

Impact of Green Washing on Consumer Purchase Intention in the Cosmetic Industry

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Abstract: Although green consumption is becoming more popular in India, its consequences on the environment remain debatable. Does green marketing foster corporate green washing or does it help Indians become more environmentally conscious? Due to their precarious moral position, eco-marketers must carefully craft the messaging of their environmental products in order to appeal to both conventional and natural product buyers as well as consumers with environmental ethics. Eco-marketing creates a complex ethical identity for the green customer as a result. People who care about the environment already follow their own moral principles. Businesses that care about the environment provide environmental goods an aesthetic quality in an effort to draw in new customers. What are the repercussions of an aesthetic-infused environmental ethics in a time when environmentalism is becoming more and more popular? There has been a noticeable surge in companies that are eco-friendly, organic, vegan, natural, and cruelty-free in the cosmetics industry in recent years. Therefore, positioning themselves as "green" companies in customers' minds, causing them to believe—indirectly or directly—that their brand respects and benefits the environment. In general, this trend is not good for the environment since it directs us toward sustainable and responsible consumerism. However, it is important for us to be aware as customers that not all companies exploit this trend "fairly" and simply for greenwashing.

friendly" in their advertising more frequently, encouraging customers to "go green" and "save the globe." Greenwashing becomes a significant issue, though, when a corporation cannot live up to its "green" claims. One negative side effect of the greening market is greenwashing. It is described as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service" and "disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image." False claims cause customers to question products, which harms their willingness to make purchases and spread the word about them. Because of this, greenwashing may result in a short-term profit for the dishonest businesses, but in the long run the entire green market sees a decline. For the market and customers, that is a loss-loss scenario. Greenwashing, also known as "Green sheen," is a marketing technique employed by businesses to present themselves as an ecologically friendly brand or product in the eyes of customers. Companies overstate advantages or claims related to environmental concerns in this way in an effort to deceive customers. Businesses employ this tactic for two reasons in particular: a surge in consumer demand for green products. It may help the business establish a reputation as a CSR-oriented business in the marketplace and in consumers' thoughts. By doing this, a "false" favorable company image is created with the sole intention of boosting sales. Since there isn't yet an official legal definition for natural and organic cosmetics, it can be challenging to distinguish between marketing tactics and actually eco-friendly goods in the field of cosmetics. As a result, several less-than-green firms are profiting from the growing demand for green products by deceiving consumers with eye-catching packaging decorated with flowers, leaves, and bold

1. INTRODUCTION

Companies are under pressure to act ethically toward the environment and issues associated to it by implementing green management systems or employing green branding and marketing. Consumers are prompted to be more proactive and receptive to green consumption by environmental challenges. The major justifications for "becoming green," particularly for large businesses, include customer views of green products, improved community connections, and efficient cost management. Companies are utilizing phrases like "eco-friendly," "green," and "earth

claims about being organic, natural, and eco-friendly. There hasn't been enough study done on how greenwashing affects consumers' views of green branding. It might be difficult to distinguish between green and greenwashed practices since terminology is not regulated. Knowing which businesses are supportive of your quest for clean beauty is a wonderful place to start. The carbon footprint of their supply chain frequently eclipses the effect of one product, despite the fact that some of these businesses offer genuine clean products. Consider the brand-new "Lash Blast Clean Beauty Mascara". No parabens or sulphates are promised on the package, which is eco-friendly due to the light green tube and the phrases "clean beauty." A bulky plastic tube houses the mascara, and the list of ingredients is anything but pristine. The same problem applies to product lines with names like "Love Beauty and Planet," which appear to be sustainable but don't actually imply anything. The main firm, a larger organization that owns smaller ones, is not cruelty-free and does not have a distinct environmental objective, as is the case with many other companies. To the author's knowledge, no previous study has examined the relationship between greenwashing and customers' views of green brands and their impact on purchase intentions. Additional study is required in the area of green branding. This study looks into the connections between greenwashing, green brand equity, brand trust, and purchase intention in an effort to close that gap. It appears that this tendency will continue to grow in strength and consumer desire, maybe not for the most heartfelt but for more materialistic motives. The law has to be defined in order to set simple, unambiguous rules for what constitutes natural, organic, and bio products, among other terms. As customers, it is our responsibility to avoid being duped by greenwashing and to know what we want from a product.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Greenwashing

Netto, Sobral, Ribeiro and Soares (2020) evaluated the systematic review on the concept and forms of Green Washing and an overview of greenwashing is provided in this article. Due to the worsening of environmental issues, businesses are working to create and market green products. Some businesses deceive its stakeholders using a practice known as

"greenwashing." The next article by Riccolo (2021), was based on the study of lack of regulation in preventing greenwashing of cosmetics in U.S. According to this article, as the demand for environmentally friendly goods and services rises, so does the danger that businesses may exaggerate their commitment to sustainability in an effort to win over and keep investors and customers. Thus, it gives the brief description on the practice of Greenwashing in U.S. The next article by Slusher(2021) developed the idea on a consumer guide to cosmetic greenwashing in the United States. This guide investigates the misleading environmental marketing and cosmetics sales in the US. The author developed a consumer guide to help people spot greenwashing in cosmetic goods advertised and sold in the United States by looking at regulatory rules and organisations supplied by the FDA, FTC, and USDA governing cosmetic labelling and marketing. The next article by Dahl (2010), This article analyses how a company invests more effort and money into portraying itself as environmentally friendly than it does into reducing its real environmental effect. The article by Berrone, Fosfuri and Gelabert (2015) investigates whether environmental actions have any connection to environmental legitimacy. The article by Makia (2021) analyses how cosmetics companies can enhance green washing credibility from a consumer's perspective.

Brand Credibility

Javed (2022) examined the links between brand credibility and perceived greenwashing. They demonstrated that brand trust is inversely correlated with perceived greenwashing. Gelici (2019) explored how agent knowledge, brand reputation, and word-of-mouth are impacted by greenwashing. Muller (2021) examined the impact of (mis)alignment between green brand logos. Considering the impact of corporate environmental performance brand mindset, brand credibility, greenwashing, and buying intentions in a global setting.

Green Brand Equity

The article by Avcilar (2017), evaluates how a perceived greenwashing technique influences on green brand equity and this research was conducted in the gas stations of Turkey. According to the study, there is a link between green brand equity and people's

opinions about greenwashing. Chen, Tien, Lee, Tsai (2017) demonstrated that the negative association between greenwash and green brand equity is mediated by green brand image and green satisfaction. In order to increase their green brand equity, businesses should eliminate their greenwashing practises and improve their perception of their green brands and customer happiness. Qayyum, Jamil, Sehar (2022) analysed how green brand equity is affected negatively by excessive product packaging (EPP), greenwashing, and green misunderstanding (GBE). Additionally, it was looked into how brand trust could moderate the detrimental consequences of green marketing.

3. CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

Anbuselvan and Nivashini (2020) developed a study on Customer's Perception towards Green Washing with Special Reference to Cosmetic Products in Madurai and explains that this study is done to determine how consumers feel about cosmetic items that claim to be environmentally friendly. Many businesses make an effort to show their care for the environment and draw in customers who want to do their part to make the world greener. Contrarily, this has increased the practice of "green washing," in which businesses come up with plans to draw customers without significantly altering their goods. The study examined how green washing affects consumers' purchasing decisions. The next article by Zhang, Li, Cao, Huang (2018) examined the influence of greenwashing perception on green purchasing intentions which played the mediating role of green word-of-mouth and moderating role of green concern. This study integrates the mediating effect of green word-of-mouth (WOM) and the moderating impact of green concern to investigate if and how consumers' views of greenwashing influence their intentions to make green purchases. The next article by Nguyen, Yang, Nguyen, Johnson and Cao (2019), analysed the mediating role of scepticism in greenwash and green purchase intention, this research looks at a model that connects greenwashing, green scepticism, and aspirations to make green purchases. It also looks into how knowledge and information affect the link between greenwashing and plans to make green purchases. The next article by Akturan (2018), analysed how did greenwashing affect green branding

equity and purchase intention and the main purpose is to investigate the connections between greenwashing, brand credibility, green brand associations, and purchasing intention. The next article by Ahmad, Zhang (2020) analyses what will be the effect of Green purchase intention on electronic service quality and customer green psychology and this study focused on the impact of electronic service quality (i.e., firm characteristics) and consumer green psychology, such as green word-of-mouth (WOM), green trust, greenwashing, consumer social responsibility, green perceived value, and green involvement to investigate the antecedents of green online purchase intention (i.e., customer characteristics). The next article by Szabo and Webster (2020), evaluates how does a perceived Greenwashing influences the Effects of Green Marketing on Environmental and Product Perceptions, according to this study, perceived greenwashing affects website visitors' happiness as well as their impressions of the environment and products. Additionally, they discovered a connection between website involvement and opinions on the environment, products, and alleged greenwashing. We wrap up by talking about the management and ethical implications for practise and research.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND HYPOTHESES

Greenwashing

The phrase "greenwashing" is derived from the word "whitewash," which implies to conceal, disguise, or camouflage. American environmentalist Jay Westerveld used it for the first time in 1986. By encouraging customers to reuse towels for environmental reasons, hotels, in Westerveld's opinion, were engaging in greenwashing. In actuality, however, hoteliers just concerned about making a profit. "Insincere, questionable, exaggerated, or deceptive environmental statements" are referred to as "greenwashing." Greenwashed behavior is a type of "creative reputation management" where businesses cover up wrongdoing. Confusion, fronting, and posturing are three deceptive techniques that businesses may employ. Complex paperwork, processes, and procedures inside businesses are the source of confusion. Companies regulate and restrict the flow of papers and information to regulators and prosecutors in order to reduce misunderstanding.

Fronting involves minimizing the seriousness of the issue, outing overstated statements, utilizing image advertising to indicate a "green" relationship, highlighting the problem's ambiguity, doubting the viability of the groups, and rebranding to escape previous associations. Retained lawyers, compliance officers, ethics officers, and ethical committees all make representations to achieve this. Using "front groups" or coalitions to support or oppose proposals for legislation or to advance moderate "middle ground" positions is an example of posturing. Other forms of posturing include presenting evidence to support the popularity of front groups among the general public or grassroots supporters and using front groups to review, define, and redefine industry standards. Posturing is to persuade both internal and external stakeholders of the need of acting ethically. Because green brands trigger pleasant feelings and some customers feel better when they believe they are using green products, consumers can be readily persuaded to believe that they are "being green." However, greenwashing has a detrimental effect on customers' attitudes and actions. The consumer feels uneasy about his or her purchase decision as a result of risk perception. Confusion and risk perception among customers increase when green promises are questioned as being credible. As a result, customers who are dubious and care little about the environment do not exhibit favorable opinions toward green companies. Undoubtedly, the rise of "greenwashing" in recent years has made consumers more suspicious by raising their doubts.

Brand Credibility

Brand credibility is defined as "the plausibility of the product information contained in a brand, which demands that customers see the brand having the capacity (i.e. expertise) and willingness (i.e. trustworthiness) to consistently deliver what has been promised." It has two subdimensions: proficiency and reliability. Expertise is the capacity of businesses to carry out their commitments. The ability of businesses to fulfil their commitments is what makes them trustworthy. Brand investment, continuous marketing-mix efforts, and clarity all contribute to the development and maintenance of brand credibility. A certain amount of harmony and convergence between marketing initiatives and reliable marketing-mix techniques are necessary for consistency. Investments

in brands are what a business spends money on. It denotes a long-term partnership and guarantees that brand commitments will be upheld. Uncertainty is absent in clarity. Because of skepticism and ambiguity, it is challenging to establish trust in the sector of green marketing. Building brand credibility is crucial to developing an eco-friendly image since it increases perceived quality while lowering information costs and perceived risks. Additionally, perceived green value and green brand image are significantly impacted by brand trustworthiness. Brands with more brand equity demonstrate greater brand credibility.

Green Brand Equity

The "added value that a given brand endows a product with" is known as brand equity, and marketing activities add to this incremental value. Because it has characteristics that set it apart from other items that meet the same needs, a brand is more than just a product. The strength of a brand is derived from the consumer's knowledge and experience through time. For businesses, brand equity creates a long-lasting competitive edge. Brand equity is "a combination of brand assets and liabilities associated to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or detract from the value supplied by a product or service to a business and/or to that firm's clients," according to Aaker (1991). One of the crucial elements of brand equity is brand image. Brand equity would be reduced by a poor brand image. Customers are more likely to buy a brand if they believe that it has a superior brand image. As a result, previous research suggests that brand equity and brand image are positively correlated. Previous research claims that a corporation must devote resources to enhance its brand image in order to raise brand equity since brand image is a key factor of brand equity.

Consumer purchase intention

Many businesses make an effort to show their care for the environment and draw in customers who want to do their part to make the world greener. Contrarily, this has increased the practice of "green washing," in which businesses come up with plans to draw customers without significantly altering their goods. Why consumers purchase the greenwashed product or whether their perception change after knowing the product is greenwashed is studied in this research. The decision-making process, information seeking about

the product, the timing of product adoption, attitudes and preferences toward the product, perceptions of alternatives, and brand loyalty may all be affected by product engagement, according to studies. Different components of engagement in the consuming process, such as purchasing, promoting, sticking with it, and

product involvement, are present. Consumers who are more involved with a product look for additional information, evaluate qualities, and have particular preferences.

Thereby, our proposed model is illustrated as shown in Figure 1.



5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and the sample

The study framework and hypotheses are verified in this paper using the questionnaire survey method. This paper incorporates consumer level analysis as its analytical unit. The focus of this study’s research is on Indian customers who have purchased information and cosmetics in the past. Consumers who had purchased cosmetic products were issued the surveys at random. The questionnaire was prepared based on the four variables i.e., greenwashing, consumer purchase intention, green brand equity and brand credibility. The questionnaire opened with a brief explanation of what greenwashing is, the company’s green claims, and the idea that many cosmetic companies today appear to market themselves as green businesses while not actually being green. The respondents who had been employed and had purchased cosmetics were then determined by asking several questions under each condition. After consulting with specialists, the final questionnaire was totally accepted. A five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate each variable (anchored at 1 indicates “strongly disagree”, 2 “disagree”, 3 “neutral”, 4 “agree”, and 5 “strongly agree”).

Data Collection

Consumers from India who have purchased cosmetics were included in this sample. Students of Xavier Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship was also involved in the sample. In collaboration with Indian colleagues and associations, data collecting was carried out. Email and social media invitations were sent to respondents inviting them to click on a link

leading to a Google form containing the questionnaire. I got 179 responses after two weeks. A number of 58.1% were from women and 40.8% from men and 1.1% were not specified; 44.2% were under 30 years old, 61.5% were aged from 22 to 29 years old, 38% were aged 16-21 years old and 0.6% were aged from 29 to 35 years old; 72.1% were students from B.E/M.E/MBA/PGDM degrees, 21.8% were working professionals, 0.6% were Home-maker and 5.6% belongs to other categories.

Data Analysis

The collected data from the questionnaire is inspected, cleansed, transformed, and the data is modelled with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions and supporting decision making. But while analyzing the data through SPSS, it was found that there is no correlation between any variables. While going through it, it was noticed that since the past research of relevant topics were done in foreign countries like U.S, Taiwan etc., there the concept of green washing was known among the people but in India the concept of green washing is emerging but still they are not aware of it.

6. RESULTS

Measurement Model

Before testing the hypotheses, we used Cronbach’s α coefficients to assess the reliability for each of the constructs. Table 1 shows the reliability statistics. The Cronbach’s α range from 0.771 to 0.911 (higher than 0.7) but the reliability of this research model is 0.547 which is less than the standard value. On referring to previous research papers it was found that the origin

of the related studies is done in foreign countries like U.S., Taiwan etc., since the concept of green washing is emerging in India, the awareness among the public is less. This might be the reason for lower reliability.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.547	.556	13

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Then this study is proceeded by taking the evidences of the previous research. The majority of current research concentrates on the connection between greenwashing and customer reactions, business

performance, and market value. The impacts of greenwashing on green branding and purchase intention are an area that has received little research. The study's findings shed light on this issue. This study specifically highlighted the detrimental impacts of "greenwashing" on brand associations and believability, and consequently on green brand equity and purchase intention. According to the study by Akturan (2018), Both high and low levels of product involvement were analysed with a model, and it was discovered that there were substantial connections between the variables. As a result, each research hypothesis was confirmed. As a result, the findings extend the theoretical positions on green branding. Theoretically, the postulated links add to the literature on product participation.

	GW1	GW2	GW3	BC1	BC2	BC3	PI1	PI2	PI3	PI4	GBE1	GBE2	GBE3
GW1	1												
GW2	0.547596	1											
GW3	0.340911	0.331894	1										
BC1	-0.10532	-0.11364	0.038631	1									
BC2	-0.10603	-0.14278	0.09404	0.487832	1								
BC3	-0.13297	-0.10425	0.10633	0.192166	0.256236	1							
PI1	0.09585	0.15797	0.201469	0.0554	-0.03711	0.042054	1						
PI2	0.011051	0.0699	-0.0575	0.016503	0.11566	0.131831	0.043605	1					
PI3	-0.08609	0.097462	0.111277	0.001891	0.088533	-0.05333	0.055944	0.009362	1				
PI4	-0.09044	-0.10079	0.136895	0.194428	0.31726	0.234459	0.044424	0.053559	0.064394	1			
GBE1	0.04047	-0.07087	-0.08318	0.133833	0.143597	0.122059	-0.00286	-0.00993	-0.00912	0.061229	1		
GBE2	0.080267	0.060967	0.258473	0.088112	0.15448	0.146861	0.140629	-0.03236	0.161787	0.037801	0.238297	1	
GBE3	0.044542	-0.06515	0.089751	0.072724	0.252875	0.128871	0.074151	0.053232	0.238164	0.298483	0.175363	0.203186	1

The Results of Akturan's Structural model

	High-involvement brand					Low-involvement brand				
	GW	GBA	BC	GBE	PI	GW	GBA	BC	GBE	PI
Greenwashing (GW)	(0.79) ^a					(0.71)				
Green brand associations (GBA)	-0.56 ^a	(0.71)				-0.18	(0.73)			
Brand credibility (BC)	-0.53	0.52	(0.64)			-0.32	0.40	(0.69)		
Green brand equity (GBE)	-0.41	0.47	0.63	(0.73)		-0.31	0.42	0.63	(0.70)	
Purchase intention (PI)	-0.41	0.47	0.61	0.63	(0.79)	-0.15	0.63	0.43	0.67	(0.71)

Notes: For every latent variable, its square root AVE value is greater than its correlation coefficient values with other variables, thus verifying discriminant validity. The values in the parenthesis are square root AVEs. ^aCorrelation values between constructs

	High-involvement brand				Low-involvement brand				
	Estimate	SE	t-value	Sig.	Estimate	SE	t-value	Sig.	
Green brand equity → Purchase intention	0.664	0.072	9.239	0.000	0.516	0.065	7.973	0.000	H1: supported
Brand credibility → Green brand equity	0.686	0.096	7.159	0.000	0.810	0.106	7.640	0.000	H2: supported
Greenwashing → Brand credibility	-0.727	0.110	-6.594	0.000	-0.336	0.083	-4.050	0.000	H3: supported
Green brand associations → Green brand equity	0.324	0.111	2.932	0.003	0.341	0.120	2.841	0.004	H4: supported
Greenwashing → Green brand associations	-0.664	0.072	-9.239	0.000	-0.152	0.058	-2.624	0.009	H5: supported

Since two different involvement levels and brands were chosen, the analyses were executed separately. The overall fit measures of the SEM indicate that there is a goodness-of-fit between the data and the model ($CMIN/df_{high-inv.} = 2.200$ ($CMIN/df_{low-inv.} = 2.257$); $GFI_{high-inv.} = 0.848$, ($GFI_{low-inv.} = 0.846$); $IFI_{high-inv.} = 0.908$ ($IFI_{low-inv.} = 0.899$); $CFI_{high-inv.} = 0.907$, ($CFI_{low-inv.} = 0.897$); $RMSEA_{high-inv.} = 0.069$, ($RMSEA_{low-inv.} = 0.071$). All the paths are significant ($p < 0.05$), and all the hypotheses are supported. The explanatory power of the model is as follows: for green brand equity $R^2_{high-inv.} = 0.506$ ($R^2_{low-inv.} = 0.548$) and for purchase intention $R^2_{high-inv.} = 0.488$ ($R^2_{low-inv.} = 0.485$).

R^2 values represent the explanatory power of the dependent variables and therefore the model's overall adequacy. In other words, they indicate how much of the endogenous latent construct is explained by exogenous latent variables (Sirohi et al., 1998). In this study, the constructs explain approximately 50 percent variance in green brand equity and approximately 48 percent variance in purchase intention. The explanatory strength of the dependent variables and, consequently, the model's overall suitability, are represented by R^2 values. They demonstrate the extent to which exogenous latent variables contribute to the explanation of the endogenous latent concept (Sirohi et al., 1998). In this study, the variables account for almost 50% of the variation in purchase intention and nearly 48% of the variation in green brand equity.

7. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

Environmental awareness is expanding around the world. A corporate environmental policy is described as a "statement by the organisation of its intentions and principles in relation to its overall environmental performance, which provides a framework for action and for the setting of its environmental objectives and targets" by the International Organization for Standardization. However, the pressure to "be green" led some businesses to engage in greenwashing, a dishonest practise used to sway the public's perception of environmental responsibility.

The majority of current research concentrates on the connection between greenwashing and customer reactions, business performance, and market value. The impacts of greenwashing on green branding and purchase intention are an area that has received little research. The study's findings shed light on this issue. This study specifically highlighted the detrimental impacts of "greenwashing" on brand associations and believability, and consequently on green brand equity

and purchase intent. Both high and low degrees of product involvement were investigated with a model, but no significant connections between the variables were discovered. Therefore, the data is interpreted with support from earlier study studies. As a result, the findings extend the theoretical positions on green branding. Theoretically, the postulated linkages also advance the literature on product participation.

Additionally, greenwashing has a detrimental impact on brand trust and linkages with green products. Consequently, it has a detrimental, indirect result. On purchasing intent and green brand equity. High-involvement items are more negatively impacted than low-involvement ones. In other words, greenwashing has a more detrimental effect on brand credibility and associations in the minds of consumers when the product is a high-involved product as opposed to a low-involved one.

The study contains a number of limitations, like with all research, which may open up new research directions. The results might only apply to the brands (cosmetic goods) in the sample. Since India is a developing nation and data were gathered from customers there, the conclusions need be confirmed for other cultures and nations. Therefore, the generalizability of particular brand categories should be examined.

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