



Does Green Branding Drive Green Purchase Intentions? Evidence From An Empirical Study With Mediating Role Of Green Trust

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ABSTRACT

The production and consumption activities resulting from industrialization and human evolution have been detrimental to the environment, leading to an increasing trend of environmental degradation. However, environmental concerns have raised awareness of the benefits of green products. Despite this, many customers fail to exhibit green purchase behavior, indicating a gap between their preferences and actual behavior. Moreover, the increasing trend of greenwashing activities by companies has led to customer distrust towards available green products. To address this issue, a sincere green branding is needed to make consumers aware about genuine green brands and motivate to transform their concern for environment into purchase intentions and subsequent behavior. This paper analyzes the effect of green branding on customer purchase intentions, mediated by green trust, for eco-friendly fast moving consumer goods(FMCG). A data of 216 Indian customers of consumer goods is collected using a structured questionnaire to ascertain their views. Linear regression is applied using Haye's process model in SPSS to empirically evaluate a conceptual model developed for the study. Based on path coefficients of the model understudy, green branding strategy of companies helps in developing positive green trust among the consumers which further boosts their green purchase intentions positively. Future research should explore other green marketing strategies such as eco-labelling, green advertising, and green packaging, as well as longitudinal studies at the regional level to expand on these findings.

Keywords: Green branding; green trust; green purchase intention (GPI); mediation; theory of planned behaviour (TPB).

1. Introduction

The depletion of natural resources and excessive energy consumption have contributed to the global environmental deterioration, as reported by Chen and Chai (2010), Issock et al. (2020), and Jaiswal et al. (2022). Consequently, It is crucial to transition towards sustainable consumption patterns by promoting the usage of eco-friendly products, which can incentivize industries to manufacture and produce sustainably, as noted by Amoako et al. (2021). According to Jaiswal & Singh (2018) and Khare & Kautish (2021), Awareness of environmental issues and the advantages of sustainable consumption after the recent covid spread, among consumers in India has risen. However, Wang et al. (2020) and More (2019) observed an increase in greenwashing practices by companies during the pandemic, which has created doubts and uncertainty among consumers about the genuineness of green products. Branding the products or companies as a whole to create a distinct image in the mind of consumers has become increasingly common and important. (Meletis and Campbell, 2007) Consumers are looking for products as well as services which are perceived to pose lowest environment damage, like eco-friendly holidays, which showcase a strong business focus for product and place advertising on green parameters. The attitude of consumers towards green products can be changed by the brands, as an efficient green position involves brand differentiation. It has also been stated that there is less commercial success for those products. Companies should understand that green branding is effective only if

they are credible and trustworthy. Consumers must be able to trust that the green brands accurately reflect a product's commitment towards environmental performance. Otherwise, it will remain as a green brand among the crowd of other green brands, which are seen as nothing more than a marketing gimmick, and consumers may lose trust in the companies.

Major objectives associated with this investigation are: a) To examine how green branding (GBR) affects the intentions of Indian consumers to buy environmentally sustainable goods in the post-covid scenario, b) To investigate the function of green branding in building trust among consumers regarding environmentally certified green products, c) Assessing the intervening influence of consumer trust between the green branding practices of companies and green purchase intentions towards eco-friendly products.

2. The conceptual framework and proposed research hypotheses

2.1. Theory of planned behavior-Cognitive consumer behavior theory

Two major consumer intention-behavior theories, "Theory of planned behavior-TPB" (Ajzen, 1985; 1991) and "theory of reasoned action-TRA" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) has been intensively used by investigators & researchers globally. TPB structure claims belief to behavior relationship in consumption of green products mediated and moderated through "subjective norm(SN)", "attitude(A)" and "perceived behavioural control(PBC)"; which is customised and extended by many researchers like Chin et al. (2018) who have integrated additional factors (Wei et al., 2017). Scholars from developed as well as developing countries in order to study green buying behaviour practiced few customised models through the inclusion of cognitive measures and practices like perception towards eco-label, green brands, environmental concern, environmental knowledge for the products oscillating from conventional eco-friendly products (Lai and Cheng, 2016) to green high-end products (Kaur et al., 2021); from environment friendly clothes (Kang et al., 2013) to organic foods (Pham et. al., 2018). Within the epitome of eco-sustainable and competitive brink, significant green marketing practices namely; ecolabels, green advertising and sustainable branding, are being accepted and practiced by organizations in developing nations to publicise sustainable consumerism and green goods (Chin et. al., 2018).

2.2 Green Branding (GBR)

Green branding is promoting and positioning a brand as per its environmentally friendly characteristics (Insch, 2011). Due to the growing importance of green products among the consumers, companies are creating more products and services with eco-friendly attributes. there exist two major approaches **to green brand positioning**; functional and emotional. Where functional brand positioning appeals to the rational mind by providing detailed information on environmental benefits, emotional brand positioning stresses brand benefits related to people's emotional needs, such as a sense of satisfaction from contributing to the improvement or protection of the environment, or from exhibiting one's lived environmental consciousness to others (Hartmann et. al., 2005)

Green Trust (GT)

According to Rousseau et. al. (1998), trust can be defined as a cognitive state that is founded on affirmative beliefs regarding the actions or motives of other individuals. It includes a readiness to be vulnerable. Previous research has emphasized that trust can enhance people's expectations of outcomes, leading to a more favourable intentions, as noted by Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen (2015). As defined by Morgan and Hunt (1994), association of trust with an exchange partner's "assurance, dependability, and honesty, also other attributes, such as truthfulness, accountability, stability, assistance, and kindness, are also associated with it. Researchers such as Kang & Hustvedt (2014) and Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) have analysed green trust, which is the conviction that an organization will behave in a manner that benefits society as a whole and fulfil its promises. According to Chen (2010), green trust can be described as consumers' readiness to take a product's purchase decision on the grounds of their conviction or anticipation regarding product's environmental performance, which is determined by its credibility, benevolence, and ability. Green trust is significantly and optimistically affected by green marketing practices (Martínez. P, 2015). But, Chen & Chang (2012) and Praful Vijay More (2019) stated that greenwashing activities can diminish consumer confidence, ultimately undermining green trust. According to Maxham and Netemeyer (2003) and Homburg et al. (2013), green marketing initiatives can help build trust in a company, especially if the company has made mistakes in the past from the customer's outlook. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the impact of green branding on consumers' trust in a company. We can draw the following hypotheses:

H1: *Application of GBR affects GT of consumers positively.*

2.3 Green purchase intention (GPI)

Green purchase intention (GPI) can be described as the inclination and eagerness of environmentally conscious consumers to choose eco-friendly products over conventional ones (Moslehpour et al., 2022). In this line, Chen and Chang (2012) suggest that companies should allocate resources towards enhancing their green image and building and sustaining trust with environmentally conscious customers in order to increase green purchase

intentions. Although few researchers in other countries have already proven the positively significant association between 'GT' and 'GPI' (Chen and Chang, 2012; Guerreiro and Pacheco, 2021), but it is still research void in Indian context. Although, after covid 19's impact, a surge in companies greenwashing practices had a negative influence on consumers' belief mechanism which had affected their intent to procure sustainable goods (Chen Y.S. et al., 2013; Schmuck et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020; More, 2019). In harmony with Leonidou et al. (2013), the trust that consumers have in a company's commitments to the ecosystem can shape their intention to acquire green goods because customers likely to relate themselves with moral and trustworthy businesses while avoiding those with questionable ethical practices. Thus, we can draw the following hypotheses:

H2: *GT is positively association with GPI.*

H3: *GBR is positively association with GPI, mediated through GT.*

According to Chen & Chang (2013), green trust mediates the relationship between green brand image and green purchase intention. Also, researchers like Yadav & Pathak (2016) Found a strong positive relationship between green brand and purchase intention among Indian millennials. The literature consistently supports that green branding positively affects green purchase intentions. Thus, we can draw the following hypothesis:

H4: *GBR is positively impactful on GPI.*

Figure 1 exhibits the model conceptualizing the relationships between various latent constructs

3 Methodology of Research

This section contains the method of data collection and sample design, demographic profiling of respondents, latent constructs and various measures used for assessing them.

3.1 Sampling and data collection

A questionnaire survey is conducted on Indian consumers through online mode on various social media platforms using convenience sampling, who are above 18 years of age. Here, Indian consumers means respondents from pan India, as social media groups used for sharing the questionnaire were national level groups having member representations from all over the country. As per the demographic data received after survey shown in Table 1, more than 80% of the respondents are learned youth (postgraduate) having greater sense of green concepts and have concern for the environment (Kumar et. al., 2017). The demographics (ref. Table 1) of the sample are representative and consistent with previous research by Pickett-Baker and Ozaki (2008), Policarpo and Aguiar (2020), and Thøgersen (2004), which suggest that younger and educated consumers are inclined towards green consumption to live a sustainable lifestyle.

Before administering the survey, a pilot (preliminary) enquiry was steered among 30 doctoral students to detect and rectify any possible shortcomings in the survey questionnaire. After screening the cognitive proficiency of the participants, a total of 216 complete and reliable responses were considered for analysis, eliminating the partially filled replies and anomalies. 216 participants' sample size was considered highly adequate for the analysis of the 13-item scale with three latent constructs, as for multivariate analysis, it exceeded the intended threshold of 15 responses per variable per latent construct (Hair et al., 2015).

3.2 Latent constructs and measures

The survey tool was modified to suit the Indian context, while incorporating some changes from pre-existing validated measures. The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts. First one collects demographic and profile information, as presented in table 1. Second one compiled three constructs using 13 items valued on a "5 point Likert scale" stretching between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree(5)" (Datta K., 2008). 5 items were adapted from the research by Muhammad Ali (2021) to measure green branding. To gauge green trust 5 items were adapted from the work of Bang Nguyen-Viet (2022). Green purchase intention was gauged using 3 items adapted from a paper by Mostafa (2006). The items for measurements are specified in Appendix (ref. Table A1).

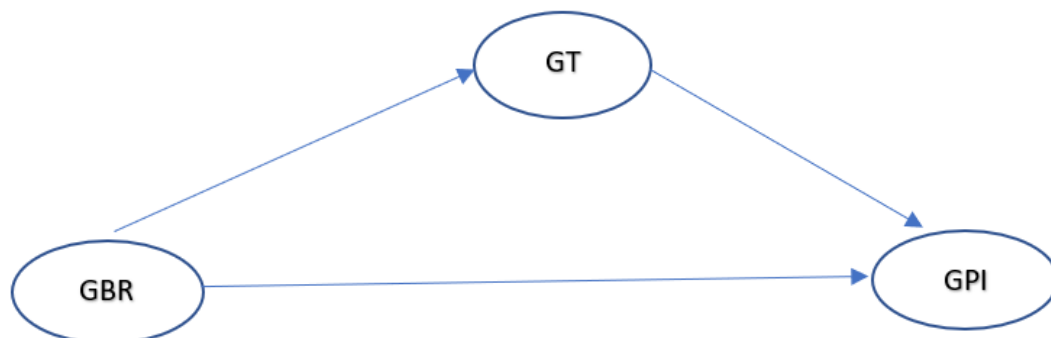


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Table 1: Part one: Respondents' data

Characteristic	Occurrence value	%
Gender		
1. Male	119	55.1
2. Female	97	44.9
Age		
1. Less than 20	2	0.9
2. 21 – 30	142	65.7
3. 31 – 40	42	19.4
4. 41 – 50	20	9.3
5. Above 50	10	4.6
Education		
1. Undergraduate	16	7.4
2. Graduate	46	21.3
3. Post-graduate	142	65.7
4. Professional qualification (CA/ICAWS etc)	12	5.6
Monthly household income		
1. Below 30000	39	18.1
2. 30001 – 45000	33	15.3
3. 45001 – 60000	48	22.2
4. 60001 – 75000		
5. Above 75000		

4 Data analysis and results

Our research is focused on the intervention variable 'green trust (GT)' to get insights into its mediating effect amid green branding (GBR) and intentions to purchase green goods (GPI).

4.1 Reliability and validity

To assess reliability and validity of factors, factor analysis is utilised. Table 2 and table 3 shows the reliability & validity statistics. According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), to evaluate the construct reliability, Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR) values are generally utilised. Estimates of Cronbach's α varying between 0.883 and 0.894 which shows that all the latent constructs are quite reliable with higher values than the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Kline, 2015). Composite Reliability (CR) value varies between 0.833 to 0.862 which confirms that all the constructs are having sufficient reliability than the minimum recommended threshold of 0.70 (Kline, 2015).

Convergent Validity of the constructs is evaluated through CFA loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) (Xu et. al., 2020; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All factor loading values are above 0.5 at 0.05 level of significance (Hair et. al, 2006) with most of the values are above 0.6 (Field, 2005). All AVE estimates varied between 0.54 and 0.62 which are exceeding the prescribed threshold of 0.50. On summarising these outcomes, the understudy parameters are having adequate convergence validity as well as reliability. All three understudy constructs shows satisfactory discriminant validity, referring to table 3 we can observe that the root square of AVE estimate of every latent construct/parameter is far more than the correlation among the specific parameter and any other parameter (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Thus, above outcomes strongly and adequately supports reliability and validity.

Table 2: Reliability and validity of factors.

Items	Construct	Factor Loading	p	CR	Cronbach's α estimates	AVE
GBR1	GBR	0.777	A	0.862191	0.887	0.562133
GBR2		0.771	*		0.884	
GBR3		0.854	*		0.888	
GBR4		0.509	*		0.893	
GBR5		0.79	*		0.884	
GT1	GT	0.826	A	0.853442	0.887	0.540428
GT2		0.625	*		0.888	
GT3		0.737	*		0.887	
GT4		0.682	*		0.883	
GT5		0.788	*		0.884	
GPI1	GPI	0.749	A	0.833272	0.891	0.625374
GPI2		0.836	*		0.894	
GPI3		0.785	*		0.89	

* p < 0.05.

Table 3: The measures of central tendency (means), dispersion (standard deviations), and associations (correlations)

	MEAN	SD	GBR	GT	GPI
GBR	3.395	0.874	0.75		
GT	3.720	0.754	0.595	0.74	
GPI	3.984	0.724	0.424	0.525	0.79

Note: root square of each AVE values is highlighted in bold (p < 0.01)

4.2 Analysis of conceptual model

Variance inflation factor (VIFs) values obtained from the collinearity test are less than 10 which eliminated the concern for multicollinearity in this study (Kline, 2015; Lai and Cheng, 2016). Hayes process model 4 (ref. Figure 2) is utilised for analysing the conceptual model and testing hypothesis (Model 4; Hayes, 2013). Present research evaluated the mediating effect of green trust (GT) on the association amongst green branding (GBR) directed to green purchase intention (GPI). Outcomes of study uncover the significant association of green branding with green trust (coeff. = 0.5945, t = 10.8162, p < 0.05) along with a significant relation of GT to GPI (coeff. = 0.4223, t = 5.9043, p < 0.05); hence hypotheses H1 and H2 are defended respectively. Also, a significant direct effect is observed from GBR to GPI (coeff. = 0.1732, t = 2.4218, p < 0.05), thus hypothesis H4 is also defended. Path coefficients analysis and all the hypotheses testing results except hypothesis 3 (H3) are shown in table 4.

4.3 Mediation analysis and results

The indirect effects for mediating GT were tested midst GBR and GPI using regression by Haye's process model 4 in SPSS. Outcome demonstrated the significant indirect effect of GBR on GPI via GT (coeff. = 0.2511, t = 4.076, p < 0.05). Thus, GT mediate the co-relation amidst GBR and GPI. Hence, hypothesis H3 is defended. Also, mediation of GT is complementary as all the coefficients (direct, indirect and total) are positive and will enhance the model outcome. Summary for mediation analysis is presented in table 5. Hence, the relationship amidst GBR and GPI is partially mediated by GT.

To investigate the arbitrating impact of GT amidst GBR and GPI, three steps are used. Firstly, independent variable GBR should significantly relate to dependent variable GPI. Secondly, Independent variable GBR should be related to mediator GT significantly. Lastly, mediator GT should have significant relationship with GPI and thus GT has a partial/limited mediation between GBR and GPI (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Table 5 exhibits the outcome of mediation investigation. It uncovers partial mediating effect of GT in the relationship of GBR and GPI.

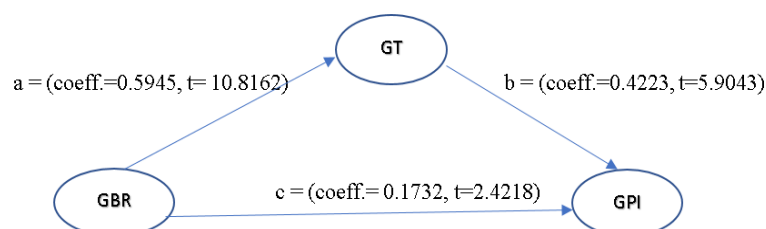


Figure 2: Conceptual model based on Hayes process model 4**Table 4: Statistics of path analysis**

Relationships	Coefficients	t statistic	Conclusion/Result
GBR → GT	0.5945	10.8162	H1 Supported
GT → GPI	0.4223	5.9043	H2 Supported
GBR → GPI	0.1732	2.4218	H4 Supported

Table 5: Analysis and result of mediation effect

Path	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Confidence Interval		t statistic	Conclusion/Result
GBR-> GT -> GPI	0.1732	0.2511	0.4243	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	5.9043	Partial mediation and H3 is supported
				0.1373	0.3782		

5 Discussion

This investigation is conducted for achieving the goal to lighten the complex thinking and decision-making mechanism inherent in the relationship of green branding (GBR) and green purchase intentions (GPI) of Indian consumers. A mediation model linking green branding with intention to purchase green/eco-friendly goods through trust for green goods was proposed using some arguments from cognitive theories like Theory of Planned Behavior-TPB (Ajzen, 1985; 1991). Research findings suggests that, green branding practice of the organizations has significant positive impact on building green trust for environment friendly products. Green products under a green brand provides credible information about organizations environmental actions which enhances customers green trust on them.

Moreover, study also shows the significant positive relation of green trust and green purchase intentions of the consumers. These results go along with the findings of Sun et al. (2020) for Chinese respondents. Results demonstrate that consumer involvement to examine any label or brand exhibiting a green product can enhance consumers' trust in sustainable products, thereby indirectly influencing their intention to make green purchases. These results are consistent with the findings of Canio & Martinelli (2021) done for Italian food shoppers and Aaker (1996) and Mele et al. (2019) for companies in hotel industry. Thus, organizations who want to achieve target growing consumer intention should give due importance in building a ecofriendly brand which are trustworthy to consumers.

Research findings also reveal that green branding also have some direct effect on purchase intentions for green products. It also signifies that mediating effect of green trust between green branding and green purchase intention is partial but the total effect (direct and indirect) is significant and therefore FMCG companies can strengthen the influence of their sustainability declarations on consumer's green buying intentions by creating and building a green brand for their products, subsequently leading to purchase behavior. Thus, green marketing tool needed by companies to regain consumer trust and to encourage them to form positive and strong purchase intentions towards eco-friendly products (Aaker, 1996; Mele et. al., 2019)

6 Theoretical and practical implications

This study put forward some insightful contribution to the current field of knowledge. It expand the use of one of the growing green marketing practices i.e., green branding as a crucial determinant of purchase intention for green products. Current research encapsulates the importance of green trust of consumers by building a conceptual model incorporating intrinsic and extrinsic constructs. Further it distinguishes direct along with indirect effect of green branding on purchase intention, emphasising the mediating part of green trust too.

This study provides valuable insights for FMCG companies on the significance of green branding as a trust-building strategy to enhance the green purchasing intentions of consumers. Which can encourage corporate organizations and accreditation agencies, whether public or private, to conduct awareness programs for consumers to educate them about their brand and its characteristics in identifying authentic environmentally friendly products and making informed purchase decisions. Promoting a favourable perception of green branded products among consumers can be a useful strategy for companies to improve their trust. This can be achieved through advertising, social media campaigns, and other forms of marketing that highlight the ecological advantages of their offerings and the authenticity of their brands and to emphasize their commitment to the environment. Companies may provide transparent information about their environmental practices to build trust and credibility with consumers

In the current study the value of green trust is relatively not very high, indicating the developing market for branded green products is fragmented and brittle. Thus, to establish green trust and to improve the extended progress of branded green goods marketplace in India and other developing countries, strict and consistent standards for control should be established and communicated among the companies.

The role that the government play is extremely crucial in the promotion and development of sustainable products by providing subsidies to encourage companies to facilitate the production of environmentally friendly products, which can increase their efficiency and motivate them to build a brand for standardization and contribution to the economy. Apart from providing subsidies to the companies, providing incentives to consumers can be an effective strategy to boost the procurement and consumption of branded green products. For example, the government could offer tax credits or rebates to consumers who purchase branded green products, or offer discounts to those who recycle or engross in other green practices. These enticements motivates consumers to make sustainable choices and support companies that prioritize environmental responsibility.

7 Conclusion, limitations of study and future investigations possibilities

Whilst, results for this investigation align with the theories commonly employed in the behavior of consumers with regards to environmentally sustainable products and contribute significantly to the green marketing field in the Indian context, there are also some acknowledged limitations that could be explored as potential opportunities for future research in this area. Firstly, the population and sample of the study is taken at the country level and not confined to any particular region or state of the Indian territory. Since India is a country of extremely diverse culture, tradition and socio-economic demographics, an approach of regional level cross sectional studies can give varied results and enhanced insights about the domain area. Secondly, all the constructs were measured on the basis of cross-sectional outlook of the research at the single time period, thus the conceptual model can be validated by the future researchers through a longitudinal study. Thirdly, we have considered a single green marketing practice i.e., green branding for viewing its impact on green purchase intentions of the consumers along with mediation of green trust only, future research can incorporate other practices like green advertisements and eco-labeling to evaluate a collective impact on green purchase intentions augmented by the mediating and moderating effects of awareness, subjective norms etc. Fourthly, the study is in context to fast moving consumer goods industry aimed to motivate green purchase intentions in developing economies, however, further investigation can be conducted on other types of environmentally friendly products, including energy-efficient electronic devices, green fashion and apparel, e-vehicles, and more, to promote green consumption in further investigations.

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Abbreviations

GBR	Green branding
GT	Green trust
GPI	Green purchase intention

Appendix

Table A1: Compilation of items used to assess constructs in the questionnaire

Green branding (GBR)	
1.	The brand is considered as the best standard of environmental promises
2.	The brand maintains its environmental reputation professionally
3.	Environment performance can be successfully attained by the brand.
4.	The brand has recognition for its environmental concern
5.	The brand can be trusted for its promises about environment.
Green Trust (GT)	
1.	I believe that the brand's environmental assurances are typically trustworthy.
2.	I believe that the brand's environmental performance is typically reliable
3.	Branded products eco-friendly statements are trustworthy
4.	My expectations are met by the brand's environmental concern
5.	Environmental protection promises and commitments are kept by brands.
Green Purchase Intention (GPI)	
1.	As green products are less polluting; I would consider them for purchasing
2.	Due to environmental reasons, I would switch and consider other brands.
3.	I have an intention to changeover to a green form of a product.

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