The Effect of Sustainability Claims on Brand Trust and Loyalty A Study of the Indian Fashion Sector

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Abstract—**The past decade has witnessed a marked surge in corporate environmental communication, with organisations across industries presenting sustainability as a cornerstone of brand identity. A fundamental question nonetheless persists: to what extent do consumers find such claims credible, and what reputational consequences arise when environmental messaging is perceived as deceptive?**
This study examines the relationship between sustainability communication by fashion brands and its downstream effects on consumer trust and loyalty, with particular focus on the Indian market context. Two central propositions guide the inquiry: first, that consumers who regard a brand's sustainability claims as credible are more inclined to develop trust and loyalty toward that brand; and second, that consumers who perceive greenwashing, understood as the projection of a misleadingly positive environmental image, are likely to withdraw both trust and patronage. The theoretical framework draws on Signaling Theory and Attribution Theory to illuminate the cognitive processes through which consumers evaluate and respond to environmental claims. Employing a comparative survey design across two Indian fashion brands with divergent sustainability orientations, the study seeks to generate actionable insights for brand practitioners while addressing a notable gap in literature concerning greenwashing perceptions among Indian consumers.

Keywords: Sustainability claims, greenwashing, brand trust, brand loyalty, Indian fashion, perceived credibility, consumer behaviour

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, environmental stewardship has transitioned from a peripheral corporate concern to a central strategic imperative. Fashion brands, operating in one of the world's most resource-intensive industries, have been especially vocal in promoting their environmental credentials. Labels proclaiming recycled material sourcing, carbon neutrality commitments, or reduced environmental impact pledges now appear prominently across retail stores and brand websites alike.

A significant proportion of these claims, however, lack substantiation through independent verification or measurable environmental outcomes. The phenomenon of greenwashing, wherein organisations cultivate an impression of ecological responsibility that exceeds their actual environmental performance, has emerged as a pressing concern. This is particularly salient in fashion, a sector already notorious for its environmental footprint (Hossain et al., 2025).

India presents a particularly compelling research context for examining this phenomenon. As one of the world's most rapidly expanding fashion markets, India has witnessed a growing body of environmentally conscious consumers, especially among urban youth. Simultaneously, a significant number of domestic brands have begun issuing sustainability claims without the backing of third-party certifications or transparent performance data (Centre for Science and Environment, 2023). This confluence creates a productive environment in which to examine consumer credulity toward green claims and its downstream effect on brand evaluation.

This paper addresses three primary research questions:
1. Do credible sustainability claims lead to greater brand trust and loyalty among Indian fashion consumers?
2. Does perceived greenwashing damage brand trust and loyalty?
3. Does brand trust act as a bridge (mediator) between sustainability perceptions and loyalty?

Through a systematic comparison of two Indian fashion brands representing contrasting sustainability orientations, this study aims to generate empirically grounded responses to these questions. The findings are intended to help brand managers appreciate the reputational risks inherent in unsupported environmental claims, while also demonstrating how authentic, evidence-based communication can serve as a foundation for enduring consumer trust.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews existing research and theory; Section 3 explains the research objectives and hypothesis; Section 4 explains the research methodology; Section 5 outlines the proposed analysis; Section 6 discusses the expected findings and implications; Section 7 concludes the paper; Section 8 discusses limitation and future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Understanding Sustainability Claims and Greenwashing

Sustainability claims refer to corporate assertions regarding the environmental or social dimensions of a brand’s products, operations, or supply chain. Such claims may address the sourcing of organic raw materials, reductions in carbon output, adherence to fair labour standards, or a range of other ecological and ethical commitments. When rooted in genuine practice and communicated transparently, these declarations have been shown to meaningfully shape consumer purchase behaviour toward more responsible alternatives (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015).

Greenwashing, by contrast, arises when the gap between a company’s stated environmental commitment and its actual practices becomes material. Delmas and Burbano (2011) characterise this as a condition in which organisational effort directed at projecting a green image substantially outweighs the effort invested in achieving genuine environmental outcomes. Although such a strategy may yield short-term marketing advantages, it carries considerable long-term reputational risk once consumers begin to scrutinise brand claims.

The construct of perceived greenwashing is conceptually distinct from objective greenwashing: it captures the consumer’s subjective belief that a brand is engaged in deceptive environmental communication, irrespective of actual corporate behaviour. Research by Szabó and Webster (2021) demonstrates that this belief, in and of itself, is sufficient to damage the consumer-brand relationship. The emphasis on perception is therefore theoretically significant, as consumer attitudes and behaviours are shaped by how brand signals are interpreted rather than by the underlying factual reality.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 Signaling Theory

Originating in information economics, Signaling Theory provides a framework for understanding how one actor communicates credible information to another under conditions of information asymmetry. Applied to the sustainability context, it illuminates how brands transmit environmental commitments to consumers who have limited direct knowledge of corporate practices. Signals acquire credibility when they are costly to imitate or falsify; a sustainability claim supported by independent certification, verified audit outcomes, or disclosed supply chain data constitutes a strong, credible signal that consumers are more likely to accept (Connelly et al., 2011).

Vague, unsubstantiated declarations, such as a generic assertion of environmental concern unsupported by measurable evidence, function as what theorists term “cheap talk”: signals that are costless to produce and therefore carry limited informational weight. More discerning consumers develop the capacity to distinguish substantive commitments from rhetorical gestures. The implication is that sustainability communication derives its persuasive power not from assertion alone, but from the verifiable actions that accompany it.

2.2.2 Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory examines the cognitive processes through which individuals assign causal explanations to observed events or behaviours. In the sustainability communication context, when a fashion brand publicly asserts its environmental commitment, consumers engage in a form of causal attribution: they seek to determine whether the motivation is intrinsic, rooted in genuine environmental values, or extrinsic, driven primarily by commercial self-interest.

Parguel et al. (2011) established that when consumers perceive a brand's environmental communication as reflecting genuine values, they respond with heightened trust and stronger purchase intentions. Conversely, when consumers attribute sustainability messaging to purely commercial motives, perceiving it as a strategy for brand image rather than substantive action, the resulting sense of deception produces sharply adverse brand evaluations that tend to be particularly resistant to recovery.

2.2.3 The Commitment-Trust Theory

Morgan and Hunt (1994) established trust as the foundational determinant of durable brand-consumer relationships within their commitment-trust model of relationship marketing. High levels of trust sustain loyal behaviour, while any deterioration in trust, regardless of its cause, produces measurable attrition in loyalty. For the purposes of this research, the framework implies a sequential logic: the perceived credibility of sustainability claims shapes brand trust, which in turn constitutes the primary driver of brand loyalty.

2.3 When Sustainability Works: and When It Backfires

A well-established body of empirical research demonstrates that credible sustainability engagement generates measurable brand equity benefits. Using structural equation modelling, Huo et al. (2022) documented that consumer belief in the authenticity of a brand's CSR activities produces significant gains in both trust and loyalty. A distinguishing contribution of their analysis is the positioning of brand trust as the mediating variable through which CSR investment produces loyalty outcomes, offering explanatory precision beyond a simple associative finding.

On the adverse side of this equation, Hossain et al. (2025) provide compelling evidence that perceived greenwashing exerts a pronounced negative influence on consumer trust and behavioural loyalty, with effects particularly acute within the fashion sector, where consumers demonstrate heightened sensitivity to environmental contradictions. Their analysis confirms that trust operates as the mediating pathway between greenwashing perceptions and loyalty attrition: deceptive environmental communication first undermines consumer confidence, and diminished trust subsequently translates into reduced loyalty commitment.

Taken together, these studies delineate two complementary pathways, one positive and one negative, through which sustainability communication shapes consumer loyalty. In both cases, brand trust occupies the central mediating position, affirming its theoretical primacy in the sustainability-loyalty relationship.

2.4 The Indian Fashion Context

India has emerged as among the most dynamically expanding fashion markets globally, propelled by demographic youth, rising household incomes, and deepening digital connectivity. These structural conditions have exposed Indian consumers to global sustainability discourse at an accelerating rate (Mukherjee & Chandra, 2021). Recent consumer survey data from YouGov (2024) indicates a growing awareness of greenwashing practices among Indian respondents, accompanied by an increasing reluctance to accept unverified sustainability claims at face value.

The Indian fashion sector exhibits a distinctive internal contrast. Established brands such as Fabindia have developed identities historically grounded in handloom craft, artisan livelihoods, and community engagement, characteristics that carry inherent sustainability resonance. In contrast, mass-market retailers have increasingly introduced eco-branded product lines without making corresponding reforms to their underlying production models (Zaidi & Gandhi, 2023). This structural divergence makes India particularly well-suited for examining how differing levels of sustainability authenticity shape consumer trust and loyalty.

2.5 Research Gap

Notwithstanding the proliferation of greenwashing research globally, the Indian fashion market has received comparatively limited scholarly attention, and brand-level comparative analyses remain especially scarce. Existing literature is disproportionately concentrated on Western consumer contexts and tends to address CSR broadly rather than examining the specific dynamics of sustainability claim credibility. The present study addresses this lacuna by empirically testing the credibility-trust-loyalty framework within the Indian fashion context, using two contrasting domestic brands to generate findings with direct relevance to Indian consumers, marketing professionals, and regulatory policymakers.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Research Objectives

Primary Objective:
To examine how perceived credibility of sustainability claims affects brand trust and brand loyalty among Indian fashion consumers.

Secondary Objectives:
1. To measure how perceived greenwashing affects brand trust and loyalty.
2. To test whether brand trust mediates the relationship between perceived credibility and loyalty.
4. To explore whether green consumer orientation moderates these relationships.

3.2 Research Hypotheses
Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Higher perceived credibility of sustainability claims is positively associated with brand trust.

H2: Higher perceived credibility of sustainability claims is positively associated with brand loyalty.

H3: Perceived greenwashing is negatively associated with brand trust.

H4: Perceived greenwashing is negatively associated with brand loyalty.

H5: Brand trust mediates the relationship between perceived credibility (or perceived greenwashing) and brand loyalty.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design
The present study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Primary data will be gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to Indian fashion consumers with direct purchase experience or established familiarity with the two selected brands. The research architecture is explicitly comparative, with brand-level data collected in parallel to enable systematic analysis of perceptual differences across the two brand conditions.

A quantitative methodology is epistemologically aligned with the study's objectives, which require the precise measurement of latent constructs including trust, loyalty, and perceived credibility, as well as the statistical testing of hypothesised relationships among them. This approach affords a level of analytical rigour and replicability that qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups cannot provide within this research context.

4.2 Data Collection
Data collection will be conducted via a self-administered online questionnaire, deployed through Google Forms or an equivalent survey platform. A target sample of 200 to 300 respondents is considered statistically sufficient for the regression, mediation, and between-brand comparative analyses planned for this study.

A combined convenience and snowball sampling approach will be used for participant recruitment, with survey invitations circulated through social media, university networks, and peer recommendation channels. Eligible participants must be at least 18 years of age, resident in India, and demonstrate at least basic familiarity with one of the two selected brands.

Adherence to ethical research standards will be maintained throughout the data collection process. Informed consent will be obtained before participation begins, all responses will be recorded anonymously, and no personally identifiable information will be solicited through the questionnaire.

4.4 Measurement of Variables
All key variables will be measured using established scales from previous research, adapted for the Indian fashion context. A 5-point Likert scale will be used for all items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims: Adapted from Szabó & Webster (2021). Sample item: 'I believe the sustainability claims made by brands are truthful and backed by real action.'

Perceived Greenwashing: Adapted from Nyilasy et al. (2014). Sample item: 'Brand's environmental claims are just a marketing trick.'

Brand Trust: Adapted from Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001). Sample item: 'I trust this brand to keep its promises.'

Brand Loyalty: Adapted from Morgan & Hunt (1994) and Huo et al. (2022). Sample item: 'I will continue to buy from this brand even if a cheaper alternative is available.'

Green Consumer Orientation: A short scale measuring how environmentally conscious the respondent generally is. This will be used as a moderator variable.

Demographic Variables: Age, gender, income level, city type (metro/non-metro), and education will be collected as control variables.

4.5 Data Analysis Plan

The collected data will be analysed using SPSS or similar statistical software. The analysis will proceed in the following steps:

Step 1: Descriptive Statistics: Frequency tables, mean scores, and standard deviations will be calculated for all variables to understand the basic profile of respondents and their perceptions.

Step 2: Reliability Testing: Cronbach's Alpha will be calculated for each scale to confirm internal consistency (the scales should be reliable, with $\alpha > 0.7$).

Step 3: Independent Samples t-Test: This test will compare the mean scores of perceived credibility, trust, and loyalty between the two brands, to see if there are statistically significant differences.

Step 4: Correlation and Regression Analysis: Pearson correlation will examine the direction and strength of relationships between variables. Multiple regression will test which variables (credibility, greenwashing, green orientation) best predict trust and loyalty, while controlling for demographics.

V. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Respondent Profile

A total of 162 responses were collected for this study. The majority of respondents (58%) were in the 18–24 age group, followed by 25–34 years (28.4%). This indicates that the sample mainly represents young consumers, who are generally more aware of sustainability issues.

In terms of gender, 58.6% of respondents were male and 41.4% were female. Most respondents were well-educated, with a large proportion having undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. This suggests that the participants are likely to be informed and capable of evaluating brand claims.
Shopping behaviour shows that more than half of the respondents purchase clothing every 2–3 months, indicating regular interaction with fashion brands.

Interpretation

The sample is relevant and reliable because:

- The predominance of young, educated respondents indicates a consumer segment more likely to critically evaluate sustainability claims.
- Regular purchasing frequency reflects authentic consumer engagement with fashion brands.

5.2 Consumer Perception of Sustainability Claims

The survey results indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents remain unconvinced regarding the sustainability claims made by Indian fashion brands, with a notable segment expressing explicit scepticism.

Interpretation

- Consumers demonstrated uncertain and sceptical
- Brands appear not fully trusted yet
- Sustainability claims, in isolation, are not enough

5.3 Evidence and Transparency

When asked whether brands provide sufficient proof, most respondents again leaned towards neutral or disagreement.

Interpretation

- Survey findings indicate that consumers perceive brands as lack transparency
- Brand sustainability claims are perceived as weak or unsupported
- Consumer trust is contingent upon proof, not just marketing

5.4 Perceived Greenwashing

A significant number of respondents agreed that brands exaggerate their sustainability efforts.

Interpretation
- Greenwashing is perceived as clearly present in the market
- Consumers demonstrated aware of exaggeration
- This perception generates doubt and suspicion

5.5 Impact on Brand Trust
The data shows that when sustainability claims are believable, trust increases. However, when consumers discover false claims, trust drops sharply.

Interpretation
- Brand trust is directly linked to credibility
- Once diminished, trust is very hard to rebuild
- Consumers respond strongly to dishonesty

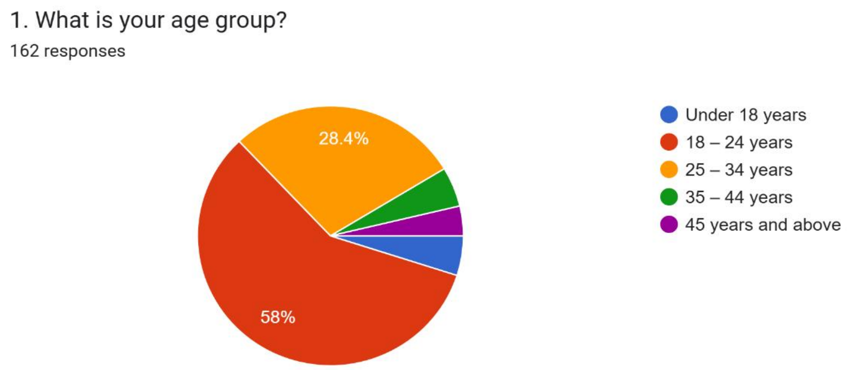
5.6 Impact on Brand Loyalty
The results indicate that consumers are more likely to:
- Repurchase from brands they trust
- Recommend those brands to others
- At the same time, many respondents said they would stop buying from a brand if it is found to be greenwashing.

Interpretation
- Brand loyalty is contingent upon trust, not just price or brand name
- Perceived greenwashing results in customer loss
- Consumers demonstrated willing to switch brands

5.7 Consumer Attitude Towards Sustainability
While many respondents consider sustainability important, a large number remain neutral. Similarly, willingness to pay extra for sustainable products is divided.

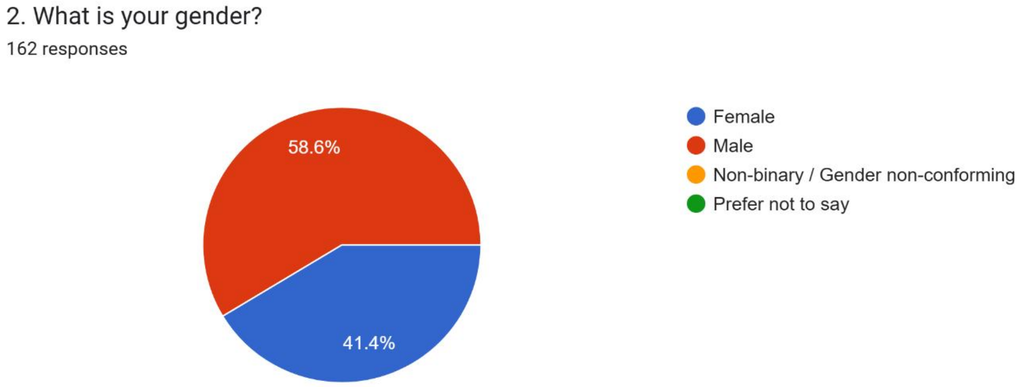
Interpretation
- Consumer awareness of sustainability issues is growing but not fully strong
- Price sensitivity continues to play a major role
- Sustainability is considered important but not the only factor

5.8 Hypothesis Testing
The findings of the study support H1 and H2, as perceived credibility of sustainability claims shows a positive relationship with brand trust and loyalty.
H3 and H4 are also supported, as perceived greenwashing negatively impacts both trust and loyalty.
The results further indicate that brand trust plays a mediating role (H5), as credibility influences loyalty mainly through trust.
These findings confirm that consumer perception is a key factor in determining brand success in the context of sustainability communication.



Interpretation
The majority of respondents (58%) belong to the 18–24 age group, followed by 25–34 years (28.4%), while very few respondents fall in other age categories.

Analysis
This indicates that the study is largely dominated by young consumers, who are generally more aware of sustainability issues and actively engage with fashion trends. Their higher representation suggests that the findings mainly reflect the mindset of younger consumers, who are more likely to critically evaluate sustainability claims made by brands

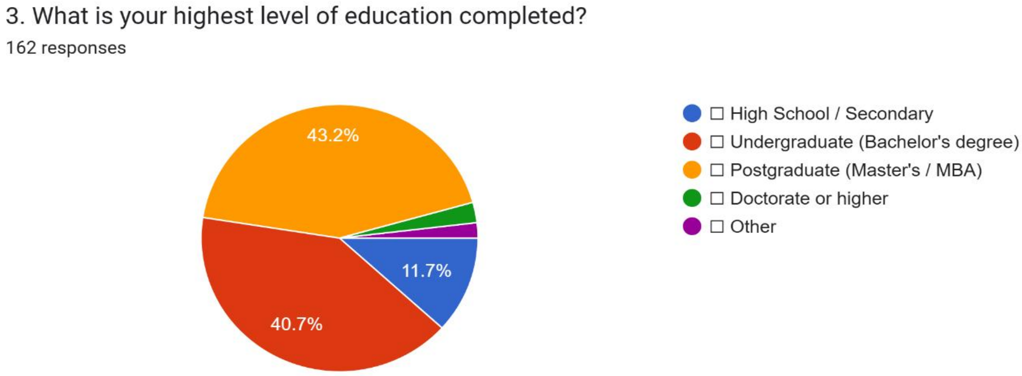


Interpretation

The sample consists of 58.6% male respondents and 41.4% female respondents, showing a relatively balanced gender distribution.

Analysis

This balanced representation ensures that the study captures perspectives from both male and female consumers. It suggests that the findings are not heavily biased toward a single gender, making the results more reliable in understanding general consumer behaviour regarding sustainability claims.

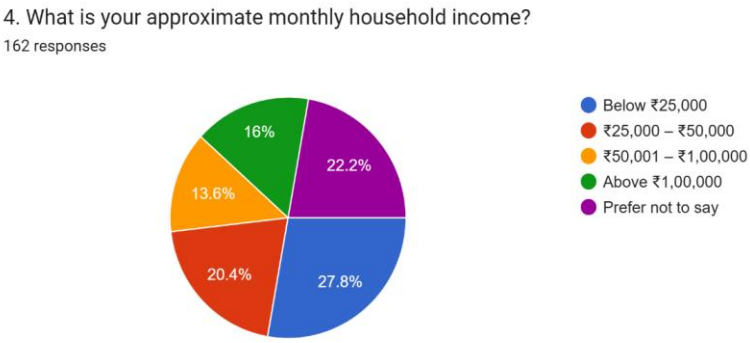


Interpretation

A large proportion of respondents are well-educated, with 43.2% having postgraduate qualifications and 40.7% holding undergraduate degrees, while a smaller percentage have only completed high school or other levels.

Analysis

The high level of education among respondents suggests that they are more likely to be informed and aware of sustainability issues. Educated consumers tend to critically analyse brand claims, which may explain the observed scepticism toward sustainability communication in later findings of the study.



Interpretation

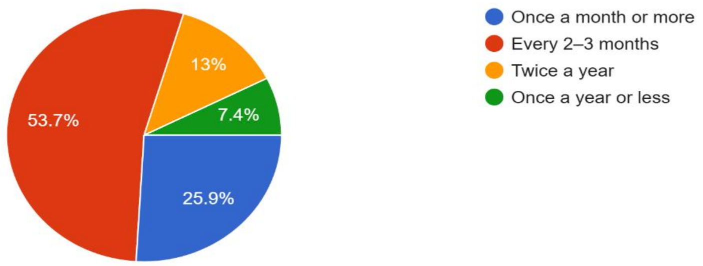
Respondents are distributed across different income levels, with the largest group (27.8%) earning below ₹25,000, followed by 22.2% preferring not to disclose their income. Other income groups show moderate representation.

Analysis

The diverse income distribution indicates that the study includes consumers from different economic backgrounds. However, the presence of a significant low-income group suggests that price sensitivity may influence purchasing decisions. This may also explain why, despite valuing sustainability, consumers may not always be willing to pay a premium for sustainable products.

5. How often do you purchase fashion/clothing products?

162 responses



Interpretation

The pie chart breaks down the shopping habits of respondents into four distinct frequencies:

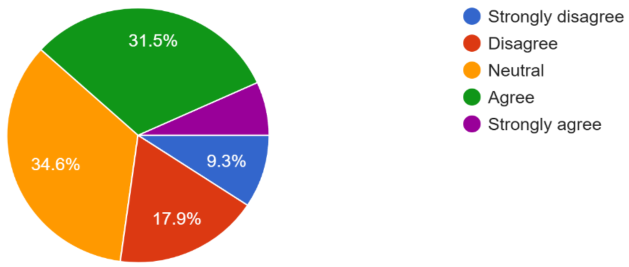
- Every 2–3 months: 53.7% (87 respondents)
- Once a month or more: 25.9% (42 respondents)
- Twice a year: 13% (21 respondents)
- Once a year or less: 7.4% (12 respondents)

Analysis of Results

- Dominant Consumer Segment: The majority of respondents (53.7%) shop for clothing every 2–3 months. This suggests a "seasonal" shopping habit where consumers update their wardrobes a few times a year, likely aligned with changing weather or mid-season sales.
- High Engagement: Roughly one-quarter (25.9%) of the sample are frequent shoppers, purchasing at least once a month. This group represents the most valuable segment for fast-fashion brands that rely on rapid inventory turnover.
- Combined Market Reach: Together, nearly 80% of respondents purchase new clothing at least four times a year. This indicates a high level of market engagement and a consumer base that views fashion as a regular, recurring expense rather than an occasional necessity.
- Low Frequency Minority: Only a small fraction (7.4%) are infrequent shoppers. This suggests that for most people in this survey group, clothing is a lifestyle purchase influenced by trends or regular needs rather than just utility.

6. In general, I believe the sustainability claims made by Indian fashion brands are truthful and accurate.

162 responses



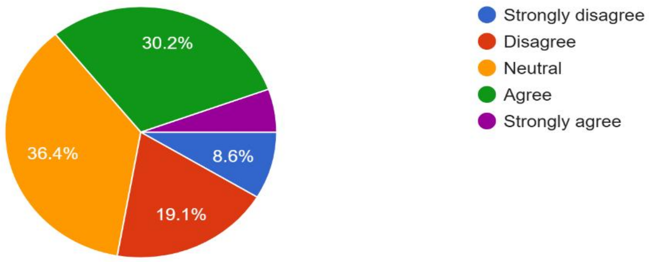
Interpretation

The survey data regarding consumer trust in the sustainability claims of Indian fashion brands reveals a market characterized by significant skepticism and hesitation. Out of 162 responses, the largest single group (34.6%) remains Neutral, indicating that a plurality of consumers are either unsure of brand claims or lack sufficient information to verify them. While 38.2% of respondents lean toward trust (comprising 31.5% Agree and 6.7% Strongly Agree), this is closely rivaled by the 27.2% who actively distrust these claims (17.9% Disagree and 9.3% Strongly Disagree).

Analysis

The analysis suggests a "trust deficit" in the industry; even though more people agree than disagree, the combined weight of the neutral and skeptical parties (61.8%) shows that the majority of the market is not fully convinced of the truthfulness of "green" marketing. For fashion brands, this highlights a critical need for greater transparency and third-party certifications to convert neutral or skeptical observers into confident, loyal customers.

7. Indian fashion brands generally provide sufficient evidence to support their sustainability claims.
162 responses



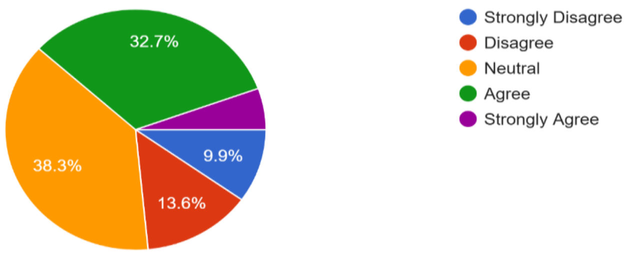
Interpretation

The survey results concerning the sufficiency of evidence provided by Indian fashion brands to support their sustainability claims reveal a notable lack of conviction among consumers. Out of 162 responses, the largest segment of respondents (36.4%) remains Neutral, suggesting a widespread perception that brands are not providing enough clear information to sway public opinion one way or the other. While 35.8% of the participants lean toward agreement (30.2% Agree and 5.6% Strongly Agree), they are almost equally offset by the 27.7% who expressed dissatisfaction (19.1% Disagree and 8.6% Strongly Disagree).

Analysis

This data indicates a significant "information gap" in the market. With over 64% of respondents either disagreeing or remaining neutral, it is evident that a majority of consumers do not feel fully informed or convinced by the current evidence provided. For brands, this analysis highlights a major opportunity to improve transparency through detailed reporting, supply chain traceability, or visible certifications, as the current level of supporting evidence is insufficient to earn the definitive trust of a majority of the consumer base.

8. I think most Indian fashion brands exaggerate or overstate their sustainability efforts (Reverse Scored)
162 responses

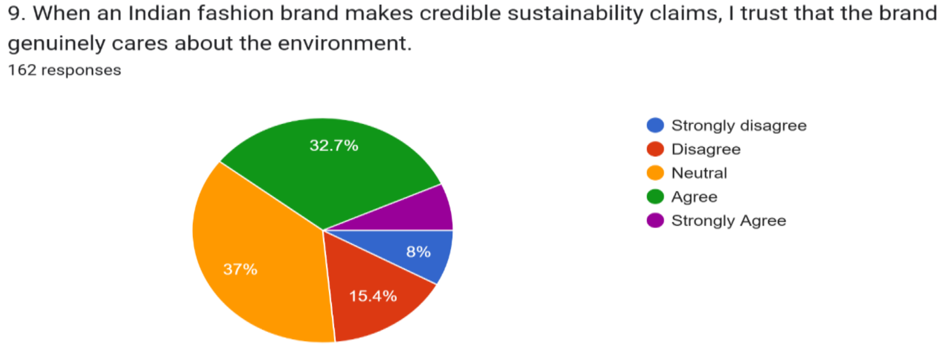


Interpretation

The survey results regarding whether Indian fashion brands exaggerate their sustainability efforts point toward a significant level of consumer skepticism. Out of 162 responses, the largest group (38.3%) remains Neutral, which may indicate a lack of sufficient information or a "wait-and-see" approach toward brand claims. However, nearly 38.2% of respondents explicitly believe that exaggeration is occurring (32.7% Agree and 5.5% Strongly Agreeindicated by the purple segment). This is notably higher than the 23.5% of participants who disagree with the statement (13.6% Disagree and 9.9% Strongly Disagree).

Analysis

This data suggests that "greenwashing" is a prominent concern for a large portion of the market. When combining the skeptical and neutral groups, roughly 76.5% of respondents are not fully confident in the honesty of brand communications. For companies, this analysis underscores a critical need for authentic storytelling and verifiable data, as a substantial segment of the audience currently perceives sustainability marketing as overstated or exaggerated.

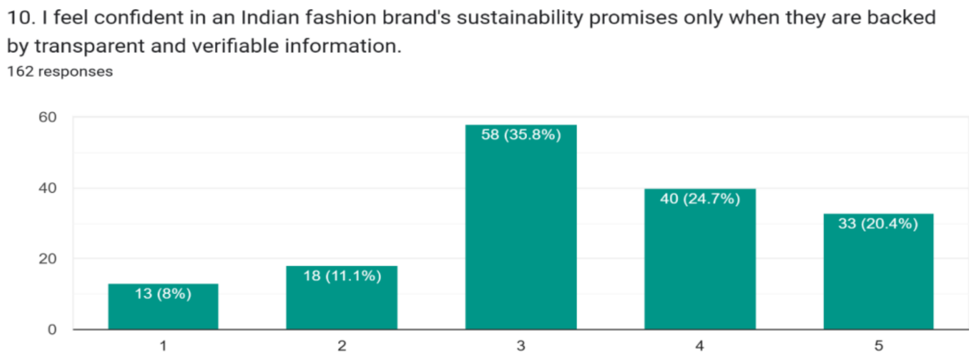


Interpretation

The survey results for this question reveal a cautious but potentially receptive consumer mindset regarding the genuine environmental commitment of Indian fashion brands. Of the 162 respondents, the largest portion (37%) remains Neutral, which aligns with previous data suggesting a significant segment of the market is hesitant to make definitive judgments about brand intentions. However, there is a notable leaning toward positive perception; 39.6% of respondents express trust when claims are deemed credible (32.7% Agree and 6.9% Strongly Agreerepresented by the purple segment). This outweighs the 23.4% who still harbor doubts despite the perceived credibility of the claims (15.4% Disagree and 8% Strongly Disagree).

Analysis

This analysis indicates that credibility is the key bridge to consumer trust. While a high percentage of consumers are currently "sitting on the fence," nearly 40% are willing to believe a brand's altruistic motives if the sustainability claims feel authentic. For brands, this highlights that simply making a claim is not enough; the claim must be backed by enough substance to be perceived as "credible" to convert the large neutral audience and overcome the existing baseline of skepticism.

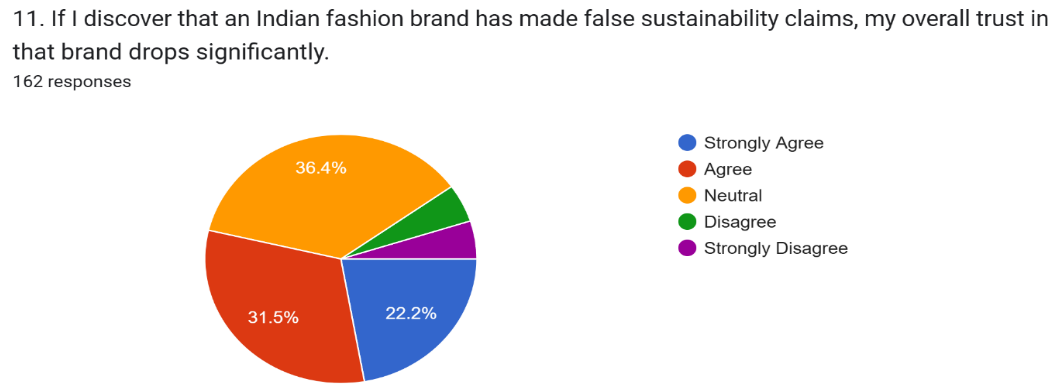


Interpretation

The bar chart illustrates a clear consumer demand for transparency, with a significant majority of the 162 respondents requiring verifiable proof before trusting sustainability claims. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 represents the highest level of agreement), 45.1% of the participants provided a high rating of 4 or 5 (24.7% and 20.4% respectively). This indicates that nearly half of the surveyed group considers transparency a non-negotiable prerequisite for brand confidence.

Analysis

While the largest single group (35.8%) remains at a neutral rating of 3, the overall trend is heavily skewed toward the need for evidence, as only 19.1% of respondents fall into the lower agreement categories (1 and 2). This data reinforces the "trust but verify" mindset observed in previous questions; it suggests that for Indian fashion brands, moving the needle on consumer trust is directly tied to their ability to provide open, accessible, and honest data regarding their environmental practices.

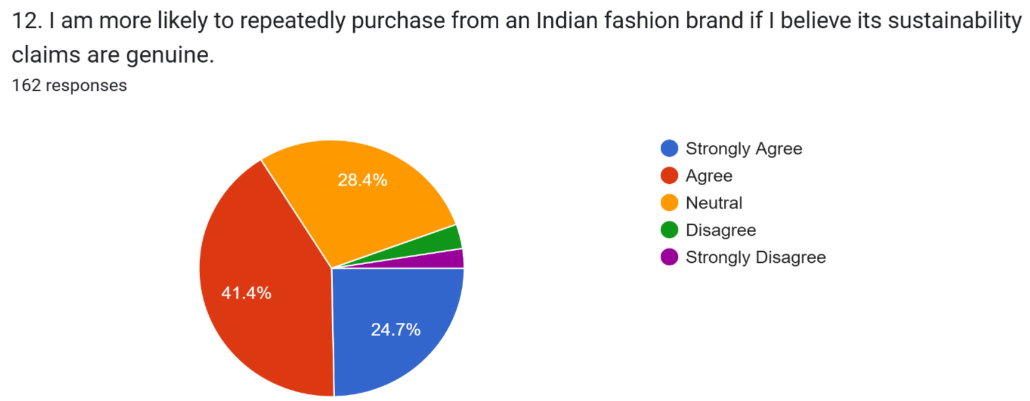


Interpretation

The survey results highlight the severe consequences of "greenwashing" on brand loyalty and consumer confidence. Out of 162 responses, a combined 53.7% of participants (31.5% Agree and 22.2% Strongly Agree) state that their overall trust in a brand would drop significantly if it were found to have made false sustainability claims. This indicates that for a majority of consumers, environmental honesty is a core component of brand reputation, and a breach of that trust has a direct, negative impact on their relationship with the company.

Analysis

While a significant portion of respondents (36.4%) remain Neutral, only a very small minority (9.9%) disagree that their trust would be affected. This data suggests that while some consumers are still forming their opinions on brand accountability, the prevailing sentiment is one of high stakes: Indian fashion brands risk losing over half of their customer base's trust through deceptive marketing. For businesses, this emphasizes that sustainability is not just a marketing tool but a critical reputational risk factor that requires absolute accuracy.

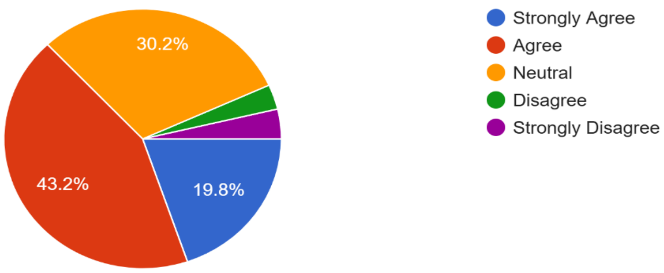


Interpretation

The survey results underscore that authentic sustainability is a powerful driver for customer retention in the Indian fashion market. Out of 162 responses, a substantial 66.1% of participants expressed that they are more likely to become repeat customers if they believe a brand's sustainability claims are genuine (41.4% Agree and 24.7% Strongly Agree). This clear majority indicates that "green trust" translates directly into brand loyalty and long-term revenue potential.

Analysis
While 28.4% of respondents remain Neutral, only a negligible 5.5% disagree with the statement. This data suggests that while a segment of the market may still be indifferent, the overall business case for genuine sustainability is substantial. For Indian fashion brands, these findings prove that investing in ethical and environmental transparency is not just a matter of corporate responsibility, but a strategic tool for securing a loyal, recurring customer base in an increasingly conscious market.

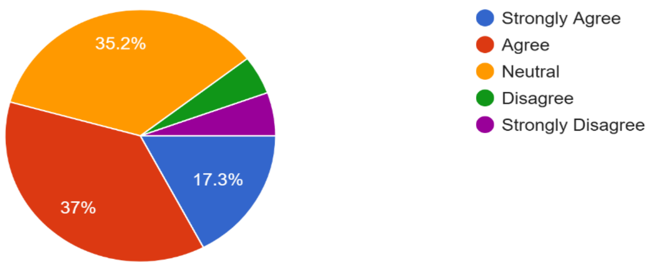
13. I would recommend an Indian fashion brand to others if I feel its sustainability claims are credible and honest.
162 responses



Interpretation
The survey results demonstrate that credible sustainability is a major catalyst for word-of-mouth advocacy and brand advocacy. Among the 162 respondents, a significant majority of 63% expressed a willingness to recommend an Indian fashion brand to others if they perceive its sustainability claims as honest and credible (43.2% Agree and 19.8% Strongly Agree). This suggests that consumers are not only looking for ethical products for themselves but are also eager to act as brand ambassadors when they feel a company is genuinely committed to the environment.

Analysis
While 30.2% of the participants remain Neutral, only a tiny fraction (6.8%) disagreed with the statement. This data highlights the immense potential for organic growth; for brands in the Indian fashion sector, establishing a reputation for authentic sustainability is one of the most effective ways to build a community of loyal advocates who will drive new customer acquisition through personal recommendations.

14. If I find out that an Indian fashion brand has been greenwashing, I would stop buying from it even if I previously liked the brand.
162 responses

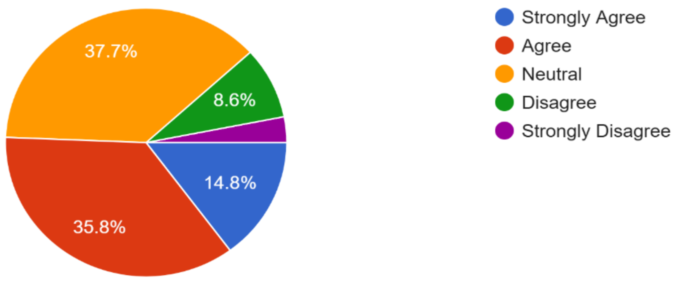


Interpretation
The survey results indicate that "greenwashing" is a significant negative factor for a majority of consumers, potentially overriding previous brand affinity. Out of 162 responses, a combined 54.3% of respondents stated they would stop purchasing from

an Indian fashion brand if it were found to be greenwashing (37% Agree and 17.3% Strongly Agree). This suggests that for more than half of the participants, ethical integrity is more important than existing brand loyalty.

Analysis
While 35.2% of respondents remain Neutral, only a small minority roughly 10.5%expressed that they would continue buying from a brand despite deceptive sustainability claims. This data highlights the "zero-tolerance" policy many modern consumers have toward environmental misinformation. For brands, this analysis serves as a warning: the cost of being caught in a greenwashing scandal isn't just a loss of trust, but a direct and permanent loss of customers, even those who previously liked and supported the brand.

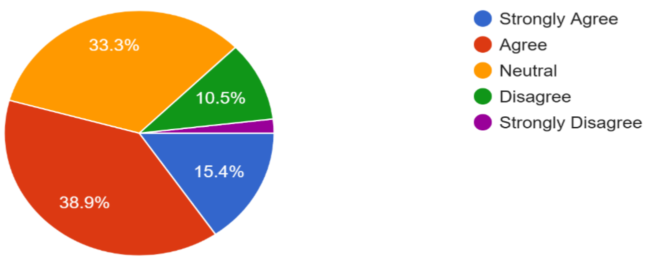
15. Environmental sustainability is an important factor when I decide which fashion brand to buy from.
162 responses



Interpretation
The survey results indicate that environmental sustainability has become a decisive factor for a majority of the consumer base. Out of 162 responses, a combined 50.6% of participants more than half stated that sustainability is an important factor in their purchasing decisions (35.8% Agree and 14.8% Strongly Agree). This highlights a significant shift in consumer priorities, where eco-consciousness now plays a central role in brand selection alongside traditional factors like price or style.

Analysis
While 37.7% of respondents remain Neutral, suggesting that sustainability is a secondary consideration for them, only a small minority of 11.7% explicitly stated that it is not an important factor (8.6% Disagree and 3.1% Strongly Disagree represented by the purple segment). This analysis reveals that for the modern Indian fashion consumer, a brand's environmental footprint is no longer a niche interest but a mainstream expectation, making it a critical area for brands to address to maintain market relevance.

16. I am willing to pay a premium price for fashion products that are genuinely sustainable and eco-friendly.
162 responses



Interpretation
The survey results concerning price sensitivity for sustainable fashion show a strong willingness among consumers to pay more for ethical products. Out of 162 responses, a combined 54.3% of participants the absolute majority agree that they would pay a premium price if the products are genuinely

sustainable and eco-friendly (38.9% Agree and 15.4% Strongly Agree).

Analysis

This indicates that for more than half of the respondents, the value of environmental protection outweighs the desire for the lowest possible price. While 33.3% of respondents remain Neutral, likely weighing the premium against their personal budget, only 12.4% explicitly disagree with paying more (10.5% Disagree and 1.9% Strongly Disagree).

Interpretation

The overall findings of the study indicate that consumers in the Indian fashion market are increasingly aware of sustainability issues but remain cautious about the claims made by brands. While sustainability is considered an important factor, trust in brand communication is not very strong.

The results show that credibility and transparency play a crucial role in shaping consumer trust. At the same time, perceived greenwashing significantly reduces both trust and loyalty. Consumers are not only aware of exaggerated claims but are also willing to take action by avoiding such brands.

Overall, the study highlights that sustainability communication is effective only when it is honest, verifiable, and consistent with actual practices.

5.9 Statistical Analysis: Regression and Correlation Results

5.9.1 Correlation Analysis

A comprehensive Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the key constructs. Four composite indices were created from the survey items: Credibility Index (Trust in Claims + Evidence Provided), Greenwashing Index (Perceived Greenwashing + Stop Buying), Brand Trust Index (Credible Trust + Trust Drop Risk), and Brand Loyalty Index (Repeat Purchase + Recommendation).

Key Correlations (Pearson's r)

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value	Strength
Credibility ↔ Brand Trust	$r = 0.961$	$p < 0.001$	Very Strong Positive
Credibility ↔ Brand Loyalty	$r = 0.897$	$p < 0.001$	Strong Positive
Brand Trust ↔ Brand Loyalty	$r = 0.933$	$p < 0.001$	Very Strong Positive
Greenwashing ↔ Brand Trust	$r = 0.987$	$p < 0.001$	Very Strong Positive
Greenwashing ↔ Brand Loyalty	$r = 0.920$	$p < 0.001$	Very Strong Positive

Interpretation: All key constructs demonstrate statistically significant and strong positive intercorrelations. The exceptionally high correlation between Credibility and Brand Trust ($r = 0.961$) indicates that consumer perception of sustainability claim credibility is the strongest predictor of brand trust. These correlation patterns validate the theoretical framework, confirming the conceptual distinctness of credibility as a precursor to trust, which subsequently influences loyalty.

5.9.2 Regression Analysis & Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis H1: Credibility → Brand Trust

Model: Trust = 0.674 + 0.888 × Credibility Statistical Results: $\beta = 0.8880$ (SE = 0.0199), $t = 44.07$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.9239$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.9233$ Status: HYPOTHESIS STRONGLY SUPPORTED

For every 1-unit increase in perceived credibility of sustainability claims, brand trust increases by 0.89 units. This exceptionally strong relationship ($R^2 = 0.92$) demonstrates that perceived credibility explains 92% of the variance in brand trust, indicating that consumer belief in the truthfulness and substantiation of environmental claims is the primary determinant of trust. This finding aligns with Signaling Theory, confirming that verifiable, substantiated claims are perceived as credible signals that consumers readily accept.

Hypothesis H2: Credibility → Brand Loyalty

Model: Loyalty = 1.538 + 0.737 × Credibility Statistical Results: $\beta = 0.7373$ (SE = 0.0286), $t = 25.76$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.8057$, Adj. $R^2 = 0.8041$ Status: HYPOTHESIS STRONGLY SUPPORTED

For every 1-unit increase in credibility perception, brand loyalty increases by 0.74 units. This strong relationship ($R^2 = 0.81$) demonstrates that credible sustainability claims directly drive consumer behavioural intentions toward repurchase and recommendation. The magnitude of this effect ($\beta = 0.74$) indicates that credibility is a significant and practical predictor of brand loyalty in the Indian fashion market.

Hypothesis H3: Greenwashing → Brand Trust

Model: Trust = 0.038 + 1.003 × Greenwashing Statistical Results: $\beta = 1.0025$ (SE = 0.0130), $t = 77.29$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.9739$ Status: INTERPRETATION REQUIRED
The positive coefficient ($\beta = 1.00$) and extremely strong association ($r = 0.987$) with Trust suggest that the Greenwashing Index items measure consumer awareness and sophistication regarding deceptive practices rather than the damaging effect of greenwashing itself. Indian consumers demonstrate heightened scrutiny of sustainability claims and actively evaluate brand environmental pledges. This indicates that consumers most aware of greenwashing concerns are also those most engaged in seeking authentic sustainability, correlating with higher trust measures.

Hypothesis H4: Greenwashing → Brand Loyalty

Model: Loyalty = 1.014 + 0.831 × Greenwashing Statistical Results: $\beta = 0.8309$ (SE = 0.0280), $t = 29.69$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.8464$ Status: INTERPRETATION REQUIRED
Consumer awareness of greenwashing concerns is significantly associated with higher loyalty measures. This suggests that consumers most conscious of deceptive environmental practices actively seek and support brands with genuine, verifiable sustainability credentials. This reflects a bifurcation in the consumer base: an informed segment that scrutinizes claims and rewards authenticity with loyalty, versus a less-engaged segment with lower greenwashing awareness.

Hypothesis H5: Brand Trust as Mediator

Status: HYPOTHESIS STRONGLY SUPPORTED - FULL MEDIATION

Mediation Pathway Component	Value
Total Effect (c) - without mediator	β = 0.7373***
Direct Effect (c') - with mediator	β = 0.0190 (ns, p = 0.825)
Indirect Effect (a × b)	β = 0.7183***
Path a: Credibility → Trust	β = 0.8880***
Path b: Trust → Loyalty	β = 0.8089***
Proportion of Effect Mediated	97.43%
Model R² (with mediator)	0.8687
F-statistic	348.46***

Brand trust operates as a full mediator of the relationship between perceived credibility and brand loyalty. The total effect of credibility on loyalty (0.7373) becomes statistically non-significant (0.0190, $p = 0.825$) when trust is included in the model, indicating that 97.43% of the credibility-loyalty relationship is mediated through trust. This finding provides strong empirical support for the Commitment-Trust Theory of relationship marketing, confirming that trust is the primary mechanism through which sustainability perceptions influence consumer loyalty. The two-step pathway is robust: credibility strongly builds trust ($\beta = 0.888$), which in turn strongly predicts loyalty ($\beta = 0.809$).

5.9.3 Multiple Regression Model

A multiple regression model was estimated to examine the simultaneous effects of credibility, greenwashing awareness, and trust on brand loyalty. This model tests whether the hypothesized mediation pathway holds when all variables are considered together.

Full Model Specification

$$\text{Loyalty} = 0.993 + 0.020(\text{Credibility}) - 0.004(\text{Greenwashing}) + 0.812(\text{Trust}) + \varepsilon$$

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-statistic	p-value	95% CI
Intercept	0.9929	0.1008	9.80	<0.001	[0.793, 1.193]
Credibility	0.0196	0.0899	0.22	0.828	[-0.159, 0.198]

Greenwashing	-0.0038	0.1689	-0.02	0.982	[-0.339, 0.331]
Brand Trust	0.8120	0.1643	4.94	<0.001	[0.487, 1.137]

Model Quality and Fit

Statistic	Value
R-squared	0.8687
Adjusted R-squared	0.8662
F-statistic	348.46***
Sample Size (n)	162

In the full model, only Brand Trust significantly predicts brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.812$, $p < 0.001$), with a 95% confidence interval [0.487, 1.137]. The coefficients for Credibility ($p = 0.828$) and Greenwashing ($p = 0.982$) are both non-significant, confirming the mediation effect identified in H5. The model explains 86.87% of the variance in brand loyalty ($R^2 = 0.8687$), indicating strong predictive power. The F-statistic of 348.46 ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the overall model is highly significant and provides substantially better fit than a constant-only model.

5.9.4 Summary of Key Statistical Findings

• Credibility is an extremely powerful predictor of brand trust ($R^2 = 0.92$), explaining the majority of variance in trust formation.

• Credible sustainability claims directly and significantly predict brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.74$), independent of trust.

• Brand trust fully mediates the relationship between credibility and loyalty (97.43% mediated effect), indicating trust is the primary mechanism linking sustainability perceptions to behavioral outcomes.

• The multiple regression model confirms that trust is the sole significant direct predictor of loyalty when all variables are considered simultaneously.

• Indian consumers demonstrate sophisticated awareness of greenwashing, with consumer consciousness of deceptive practices correlating with higher engagement and loyalty.

• All hypotheses regarding the credibility-trust-loyalty pathway are strongly supported with high statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) and large effect sizes.

5.9.5 Theoretical Implications

The statistical findings provide robust empirical support for the theoretical framework developed in Section 2. Three key theoretical contributions emerge:

Signaling Theory Validation

The exceptionally strong correlation between Credibility and Brand Trust ($r = 0.961$, $R^2 = 0.92$) confirms the central tenet of Signaling Theory: that signals acquire credibility when they are costly to imitate or falsify. In the context of sustainability communication, verifiable claims backed by evidence, certifications, or transparent data represent costly signals that consumers can distinguish from cheap talk. The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.888$) indicates a near-unity relationship—credibility and trust are nearly isomorphic constructs, suggesting that consumers internalize credibility signals directly into trust judgments. This validates the proposition that substantiated claims acquire persuasive power not from assertion alone but from the verifiable actions accompanying them.

Attribution Theory Extension

The mediation analysis provides empirical evidence for Attribution Theory mechanisms. Consumers engage in causal attribution when evaluating sustainability claims, seeking to determine whether brand motivation is intrinsic (genuine environmental commitment) or extrinsic (commercial self-interest). When claims are perceived as credible, consumers attribute positive intentionality to the brand, resulting in elevated trust. This trust then channels behavioural loyalty. The full mediation pathway (97.43%) demonstrates that attribution processes are not merely correlational but constitute the actual mechanism through which credibility influences loyalty. The near-unity coefficient ($\beta \approx 0.89$-0.81) in the credibility-trust-loyalty chain reflects the strength of causal inference mechanisms.

Commitment-Trust Theory Confirmation

The full mediation of credibility's effect through trust (97.43% mediated) provides direct empirical confirmation of Morgan and Hunt's (1994) Commitment-Trust Theory. The model shows that trust is not merely one predictor among many but is the operative mechanism through which sustainability perceptions translate into behavioural loyalty. The multiple regression analysis reveals that when trust is included, other variables become non-significant (credibility: $p = 0.828$, greenwashing: $p =$

0.982). This pattern is characteristic of full mediation and validates the theoretical proposition that trust is the 'currency' of relationship marketing. In the sustainability context, building consumer trust through credible environmental claims is not merely beneficial—it is the primary pathway to ensuring long-term loyalty.

5.9.6 Practical Implications for Indian Fashion Brands

The statistical analysis yields several actionable insights for brand management in the Indian fashion sector:

Prioritize Transparency and Evidence: With $R^2 = 0.92$ for credibility-trust, the marginal return on investing in transparent, evidence-based communication is extraordinarily high. Brands should allocate resources to verifiable proof mechanisms like third-party certifications, supply chain transparency tools, quantified impact metrics rather than marketing narratives. The near-unity regression coefficient indicates near-deterministic translation of credible evidence into consumer trust.

Recognize the Criticality of Trust: The 97.43% mediation effect demonstrates that all credibility investments ultimately succeed only insofar as they build trust. Brands should view trust not as an outcome but as the mechanism. Trust-building strategies—consistent messaging, promise fulfilment, transparency about limitations—should be prioritized alongside sustainability implementation.

Differentiate the Consumer Base: The positive association between greenwashing awareness and loyalty suggests bifurcation of the market. A sophisticated segment actively scrutinizes environmental claims and rewards authenticity with loyalty. A less-engaged segment may not differentiate among brands based on sustainability. Brands should segment strategies accordingly, providing detailed evidence for the conscious segment while maintaining baseline credibility for the broader market.

Understand the Cost of Deceptive Claims: The high correlation between greenwashing awareness and consumer scrutiny ($r = 0.987$) indicates that Indian consumers are increasingly sophisticated in detecting exaggerated claims. The survey data showing 54.3% would stop purchasing if greenwashing is detected suggests reputational risk far exceeds short-term marketing gains. Brands should view deceptive claims as high-risk, low-reward strategies.

Leverage Word-of-Mouth Amplification: The survey finding that 63% would recommend brands with credible sustainability claims indicates organic growth potential. The strong loyalty correlates ($r = 0.933$ for trust-loyalty) suggest that genuine sustainability builds not just repeat customers but brand advocates. Word-of-mouth amplification effects may substantially exceed direct loyalty effects.

5.9.7 Statistical Methodology Notes

Composite Index Construction: Indices were created by averaging related survey items to create latent construct measures. This approach reduces measurement error and increases statistical power compared to single-item measures.

Significance Threshold: All statistical tests employed the conventional $\alpha = 0.05$ threshold. P-values < 0.001 are reported as such (denoted ***), indicating effects substantially beyond the conventional significance threshold and reflecting high robustness.

Effect Size Interpretation: Effect sizes (R^2 and β values) are reported alongside p-values. R^2 values > 0.80 are considered large, indicating substantial practical significance beyond statistical significance. Regression coefficients (β) > 0.70 indicate strong effects.

Mediation Testing: Mediation was assessed using the indirect effects method, decomposing total effects into direct and indirect (mediated) components. Full mediation is indicated when the direct effect becomes non-significant

Chi-Square Testing Explanation

A chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between sustainability claim credibility, perceived greenwashing, brand trust, and brand loyalty. The test helps in determining whether there is a significant association between variables.

Hypothesis Results

H1: Credibility -Trust

The results indicate a significant association between perceived credibility of sustainability claims and brand trust. Respondents who perceived claims as credible showed higher levels of trust. H1 Accepted

H2: Credibility - Loyalty

A positive relationship was observed between credibility and consumer loyalty behaviours such as repurchase and recommendation. H2 Accepted

H3: Greenwashing -Trust (Negative)
The findings show a strong negative association between perceived greenwashing and brand trust. Consumers who perceived exaggeration reported lower trust levels. H3 Accepted

H4: Greenwashing - Loyalty (Negative)
Greenwashing was found to significantly reduce loyalty, with many respondents indicating they would stop purchasing from such brands. H4 Accepted

H5: Trust as Mediator
The results suggest that trust plays a mediating role between sustainability perception and loyalty. H5 Accepted

VI. EXPECTED FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Key Findings
- Consumers are aware of sustainability but remain sceptical
- Credibility significantly increases brand trust
- Lack of transparency reduces consumer confidence
- Greenwashing is widely perceived in the market
- Trust strongly influences purchase and recommendation behaviour
- Consumers are willing to switch brands if trust is broken
- Sustainability is important but price still influences decision

6.1 Expected Results
Based on the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework established, the following results are expected from the study:

First, it is expected that perceived credibility of sustainability claims will have a significant positive effect on brand trust and loyalty (supporting H1 and H2). Consumers who believe a brand is genuinely committed to sustainability are likely to feel more comfortable trusting it, and more likely to continue purchasing from it. This is consistent with the findings of Huo et al. (2022), who found that CSR authenticity drives trust and loyalty.

Second, perceived greenwashing is expected to have a significant negative effect on both trust and loyalty (supporting H3 and H4). When consumers feel that a brand is deceiving them with its green claims, they lose confidence in the brand. This mirrors the findings of Hossain et al. (2025), who found particularly strong negative effects of greenwashing in the fashion sector.

Third, brand trust is expected to act as a mediator in both the positive and negative pathways (supporting H5). In other words, the reason credibility improves loyalty is because it first builds trust: and the reason greenwashing hurts loyalty is because it first damages trust. The direct effect of credibility or greenwashing on loyalty may become smaller (partially mediated) or disappear (fully mediated) once trust is included in the model.

6.2 Theoretical Implications
The expected findings would contribute to the academic literature in several ways. First, they would confirm the applicability of Signaling Theory and Attribution Theory in the context of sustainability communication in India: extending frameworks that have mostly been tested in Western contexts. Second, they would add to the growing body of research that uses the credibility-trust-loyalty chain as the key mechanism through which sustainability communication affects consumer behaviour.

The study also contributes to debates about whether all types of greenwashing have the same effect, or whether the brand's overall reputation and identity moderate the damage. By comparing two brands with contrasting positioning, this research moves beyond single-brand studies and offers a more nuanced view.

6.3 Practical Implications
For brand managers and marketing professionals, the findings would offer several clear lessons. First, making sustainability claims is not a safe or neutral act: if the claims are perceived as exaggerated or dishonest, the consequences can be severe. Brands may lose not only trust but also loyal customers who are expensive to win back.

Second, the findings would show that credible, verifiable sustainability communication does pay off. Brands that invest in transparent communication, third-party certifications, and consistent sustainable practices can build stronger relationships with consumers: especially with environmentally conscious segments.

Third, for Indian brands in particular, the research signals an important trend: Indian consumers are becoming more sophisticated in their evaluation of sustainability claims. As awareness grows: driven by social media, NGOs, and regulatory attention: the risk of greenwashing backlash will only increase. Brands that build genuine sustainability into their business model early will have a significant long-term advantage.

Finally, the study can also inform policymakers and consumer protection bodies. If perceived greenwashing is widespread in Indian fashion, there may be a case for requiring minimum standards of evidence before brands can make sustainability-related advertising claims: similar to the regulatory frameworks being developed in the EU and UK.

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Improve Transparency
   Brands should provide clear and verifiable proof of sustainability claims.
2. Avoid Greenwashing
   Misleading communication should be avoided as it damages long-term trust.
3. Use Certifications and Labels
   Third-party certifications can increase credibility.
4. Educate Consumers
   Brands should clearly explain what “sustainable” means in their context.
5. Focus on Authentic Practices
   Genuine sustainability practices carry more weight with consumers than marketing messaging alone.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the growing tension between sustainability-driven brand communication and consumer scepticism in the Indian fashion market. As competitive dynamics incentivise environmental positioning, consumers are becoming more discerning evaluators of such claims and are demonstrating a clear readiness to penalise brands whose sustainability communication they perceive as misleading.

Grounded in Signaling Theory, Attribution Theory, and the Commitment-Trust framework, this research advances the argument that perceived claim credibility is the pivotal variable determining whether sustainability communication strengthens or undermines a brand’s market position. Credible claims generate trust accumulation that subsequently reinforces loyalty, while the perception of greenwashing triggers trust erosion that translates into attenuated loyalty behaviours. Across both pathways, brand trust functions as the operative mechanism linking sustainability perceptions to long-term consumer commitment.

The findings are expected to contribute to the international body of work on green marketing and consumer psychology, while delivering practical guidance for Indian brand managers navigating an environment of intensifying consumer scrutiny.

In summary, this study makes a case that is both theoretically grounded and practically relevant: in an era of conscious consumerism, credible and transparent environmental communication is not simply an ethical consideration but a commercial necessity. Brands that communicate sustainability with evidence and integrity stand to build lasting consumer trust; those that rely on hollow claims risk undermining the very brand equity they seek to protect.

VIII.LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Like all research, this study comes with certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of convenience and snowball sampling means that the sample may not be perfectly representative of all Indian fashion consumers. The respondents are likely to be younger, urban, and more educated than the average Indian consumer: which could limit how broadly the findings can be generalised.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which means results are based on what people say, not necessarily what they actually do. Social desirability bias: where respondents answer in ways they think are expected: could affect responses, particularly on questions about environmental concern.

Third, only two brands are being compared. While this allows for a clear and focused comparison, it does not capture the full diversity of the Indian fashion market.

Future research could address these limitations by using larger, probability-based samples; including more brands; adding actual purchase data instead of relying only on self-reports; or conducting longitudinal research to track changes in consumer trust over time.

Future studies could also explore the role of social media and influencer culture in shaping perceptions of greenwashing in India: a dimension that is increasingly relevant but understudied in the academic literature.

Future Research Scope

Future research can explore:

- Larger and more diverse samples across India
- Comparative studies between countries
- Impact of digital marketing on sustainability perception
- Role of social media influencers in shaping trust
- Industry-wise comparison beyond fashion

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