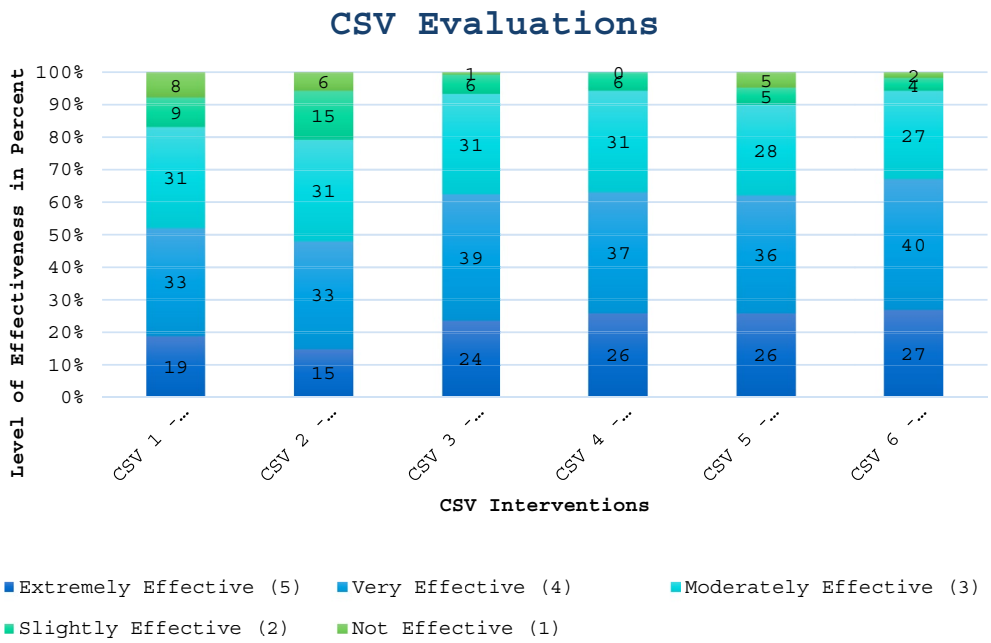

FIGURE 4 | CSV Evaluations.

TABLE 5 | Significant Differences in CSV Means and ANOVA Statistics.

CSV Intervention	*M*	SD	*F*(5, 876)
CSV 1	3.46	1.142	6.477*
CSV 2	3.35	1.097	6.477*
CSV 3	3.79	0.901	6.477*
CSV 4	3.83	0.887	6.477*
CSV 5	3.73	1.057	6.477*
CSV 6	3.86	0.934	6.477*

Note: *$p = 0.000$.

3–6. Only CSV 1 (reconceiving products and markets via spice supplementation) was not significantly different to CSV 2 (see Table 5).

Again, age impacted the preferences. Older respondents, 36+years, found CSV 6 significantly more effective ($M = 4.10$, SD = 0.817) than the younger respondents of 18–25 years ($M = 3.69$, SD = 0.841) and 26–35 years ($M = 3.71$, SD = 1.100), $F(2, 144) = 3.350$, $p = 0.038$.

In this study, the participant's age, education, and settlement duration, therefore, often lead to meaningful differences in the respondents' feedback regarding both the value and priorities of sustainable development and the CSV assessments. These traits were closely interrelated. The younger participant cohort (18–25 years) generally spent less time in Australia and had not completed a university education, whereas most older participants (36+years) arrived over 10 years ago and had a postgraduate degree. The results were divided between the younger and older participants. The younger cohort placed greater value on resolving social inequalities, while the older cohort valued government and business collaborations more highly.

These distinctions likely reflect both diverse migration histories and generational differences. The younger participants arrived in a well-established Indian Australian community and came from a more geopolitically assertive India, which may have contributed to a greater confidence in expressing socially progressive views. Their priorities also reflect broader generational shifts toward post-materialist values, including stronger concerns for equity and global justice. This drive for social purpose was shaped and mobilized by early exposure to globalized media and digital connectivity. In contrast, older participants may be more influenced by materialist concerns, shaped by earlier migration experiences and a more pragmatic orientation toward institutional partnerships.

4 | Discussion

The objective of this study was to determine how members of the Indian Australian diaspora prioritize sustainability parameters and how they perceive the role of business and CSV initiatives in supporting sustainable futures. This is with the argument that integrating more cultural sensitivity (especially from Southern origins) into sustainability and related CSV interventions can enhance sustainability progress.

4.1 | Navigating Trade-Offs Between Sustainability Parameters

The findings of this research indicate that prioritizing between sustainability parameters is challenging for participants, with frictions of prioritization focusing on social and environmental concerns and economic dimensions being more secondary. Education emerges as an enabler of both the social and environmental dimensions and thus, an effective compromise between the two. Education not only advances the understanding of sustainability's complexities but also counters other critical social

issues, such as poverty and gender inequality. This potential is particularly pronounced when sustainability education begins at the grassroots level. Participants emphasized that early engagement equips children to adopt sustainable behaviors and, crucially, to influence those around them. Such ripple effects reflect what Audley and Stein (2017) describe as the formation of cultural narratives through identity-shaping experiences in childhood. As these experiences are replicated within families and communities—and as awareness and understanding deepen—they become embedded in everyday life, ultimately serving as a catalyst for collective behavior change.

As a result, both research phases consistently rate Quality Education as the top sustainability priority and Reducing Inequalities as the least important. That said, this does not make Reducing Inequalities unimportant. In essence, because participants consider education the cornerstone of all sustainable development parameters, putting it first simply offsets placing other goals, such as Reduced Inequalities, at the bottom end of the rankings.

The participants' tensions and prioritization challenges align with findings from other academic studies. For example, Bain et al. (Bain et al. 2019) explored public perceptions of the SDGs and identified that frictions of prioritization primarily involve the social and environmental dimensions, while the economic parameter was of less interest. Similarly, a study conducted by Barkemeyer (2011) underscored the challenge of trading off sustainability issues. In this research, Barkemeyer (2011) investigated the prioritization of sustainability issues in a CSR context, comparing feedback of Global Compact member organizations from the Global North and South. The results showed that sustainability issues were generally rated as almost equally important but highlighted a divide between North and South. Specifically, socioeconomic issues, including primary education, were prioritized more in the South, while environmental issues took precedence in the North.

The notion that education is vital to achieving sustainable development is further supported in the sustainability literature. Its importance is underscored by suggestions that education should be included as an additional pillar in the tripartite sustainability model (Caradonna 2014), that education's far-reaching capacity allows for the conciliation of all three pillars (Bain et al., 2019), and that education is essential in overcoming the dearth of public knowledge of the sustainable development goal agenda (Caradonna 2014). Moreover, education for sustainable development (ESD) has been strongly endorsed by the United Nations since the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Indeed, ESD is considered an enabler (Glavič 2020) and integral to the targets of all SDGs (Ssosse et al. 2021).

However, despite this strong backing, the sustainability discourse remains unbalanced, managing the relations and prioritization among the dimensions continues to be problematic. This suggests that integrating sustainability into education and vice versa may require some reformative action. For ESD to be truly effective, policymakers and educators need to rethink and revise the curricula to ensure the equitable teaching of all three sustainability dimensions and establish their interdependencies in a way that is culturally relevant while remaining globally coherent. Like sustainability itself, ESD needs to account for diverse stakeholder perspectives and foster cooperative partnerships to improve the understanding of all dimensions and mitigate the tensions created by the inevitable trade-off decisions and compromises inherent to the paradigm.

4.2 | A Fragile Trust in Corporate Sustainability

This study shows that while businesses' involvement in sustainable development is acknowledged, the values and motives behind their contributions remain uncertain. Not only is the impact of their sustainability efforts unclear, but many also equate such engagement with greenwashing.

This skepticism regarding the integrity of businesses' social contracts can be attributed to lingering doubts about businesses' legitimacy and the limitations of traditional CSR practices. Many argue that business legitimacy is still at stake (Dembek et al. 2016; Porter and Kramer 2011), with businesses often seen as the source of capitalist problems (Munro 2020) and as antiheroes (Porter and Kramer 2006) who evoke fear rather than trust (Kramer and Pfitzer 2016). Others point to the shortcomings of traditional CSR programs, noting that they tend to focus on short-term risk mitigation rather than long-term societal benefits (Angelova 2019; Wójcik 2016). CSR programs often remain peripheral to the core business model, driven by external pressures rather than internal commitment (Yang and Yan 2020). As such, traditional CSR programs do not satisfy the expectations expressed by the participants. They do not offer the desired longevity, scalability, and integration into the core business strategy that includes collective, regional collaboration. Therefore, the shortfalls in CSR could explain the ambivalence and skepticism of the study's participants regarding businesses' sustainability engagements (Burke et al. 2014). Equally, they could justify the increased conviction in the effectiveness of the CSV initiatives displayed by participants when presented with the examples in the study (Wójcik 2016; Yang and Yan 2020).

While CSV builds on CSR principles, it considers addressing a social problem as an opportunity to be integrated into the organization's core business model, making it more of a long-term proposition (Angelova 2019; Munro 2020; Yang and Yan 2020). Moreover, CSV encourages collaboration with local government, NGOs, and trade associations, supporting a region-based concentration of expertise (Angelova 2019; Porter and Kramer 2011; Wójcik 2016). These traits align with participant expectations, validating their stronger appreciation for the CSV examples over business contributions in general.

4.3 | CSV as Confirmation of Sustainability Commitment

As mentioned, participants appreciated concrete CSV examples more than general business contributions. Specifically, interventions that align with the CSV criteria outlined by Pfitzer et al. (2013) are viewed as more beneficial to sustainability. For a CSV initiative to be considered valid, it must address a genuine social issue, be integral to the business, and therefore be

seen as long-term and scalable. CSV efforts that also involve innovative support structures and external partnerships are considered even more promising. They inspire more commitment, transparency, and accountability. In contrast, interventions that do not meet those criteria and seem to address the social cause superficially or are peripheral to the business process prompt doubt and skepticism. Meeting the twin goals is thus not necessarily greenwashing, provided the CSV approach satisfies certain criteria.

These findings suggest that the CSV model offers a compelling and legitimate approach for businesses to follow. In the view of participants, efforts that align with CSV's full intentions contribute to sustainable development. Conversely, those that seem to incorporate the CSV approach half-heartedly risk being condemned as greenwashing. Businesses that strive to advance the sustainability movement, therefore, need to set their strategic focus accordingly and fully integrate the paradigm into the core of the business model. Importantly, the CSV efforts must address real social issues at their roots rather than at their tips. That said, focusing on the best possible cause that supports the twin goals in line with the organization's business strategy remains the crux of the problem.

4.4 | Maximizing CSV Potential With Diasporic Input

Participants believe all CSV examples contribute to sustainable development. However, certain CSV strategies resonate more than others. As such, CSV strategies involving the redefinition of an organization's value chain (CSVs 3–5) and the development of local support clusters (CSV 6) take precedence over strategies that reconceive products and markets (CSVs 1–2). The former two are viewed as addressing true social causes, firmly embedding them within the business model, and involving innovative business structures and external partnerships. They best satisfy the CSV criteria. This is demonstrated through an organization's willingness to transform its existing business model (e.g., changing procurement processes and logistics like cutting delivery routes, using local suppliers or building unique community-based distribution networks). Importantly, these transformations also empower local communities through entrepreneurial job opportunities and education or collaboration with local partners. As a result, these strategies promise more longevity and scalability and address pertinent environmental and social issues, like pollution and poverty, at their core and more directly.

In contrast, strategies focused on new products and markets do not inspire the same level of business commitment and fail to address the root cause of social issues. Offering supplements in a spice product or mobile banking services to the poor does not help to solve malnutrition or poverty. These interventions are seen as more tokenistic or misaligned with local needs and context.

The significance of cultural and institutional context becomes particularly clear when comparing the two interventions CSV 2 and CSV 6. The first (CSV 2), involving mobile banking services, is judged culturally and technically inappropriate for the poor communities in India because of an inherent distrust in new technologies and money systems, and a need for further education and equipment. Indeed, this intervention failed in India (Lott and Sinha 2019), although it is very successful across several parts of Africa (Bolton 2020).

Inversely, CSV 6, involving government and business partnership, aligns with India's implicit institutional context as defined by its political, financial and labor environment and is therefore commended by participants. It illustrates the expected role of business in Indian society. Business behavior in India is driven by industrial relations, labour laws and corporate governance instead of utilitarianism and stakeholder demand (Matten and Moon 2008). This approach also aligns with the ancient Hindu philosophy, Dharma, or duty, which advocates serving others and giving back to society (Gupta and Gupta 2019).

These CSV preferences highlight that deeply rooted cultural and regional differences play a significant role in the adoption and success of the interventions. For MNCs, this means that effective stakeholder mapping should move beyond general market segmentation to include deeper cultural and institutional analysis. CSV localization strategies should prioritize interventions that are not only technically feasible but also incorporate the meaning, language, and institutional context of the regional and cultural environment in which they operate. The likely cultural resonance would support an organization in achieving genuine sustainability goals.

In contexts where direct local engagement is limited, diasporic voices—and their bicultural competencies—can play a crucial mediating role. They can provide crucial insights that can help organizations incorporate the necessary cultural sensitivities into the development of the intervention, particularly if the intervention is developed in the North for implementation in the South. Integrating a Southern diaspora's view into the sustainability discourse can thus enhance the capacity of Northern decision-makers to address sustainability issues within local contexts. In essence, the diasporic input functions as a form of cultural brokerage between Northern design and Southern legitimacy.

The Indian Australian diaspora is uniquely positioned for this role. Their pre-migration knowledge, skills, and lifestyles are founded in the cultural norms and civic practices of a Southern community. However, their viewpoints are not only representative of India and the Global South, but they also include a global, Northern position. They embody a bicultural identity. As international migrants to Australia, this diaspora has inevitably also been exposed to transnational, Northern values and lifestyles. These cross-cultural contacts and experiences have enhanced their intercultural skills and knowledge systems. However, their characteristics and experiences as biculturals are not only shaped by the direct influences of their multiple cultures but also by the strategies they adopt to navigate and integrate these cultural influences and identities (Meca et al. 2020). Their bicultural experience can depend on multiple factors ranging from their personality and direct social environments (Huynh et al. 2011) to the historical and political contexts of their cultural groups. Scholars highlight that

factors such as language proficiency, pre- and post-migration geographic locations, and higher education affect the integration of bicultural identities. For instance, individuals proficient in English and who have relocated to an Anglophone country are more likely to form a bicultural identity. Equally, urban origins, culturally diverse places of settlement, and higher education positively influence biculturalism (Huynh et al. 2011; Ramanathan 2015).

The pre- and post-migration factors of the Indian Australian diaspora are thus conducive for this type of acculturation style in Australia. The participants' English fluency, urban backgrounds, and inheritance of Western values shaped by ties to British colonialism (Ramanathan 2015), explain their cultural recall and biculturalism (Ramanathan 2015). The Indian Australian diaspora, therefore, is particularly well suited to bridging cultural differences between India and Australia and contextualizing the respective sustainability logics.

4.5 | Considering the Impact of Migration Histories and Generational Differences

That said, the study outcomes also highlight that the participants' migration histories and generational differences influence their sustainability priorities and CSV preferences. Specifically, age, education, and settlement duration often lead to meaningful differences in the feedback. However, these three traits are significantly related. Younger participants (18–25 years) generally had spent less time in Australia and had not completed a university education, whereas most older participants (36+ years) arrived over ten years ago and had a postgraduate degree.

In this study, the results are often divided between the younger and older participants, whereby most participants were under 36 years old and arrived under ten years ago. Baas (2018) notes that such divides between new and established members of a migrant community are not unusual. In the case of the Indian Australian diaspora, the younger participants, who have been part of the sizable student migrant wave since around 2000, have markedly different experiences from those who arrived under the professional skilled migrant programs starting in the 1970s (Baas 2018). They are settling into communities where Indian cultural and social networks such as restaurants, specialty shops, religious centers and community groups are already well established (Lakha and Stevenson 2001; Vahed 2007). They are also leaving an India that is more geopolitically and economically influential, and more engaged with its diaspora (Baas 2018). These contextual differences have fostered a greater sense of confidence among migrants, who tend to articulate their Indian identity more assertively, occasionally leading to generational tensions with the earlier migrant cohort.

Baas (2018) explains the tension between the Indian students and the skilled migrant group, with the older migrants seeing students as a potential threat to their community's reputation. Inversely, the student migrants feel that the "old community" is not only older in terms of the Australian settlement duration but also an "older version" of India (Baas 2018, p. 328). The young Indians tend to reject deep-rooted inequalities and divisions perpetuated by historical and systemic institutions such as caste and class divisions (Jamatia 2023). Instead, they choose to connect with a contemporary India via online communications or frequent home travel, thus nurturing the notion of a global Indian identity (Baas 2018). This identification with a global culture or de-territorialized identity is especially salient among the young, educated, cosmopolitan and more affluent individuals (Sobol et al. 2017), who are exposed to global knowledge and communication systems (David and Bar-Tal 2009). These patterns also align with the broader generational trends: millennials, shaped by digital culture from an early age, are typically portrayed as socially conscious and purpose-driven, contrary to baby boomers, whose values are often seen to emphasise material success (Rennollet et al. 2020). These generational and migratory distinctions not only shape differing attitudes toward sustainable development but also reflect broader transformations in identity and value orientation within diasporic communities in a globalized world.

5 | Conclusions

5.1 | Opportunities for Future Research and Limitations

This research draws various conclusions concerning sustainability and CSV perceptions rooted in the Global South through the lens of the Indian Australian diaspora. It underscores the critical influence of cultural context in shaping these perceptions and highlights the potential of engaging with Southern diasporas to better understand regional perception differences.

Based on these observations and the study's contributions, several research opportunities emerge that could offer additional insights and simultaneously address existing limitations, such as the scope of the participant sample and the generalizability of the data. For instance, the study contributes to a more inclusive and balanced sustainability discourse by engaging with a unique participant group whose opinions are not only embedded in the Global South but also include a Northern position. This is a novel perspective within the literature, given the sustainability and CSR discourse has largely been guided by Northern ideologies and more input from Southern actors is urgently needed. Moreover, the unique bicultural position of a diaspora adds richness and versatility to the narrative, which has seldom been documented.

However, the study's explorative design and relatively modest sample size limit the generalizability of the data to the broader Indian Australian population and other Southern diasporas. In particular, the participant base skewed young, with 60% of survey respondents and all focus group participants aged between 18 and 36. This limits the insights into intergenerational differences that emerged during analysis but could not be explored in depth due to the sample's demographic constraints.

Hence, it would be beneficial to expand this study with a greater sample size and broader cross-section of the Indian Australian diaspora and other Southern diasporas both in Australia and other parts of the Global North. For instance, a repetition of

the study including wider social demographics of the Indian Australian diaspora, such as diverse birthplaces (e.g., Indian Australians born in Fiji), more varied age groups and second-generation Indians could offer further valuable insights.

Additionally, this paper expands on the academic contention that CSV represents a compelling and legitimate sustainability model provided businesses address real social issues. It provides Southern public assessments of established CSV interventions and specific directions for CSV refinements so that businesses can avoid greenwashing labels and enhance CSV success. This data and perspective are under-represented in the existing CSV literature. However, the study focuses on only one example from each of the CSV strategies and sub-strategies proposed by Porter and Kramer (2011). Future research should broaden the range of CSV interventions studied to determine whether the observed cultural preferences and criticisms persist across sectors and contexts. This would not only enhance our understanding of public responses to CSV but also inform more culturally attuned strategy design.

5.2 | Final Remarks

This research challenges Northern-centric sustainability approaches and advocates for the integration of Southern diasporic perspectives in shaping sustainability frameworks. Through the perspective of the Indian Australian diaspora, the study sheds light on Southern cultural norms and highlights the untapped potential of diasporic voices in recasting the global sustainability narrative.

The findings demonstrate that active engagement with diaspora communities can promote more culturally informed, relevant, and effective sustainability strategies that resonate across cultural and geographic boundaries. In particular, diasporas can help organizations identify more culturally attuned CSV strategies for implementation in their regions of origin and serve as early indicators of potential cultural mismatches. The participants' critical view of the mobile banking intervention—celebrated as a success in Africa but unsuccessful in India—underscores this role.

The CSV preferences expressed by the Indian Australian diaspora in this study offer both conceptual insights and practical guidance for aligning sustainability efforts with Indian cultural values. This alignment ultimately enhances the effectiveness and impact of such efforts. As such, businesses should consider diasporic communities not only as stakeholders but as valuable strategic partners in refining sustainability practices for the culturally diverse environments in which they operate.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Endnotes

[1] In 1980, the Commission on International Development Issues introduced a delineation between developing nations of the North (often referred to as the Global North) and developed nations of the South (often referred to as the Global South) in the "North–South: A Programme for Survival" report. To reduce inequalities between the two hemispheres, the report used socioeconomic descriptors such as life expectancy, education, and income to identify developmental differences.

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Appendix: Discussion Guide A

UTS ethics Approval Number ETH21-6029 - Integrating diasporic cultural frameworks in the CSV narrative: An opportunity for sustainable development.

Intro:

Hello, I am... I am from..., I am doing this because...

Your participation in this study is **voluntary**. You are the EXPERTS, there are NO RIGHT AND WRONGS. Your responses will be strictly **confidential i.e., any identifying material will be removed**, The groups will be **audio recorded** for note taking and analysis purposes only. Should you feel **uncomfortable** with the nature of discussion at any point you may opt or withdraw from the group discussion at any time. Please flag your concerns at any time. The groups should take approx.. **75 min**. Help yourself to food and **drink**. If you need the **restrooms** they are... perhaps best to use them before we start.

1. **"Warm-up"—5 min:**

- Let's introduce ourselves: tell us your **name**, what you **do**, your **age**, how long you have been in **Australia**? Where in India you are **from**?
- Icebreaker: If you could **hear** or smell Sustainability, what would it **sound**/smell like? (Listening for positive or negative impressions)
- Briefly describe your **meaning** of sustainabilty to a "Martian" who has just landed on earth?

2. **Individual Sustainability Stories—10 min**

- Please **share the pictures** you have brought that represent your feelings, thoughts, and the meaning of sustainability. Explain why you have chosen these visuals. Were there **others you considered but discarded**? (Listen for three pillars)
- Is there anything that you would have liked to have added to your sustainability story that is **missing**? (Listen for SDG content)

3. **Laddering of Stories—15 min**

Participants will be asked to add to their story with the help of the visual material provided by the researcher. Take a look at these visuals:

- Do you feel any **would add** to your story? Why?
- Select the visuals that would add to your story. Explain why you have chosen them. **Why do they resonate with you**? Were there any pictures that were **not suitable/relevant for the topic**?

4. **Sustainability Prioritizations—15 min**

Researcher will briefly go through the 17 goals and ask participants to place them in order of priority/urgency/vs. importance. (Probing taxonomy)

- As a group, could you **rank these goals in terms of importance**? (Observe discussion)
- As a group, could you rank these goals in terms of **urgency**? (Observe discussion)
- Is there a **difference**? Why?
- If you had to **eliminate one goal**, which one would it be? Why?

5. **CSV evaluations—15 min**

Researcher will describe six CSV case studies separately and in rotation. Then ask:

- Do you think these initiatives **help sustainable development**? How? Why? Why not?
- Which initiative is **the most useful** in helping sustainable development? Which the **least**? Why?
- Which are the **best**? Why?
- How would you **improve** these initiatives?

6. **Diasporic identity/Closing—5 min**

Participants will be asked to contribute any final thoughts, feelings that have surfaced during the discussion and consider how their culture has influenced their viewpoints.

- Do you think aspects of **Indian culture** was influential in these choices? Explain (probe for cultural underpinnings, postcolonial paradigm)
- Do you think aspects of **Australian culture** was influential in these choices? Explain
- Please complete this **five question** survey. Do you feel a strong connection to the Indian migrant community vs. diaspora? (probe for word choice)
- What are you going to **tell your friends** you talked about today?

Researcher to provide an envelope with the incentive voucher, and ask the recipient to sign the receipt list. Tick box if they are willing to participate in a follow-up survey.

Appendix Sample of the Thematic Analysis. B

Umbrella Concepts	Themes/Codes	Descriptions of Participant Response	Interpretation of themes	Number of groups, *n*, (Group ID)	Reference Frequency, *n*
1. Value framework of sustainability	Normative tensions within sustainability theory				
	Human-centric sustainability	Sustainability is important because it maintains the life of people, without people it becomes redundant. The survival of people (i.e., satisfying basic needs) is the priority.	Reflective of Maslowian logic—human welfare is foundational to sustainability.	6 (1,2,3,4,5,6)	19
	Planetary precedence	The planet and its climate are the foundation of life and thus the root of the problem. Environmental damage cannot be reversed. Climate issues are global and familiar to everyone. Addressing climate issues is most commonly associated with sustainable development.	Drawn from ecological sustainability theory–planetary health is foundational; acknowledgement of the Planet's resource limitations.	4 (1,2,4,7)	25
	Economic pragmatism	The economic parameter can be an enabler of sustainability but is less critical than the other parameters. The desire for economic growth seems to counteract the principles of sustainability and is mainly a Western pursuit.	Reflective of post-growth and post-development critique–centrality of economic growth in Western sustainability models is challenged.	6 (1,2,4,5,6,7)	22
2. Institutional anchors of sustainability	Mediating structures of transformation				
	Education as cultural capital	Grassroots education not only promotes the understanding of sustainability but can also tackle other sustainability goals (e.g., equality for girls and lower socioeconomic groups). It enables behavioral change and intergenerational transmission of sustainability knowledge.	Education as a bridging construct–bridges the divide between social/environmental sustainability, between social inequalities and between the North/South.	7	26
	Government engagement a catalyst	Government is ultimately in control of the direction sustainability practices take; they have the power and responsibility to set legislation. Action on sustainability is influenced by political agendas.	The state is the regulatory and infrastructural backbone necessary for systemic change.	6 (1,2,4,5,6,7)	23
3. Contextual Authenticity	Cultural embeddedness in practice design				

Umbrella Concepts	Themes/Codes	Descriptions of Participant Response	Interpretation of themes	Number of groups, *n*, (Group ID)	Reference Frequency, *n*
	Temporal and numerical scale	Initiatives that involve systemic, long-term commitments and address the root of a problem are more genuine and effective (e.g., empowering women, integrating sustainability into the business model). Those that just deal with symptoms and not the cause (e.g., anemia vs. malnutrition) are less effective. Initiatives that have larger-scale potential seem more impactful.	Aligns with participant meaning of sustainability–something enduring, transferable, and adaptable across contexts and generations	6 (1,2,4,5,6,7)	25
	Local ownership as legitimacy	Allow the local community to tackle issues themselves by providing skills that can be passed down through generations, using local resources.	Local agency and intergenerational skill-building are hallmarks of effective and credible sustainability efforts.	5 (1,2,3,5,6)	10
	Cultural misalignment in design	Corporations are not in touch with the needs and capabilities of much of the population (e.g., implementing communication technologies as bank replacements, presumes the functioning, knowledge and trust in those technologies)	Real-world, local relevance and feasibility, override imported ideals.	4 (1,3,5,6)	11

Note: Groups 1 & 2 = Australian control groups, Groups 3 & 4 = Indian-born participants settled less than one year ago, Group 5 = Indian-born participants, mixed settlement times, Groups 6 & 7 = Indian-born participants settled 5+ years ago