

Sustainable Marketing: Decoding Green Branding’s Impact on Consumer Perceptions, Trust and Purchase Intentions

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KEYWORDS <i>Green branding, sustainable marketing, consumer perception, trust, purchase intention, perceived authenticity, environmental concern.</i>	ABSTRACT Green branding has come to be a focal pillar of green marketing, symbolizing practice of the company in an effort to keep pace with increasing consumer environmental consciousness. However, its impact on consumer beliefs, brand trustworthiness, and behavioral intentions in developing markets is yet to be explored. This research examines the effect of green branding on consumer reaction, with special attention to perceived authenticity as the mediator variable and environmental concern as the moderator variable. A systematic survey was conducted amongst 256 Tier-I and Tier-II Indian city consumers. Through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and analysis, we tested the impact of green branding on brand trust and purchase intention. The results revealed that green branding positively impacts trust and purchase intention and perceived authenticity acts as a mediator between them. Additionally, environmental concern moderates the success of the branding-purchase relationship. These results have useful implications for green branding program managers who seek to create effective environmentally oriented branding programs appealing to eco-aware segments. The research enhances theoretical sustainable marketing knowledge through identifying authenticity and consumer values as variables of green consumption behavior. Suggestion is extended to marketers and regulators regarding the need for transparency in a move aimed at lessening the risk of greenwashing..
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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past few decades, sustainability has become a core business principle, spurred on by cross-border environmental crises, regulation, and changing consumer values. Within different corporate functions, marketing has been particularly transformed, with greater focus placed on incorporating environmental responsibility within branding and promotion strategies [1]. Among the most visible displays of this movement is green branding, that self-aware use of environmental words, images, signs, and messages to convey a firm's focus on sustainability. It is the core element of sustainable marketing, where environmental, social, and economic considerations are blended together in order to construct long-term worth for stakeholders and firms [2]. Today's consumers are becoming increasingly conscious about their ecological footprint, and consumers are increasingly interested in products and brands that they see as being environmentally friendly. Green branding in this case serves as a signal to enable companies to establish trust, differentiate in competitive markets, and gain long-term consumer loyalty [3]. The trend is not without problems, though. Greenwashing, an illusion where green qualities are overemphasized or entirely created by companies, has led to customer distrust, growing by the day. Therefore, success with green branding cannot just be a question of the availability of green ingredients but also customer perception of them as genuine and trustworthy [4]. As green branding grows increasingly popular in both developed and emerging economies, empirical research on its success is rare. Most of the current research has been done in Western markets and the consumers' role in emerging markets, including India, is a lesser-researched area for green branding interpretation and reaction [5]. The current research also neglects the mediating role of perceived authenticity and the moderating role of environmental concern by consumers, which can have very strong impacts on results [6]. This research fills these gaps through a study of green branding and consumer attitude in the Indian market. It examines how green branding affects consumers' perception of brand value and trust, and whether perceived authenticity intervenes in this relationship [7]. It also investigates how different levels of environmental concern among consumers could moderate the effect of green branding on purchase intention. Based on a quantitative survey of 256 Indian urban consumers, this paper theoretically and practically makes contributions to sustainable marketing literature by providing advice for marketers and policymakers interested in developing genuine, successful green brands. The research is grounded in a quantitative survey analysis of data collected from 256 respondents in India. It explains practice and theory by delineating how specific psychological constructs interact together in sustainable consumption. Outcomes lead to firms creating more credible and effective branding campaigns and educating policy makers about consumer sensibilities towards the environment marketing.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Green Branding and Sustainable Marketing

Green marketing looks to meet the needs of customers and maintain the natural environment as well as the social environment. Green branding is one type of such a strategy that uses brand-level signals (color palette, packaging material, labeling, and certification) to signal environmentalism. [8] Sustainable marketing defines the use of approaches and practices to address the goals of environmental defense, social equity, and sustainable economic profitability. It not only involves the environmental dimensions of product supply and design but also transferring sustainable values to consumers [9]. Under this broader context, green branding has become a central dimension that allows organizations to signal their greenness and stand out in more crowded markets [10]. Green branding incorporates features such as green logos, green packaging, eco-labels, and marketing communications with a focus on ecological responsibility [11]. It is extensively utilized to create customer associations of purity, nature, and values of responsibility. Brands that succeed in incorporating green attributes within brand identity are able to reap the benefit of greater brand equity, greater customer loyalty, and greater market share [12]. These advantages depend on consumers' perceptions of authenticity and credibility, however. Faux or overstated environmental claims can prove detrimental, destroying brand trust and depleting reputational capital [13].

2.2 Consumer Perception and Trust

Consumer judgment is influenced by brand cues and includes perceptions regarding the function, believability, and values of the brand. Brand trust is belief in the capability of a brand to make its promises come true [14]. Trust is particularly important in the assessment of green claims because, in the case of information asymmetry, consumers cannot check the reliability of the claims by themselves. Brand trust is the inclination of customers to believe in a brand hoping that it would keep its promises and do what is best for them [15]. In green branding, trust plays an important part in influencing customer attitudes and behavior. As environmental assertions tend to be difficult to check, customers use their assumed trust in the brand as a basis to evaluate its credibility. Empirical research has established that green brand credibility is a reliable predictor of consumer loyalty and trust [16]. Where skepticism over corporate sustainability is high in markets, trust is particularly vital. In India, where regulatory supervision tends to be tilted and greenwashing prevalent, consumers may be especially responsive to authenticity cues [17]. Therefore, the importance of green branding in building brand trust will depend on whether its environmental initiatives are viewed as authentic and in line with its general business practice [18].

2.3 Greenwashing and Authenticity



Greenwashing undermines consumer trust, it greenwashing creates a marketplace of "lemons," where consumers cannot differentiate between real and spurious green brands [19]. Perceived authenticity thus becomes an important construct, it determines whether or not the brand is perceived to be truly committed to sustainability [20]. Greenwashing, the practice where firms mislead stakeholders by exaggerating or exaggerating their products or practices as being environmentally friendly, poses a threat to sustainable marketing credibility. Such uncertainty not only frustrates well-informed decision-making but also nullifies the effort of genuinely eco-friendly businesses. Under such a scenario, perceived authenticity becomes a key concept in consumers' assessment of eco-friendly brands [21]. It is the degree to which customers believe the green efforts of a brand are real, values-based, and systematically embedded within its operational structure, and not just shallow marketing strategies [22]. True brands are those that display consistency between what and how they speak and act through numerous touchpoints, such as product design, supply chain management, and communications approaches. Consumers increasingly look for congruence between a brand's green assertions and actual environmental track records, and authenticity is a cognitive heuristics for arriving at such conclusions [23]. Thus, in proportion with greater amounts of greenwashing, perceived authenticity is among the core moderator variables that affect trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions in green marketing [24]. Such firms which are successful in communicating such effective true commitment to the natural world shall more likely build long-term relationships with morally conscious consumers, whereas firms which greenwash risk alienation and loss of market share.

2.4 Purchase Intention and Environmental Concern

Purchase intention is the probability of a consumer purchasing a product. Green branding can strengthen this intention if it aligns with consumer values. Environmental concern to the point that people are sensitive towards environmental issues alters consumer sensitivity. People with more concern favor green products more intensely [25]. Purchase intention is the probability that the consumer will make a purchase decision based on what they know, believe, and think through past experience [26]. Purchase intention has been utilized in green marketing literature as a proxy measure of behavior outcomes in the majority of instances, particularly where actual purchase data are not available [27]. A number of studies have found a positive relationship between green positioning and purchasing willingness, especially when the green attributes are congruent with individual values [28]. Nevertheless, a widely cited attitudinal-behavior gap for sustainable consumption has been observed. Although consumers self-report environmentally responsible concern, fewer bring them into action by changing their purchase behavior. Interfering variables often are price sensitivity, product availability, and perceived effectiveness [29]. Hence, it becomes important to know the psychological mechanisms that intervene between green brand perception and consumer action.

2.5 Environmental Concern as a Moderator

Environmental concern has been defined as the extent to which people are conscious of environmental issues and are favorable to solving them [30]. It is the values, knowledge, and affective responses toward ecological issues. Environmental concern has emerged as a robust moderator in green marketing that affects how consumers perceive and respond to sustainability communications [31]. Empirical evidence shows that green branding is more acceptable to consumers who are environmentally conscious and is likely to be scrutinized by them [32]. These consumers are also seen to have higher environmental awareness, higher ethical considerations, and higher willingness to pay a premium for green products. Conversely, consumers who are environmentally unaware may view green claims as false or irrelevant and dismiss green branding efforts [33]. Environmental concern is highly situational in India by region, education, and income. Educated and urban consumers are more environmentally concerned and larger in congruence with world values for sustainability [34]. This study, therefore, predicts that environmental concern will be acting as a moderator for the green branding-purchase intention relationship enhancing or weakening it depending on the extent of concern from consumers.

2.6 Research Gap and Theoretical Framework

While more and more research investigates the green marketing-consumer behavior nexus, main gaps in research remain unattended. First, very little empirical research exists that is tested in the Indian context, particularly from the vantage point of consumer perceptions. Secondly, it is fairly uncommon for research to systematically engage mediating and moderating variables such as authenticity and environmentalism under one conceptual framework. Third, there is a lot of exploratory or qualitative work but little rigorous quantitative validation using methods such as structural equation modeling (SEM). In order to seal these gaps, this present study utilizes an integrated theory approach that draws from the Theory of Planned Behavior of Ajzen, 1991 and Signaling Theory Spence, 1973. The research assumes that green branding serves as an environmental responsibility signal, which inspires purchase intention through perceived authenticity and trust in the brand as mediating variables. In addition, the magnitude of this influence is tempered by environmental concern levels, with the influence of value congruence. Prior research exists to support that green brand signals increase consumer confidence and have a positive effect on loyalty and purchasing behavior. Results are diverse across and within populations and cultural settings. Of particular note is the limited representation in this literature of such emerging markets as India.

3. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES



Objectives

1. To determine how green branding influences brand trust and purchase intention.
2. To examine the mediating function of perceived authenticity.
3. To examine how environmental concern mediates the branding–intention relationship.

Hypotheses

H1: Green branding significantly affects brand trust in a positive way.

- H2: Green branding has an extremely strong positive influence on purchase intention.
- H3: Perceived authenticity mediates the influence of green branding on purchase intention.
- H4: Green concern will mediate the relationship of green branding and purchase intention.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This research uses a quantitative cross-sectional design with a structured survey tool to measure the effect of green branding on attitudes among consumers. The study adopts a positivist approach, appropriate to test hypotheses, set models and establish cause-and-effect through statistical inference. The purpose is to investigate the direct and indirect effect of green branding on purchase intention and brand trust and the mediating role of perceived authenticity and the moderating role of environmental concern.

4.2 Sample and Data Collection

The sample covered 256 users from the five most important Indian cities: Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, and Hyderabad. Purposive sampling was employed to obtain urbanized consumers who are educated and have an age group of 21–45 years who are most likely to be exposed to green branding via online and offline media. Inclusion criteria necessitated that participants must have had at least one sustainable purchase in the last six months, which was relevant to the study. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire using Google Forms for four weeks. Participants were recruited through university networks, LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups, and environmental community forums. Of 312 responses obtained, 256 were valid and complete, and thus achieved an effective response rate of 82.1%.

5. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. Reliability and validity tests comprised Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Hypotheses were evaluated using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Hayes' PROCESS macros for mediation (Model 4) and moderation (Model 7).

5.1 Demographic profile

It gives the definition of the most important features of the study respondents, such as variables for gender, age, level of education, and income. This places the results in context and sets up the representativeness of the sample

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	107	41.8%
	Female	149	58.2%
Age	18–30	114	44.5%
	31–45	92	35.9%
	46 and above	50	19.5%
Green Product Usage	Occasional	97	37.9%
	Regular	159	62.1%

5.2 Validity and Reliability



Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to measure internal consistency of constructs. Convergent and discriminant validity were utilized to determine validity so that constructs measured what they aimed to do without redundancy.

Table 2: Reliability and Validity

Construct	Items	Cronbach's	CR	AVE
Green Branding (GB)	5	0.84	0.87	0.58
Brand Trust (BT)	4	0.88	0.89	0.62
Purchase Intention (PI)	3	0.81	0.83	0.55
Perceived Authenticity (PA)	5	0.86	0.88	0.57
Environmental Concern (EC)	4	0.79	0.81	0.52

All constructs passed reliability ($\alpha > 0.80$) and validity ($CR > 0.70$, $AVE > 0.50$) thresholds.

5.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Structural model was determined to have excellent fit with the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.04$; $CFI = 0.937$; $RMSEA = 0.056$). Hypotheses were examined via path coefficients, significance tests, and R^2 values. Mediation and moderation effects were evaluated via bootstrapping and interaction terms, respectively.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	(β)	p-value	Result
H1	Green Branding \rightarrow Brand Trust	0.58	<0.001	Supported
H2	Green Branding \rightarrow Purchase Intention	0.33	<0.001	Supported
H3	GB \rightarrow PA \rightarrow PI (Mediation)	Indirect $\beta = 0.21$	<0.01	Supported
H4	GB \times EC \rightarrow Purchase Intention	Interaction $\beta = 0.17$	<0.05	Supported

All four hypotheses (H1–H4) were evidenced by the analysis. H1 was evidenced, demonstrating green branding to have a statistically significant and positive effect on brand trust ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating customers will most likely trust those brands that are green. H2 was also supported, as the study indicated that green branding had a positive influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$), indicating green signals maximize consumers' purchasing motivation. For H3, bootstrapping analysis indicated a significant indirect effect of green branding on purchase intention via perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.30]), confirming partial mediation and highlighting that authenticity enhances the persuasiveness of green branding. Lastly, H4 revealed environmental concern and green branding interaction to have significant prediction of purchase intention ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that consumers who hold more environmental concern would be highly responsive to green brand information.

5.4 Coefficient of determination (R^2)

It reflects the percentage of variance in the structural model explained by the independent variables. The greater the R^2 values, the greater the predictability of the model for the respective dependent constructs.

Table 4: R^2 Values for Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	R^2 (Explained Variance)
Brand Trust	0.47 (47%)
Purchase Intention	0.42 (42%)

The model accounted for 47% of the variance in Brand Trust ($R^2 = 0.47$) and 42% of the variance in Purchase Intention ($R^2 = 0.42$), indicating a substantial explanatory power of the proposed framework in predicting key consumer outcomes.



5.5 Summary of Research Objectives and Findings

Following is a summary of the study's main research questions versus the main findings from the analysis. This comparison shows how each question was addressed and to what degree the findings support the proposed hypotheses.

Table 5: Summary of Research Objectives and Findings

Objective	Analysis Method	Key Findings
1. To assess the impact of green branding on brand trust and purchase intention	SEM path analysis	GB positively affects BT ($\beta = 0.58$) and PI ($\beta = 0.33$)
2. To examine the mediating role of perceived authenticity	Bootstrapping (PA as mediator)	Partial mediation confirmed (Indirect $\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$)
3. To analyze how environmental concern moderates the branding–intention relationship	Interaction term analysis (GB \times EC)	Significant moderation effect ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$)

The findings of this study confirm strong empirical evidence for theoretical relationships suggested between green branding and consumer attitudes. Firstly, green branding is significantly related to brand trust ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$) in a highly strong manner, supporting that environment-friendly brands are trusted by consumers. In the same manner, green branding had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that consumers' chance of purchasing is increased by green brand attributes. These results meet the first goal and support Hypotheses H1 and H2. Meeting the second goal, the study confirmed perceived authenticity to mediate partially the impact of green branding on purchase intention (indirect $\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). This informs us that when consumers view green claims as being true, then it amplifies the role of green branding in purchase intention, hence confirming H3. Lastly, according to the third aim, concern for the environment amplified the impact of green branding on purchase intention (interaction $\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), meaning eco-conscious consumers are positively influenced by green branding affirming H4. On the whole, the structural model accounted for 47% of brand trust difference and 42% of purchase intention difference, evidence of the strong explanatory power of the model proposed. The study verifies that green branding not only as a communicative strategy but also as a credibility driver, particularly when supported by real practices and targeted at ecologically conscious consumers.

6. DISCUSSION

The result of the study highlights the central significance that green branding is taking in terms of shaping consumer sentiments, especially in the context of purchasing behavior with an environmental orientation. The highly significant positive association of green branding with brand trust reaffirms that individuals have faith in brands freely which demonstrate indicators of devotion towards values of sustainability. This conforms to existing research that established green branding constructs credibility and minimizes skepticism. Furthermore, the indirect effect of green branding on purchase intention highlights that green marketing efforts effectively get consumers to translate environmental awareness into action through the adoption of green products. Of particular interest is the mediating effect of perceived authenticity; it implies that consumers do not only react to green branding superficially but also consider the authenticity of environmental claims, thus affecting their likelihood of undertaking a purchase. Last but not least, environmental consciousness as a moderating influence shows that green branding has an effect to different extents based on the level of colorization among the consumers, and therefore segmentation is paramount in sustainability marketing.

7. IMPLICATIONS

Practically, these findings are of great importance for marketers and brand managers who want to boost consumer interest in sustainability efforts. Green branding on the strength of authentic and open green branding can build higher trust in the brand and stimulate purchasing intent. Marketers need to back up their environmental promises with genuine action, certification, or proof to stay out of suspicion and create lasting ties. Second, placing marketing communications in a way that targets high-green-concern consumers can maximize campaign effectiveness. For policymakers and advocates of sustainability, the findings support the potential of green branding as a vehicle that can promote environmentally sound consumption habits and suggest that efforts are directed toward supporting transparency and standardized eco-labeling to help consumers make more informed decisions.

8. CONCLUSION

To conclude the research presents empirical support that green branding has a positive influence on brand trust and purchase intent among customers in urban India. The mediating influence of perceived authenticity identifies how customers appreciate authenticity in green messages, and the moderating influence of environmental concern identifies the



inconspicuous way by which customers' values intertwine with branding initiatives. The results indicate that green branding has direct and strong effects on purchase intention and brand trust, mediated by perceived authenticity and moderated by environmental concern. Perceived authenticity is critical in facilitating the effectiveness of green branding. Environmental concern also moderates the strength of effect, with marketing strategy development implications. For practitioners, the research indicates that green branding needs to be more than symbolic. There needs to be authenticity, consistency, and transparency to establish trust in consumers and modify behavior. Theoretically, the research confirms existing models of sustainable consumption but provides market-specific findings in emerging economies. Green branding longitudinal effects can be further examined, and the model can be cross-tested with various industries and settings in future research

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