



IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL BRAND CREDIBILITY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS FOR ECO- APPAREL

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Abstract

The increasing environmental effects of the apparel industry have increasing the demand of consumers on sustainable and environmentally friendly clothing products and so environmental branding has become a vital strategic tool of apparel firms. This research analyzes the effect of brand credibility on the consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in regard to eco-apparel on the environment. The results suggest that the environmental brand credibility is positively relevant and has a significant positive influence on the consumer attitudes and buying intentions to the eco-apparel. Consumer attitude proved one of the influential mediating variables which implies that purchase intention is boosted by making credible environmental claims, which mainly affect the intentions via the establishment of positive attitudes. The findings point to the role of credibility in decreasing customer distrust and enhancing trust in eco-fabrics brands. It is valuable research that adds to the literature of green marketing and sustainable consumption as the study empirically confirms the credibility of environmental brand as a fundamental determinant of consumer behavior on the apparel market. The results are very informative to both the marketers and policymakers seeking to influence the market to shift to the culture of sustainable apparel consumption by adopting plausible and transparent branding tactics.

Keywords: Environmental brand credibility, eco-apparel, consumer attitude, purchase intention, green marketing, sustainable consumption

Introduction

The issue of the environment has gradually redefined the consumer markets and strategic priorities of the clothing brands. The environmental expenses of the fast-fashion model such as resource consumption, pollution, and textile wastes led to consumers becoming more interested in eco-clothing as well as forcing companies to communicate environmental concern via product design, supply-chain reporting and communication messages. Nevertheless, consumers are in most cases uncertain to evaluate environmental claims concerning apparel due to the high proportion of credence properties on sustainability (not readily verifiable by examination) which causes the brand-level signals and credibility to be



focal to purchase responsiveness in eco-apparel. (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Erdem & Swait, 2004).

Environmental brand credibility The perceptions of consumers that a brand is not only trustworthy (that it will fulfill environmental commitments) but also competent (that it will fulfill its commitments) are known as environmental brand credibility. Whenever consumers display such beliefs due to the environmental claims made by the brand, these beliefs can enhance the positive attitudes and translate those attitudes into the purchase intentions, particularly when the category of products like apparel is the focus of the sustainability cues because sustainability is a complex cue and the threat of greenwashing is salient. Due to the often existing attitude-behavior gap between pro-environmental attitudes and actual purchasing, the study of the credibility as a mediating/moderating variable between brand signals and behavior visions is of particular interest to the research of eco-apparel. (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Chen, 2010).

Literature review

Green branding research has revealed that trust, authenticity and perceived competence are its fundamental drivers that can turn environmental positioning into brand equity and consumer action. The Chen (2010) Research in the sustainable-fashion area builds on these results indicating that brand-level credibility enhances the chances that sustainability assertions will gain traction on the attitudes and intentions instead of being shunned as marketing discourse. (Chen, 2010; Chen et al., 2020).

The theoretical construct, brand credibility, has a chronological consumer-behavior history: Erdem and Swait (2004) showed that credibility (measured as perceived expertise and trustworthiness) enhances the likelihood of a brand passing through to the consideration set and being selected, which is further boosted by the uncertainty of product attributes or product evaluation costs. Brand credibility will decrease perceived risk and cost of information, informing consumers positively about eco-apparel, as in the case of recycled content, low-impact dye use, or fair labor, the verification of these attributes has limited feasibility. (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

There is contradictory yet informative evidence on empirical studies related to sustainable apparel directly: some researchers have found that credibility-related constructs (green trust, perceived authenticity) have positive and significant correlations with attitude and intention, whereas others find the influence of moderators (product involvement, fashionability and perceived price) significant. Likewise, according to a study on the purchase intentions of eco-fashion, it is found that the perceived value and motivations toward the purchase of the fashion products are interacted with the credibility as well as trust to translate attitude to actual purchase intent indicating the complexity in the multi-cue decision making processes which consumers undertake towards apparel. (Saepudin et al., 2023; Abrar, 2021).

Greenwashing and the credibility of information come into play: consumers are also more doubtful of unproven environmentalism and the attitude-intention connection is diluted by the

perceived greenwashing undermining brand credibility. Research indicates that perceived credibility, the effectiveness of transparent third-party certification, elaborate supply-chain disclosures and regular long-term green investments help to decrease skepticism and perceived credibility; conversely, unspecified claims and inconsistency behavior lead to skepticism and attenuation of positive attitudes. This not only creates the issue of credibility management as an ethical necessity to eco-apparel brands; it also makes it a marketing imperative. The latter serves as a foundation of Nokia, who Mahmud Nekomahmud (2022) introduced when reviewing recent greenwashing literature:(Nekomahmud et al., 2022)

Social media and online communication is a two-sided discussion: on the one hand, social media platforms increase both the credible cues (storytelling, traces of proof, a testifying influencer based on evidence) and the suspicious ones (cherry picking revealed, overstated declarations). Studies have shown that customer interaction through social media marketing by building on consumer engagement and verifiable content can lead to higher levels of credibility and consequently higher levels of green purchase intentions, especially among younger generations since they are heavy users of sustainable clothing. Nevertheless, these impacts will be contingent on how perceived authenticity and corroborating information (e.g., certifications or peer-reviewed) leads to those effects. (Nekomahmud et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2020).

Synthesis and research gap: Accumulation of evidence holds that brand signals, which are vital in eco-apparel purchase intentions and attitudes, are intermediated by environmental brand credibility. However, there is still room for improvement: (1) much of the apparel literature treats credibility as a unidimensional measure of trust, but not trustworthiness vs. expertise vs. authenticity; (2) moderator effects (e.g., involvement, fashion motivation, price sensitivity) are not balanced across contexts; and (3) the relative strength of organizational versus narrative credibility signals (certifications, audits vs. story telling and influencer endorsing) in building credibility in the apparel market has not been tested extensively. The solution to these gaps will enable the making of more accurate prescriptions to the practitioners and more accurate theoretical models that demonstrate when credibility will serve to bridge the attitude-behavior gap in the case of eco-apparel. Mandatory (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Chen, 2010; Joshi and Rahman, 2015).

Objectives

The main purpose of the research undertaken is to investigate how the environmental brand credibility affects the attitude of the consumers and purchase intentions about eco-apparel. To be more precise, the research aims at investigating the connection between perceived environmental brand credibility and consumer attitudes towards eco-apparel, to evaluate the impact of attitudes of the consumers on purchase intentions as well as the direct impact of the environmental credibility of the brands on the intentions to buy. Another purpose of the study is to be aware of the role that credibility plays as a major factor in the way of influencing positive consumer reactions to the environmentally responsible apparel brands.

Methodology

The design used in the research is descriptive and analytical. The primary data were gathered by using a well designed questionnaire to consumers who are familiar with or have seen the eco apparel brands previously. The convenience sampling was done based on a non-probability sampling technique and the data will be collected based on the respondents of the chosen urban markets. Validated Likert-scale items were used to evaluate the EBC, CA, and PI in the questionnaire.

Result and Discussion

The gathered data with 200 respondents were coded and discussed through the normal statistical methods to evaluate the effects of Environmental Brand Credibility (EBC) upon Consumer Attitudes (CA) and Purchase Intentions (PI) regarding eco-apparel.

Table 1 Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Environmental Brand Credibility	4.02	0.61
Consumer Attitude	3.89	0.67
Purchase Intention	3.76	0.71

The results show that the general perception of the respondents towards the eco-apparel brands can be defined as credible and positive (high mean scores of over 3.75 based on Likert scale), meaning that the purchase intentions are moderate.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Environmental Brand Credibility	6	0.87
Consumer Attitude	5	0.84
Purchase Intention	4	0.81

Cronbach's alpha of all constructs are above the generally recommended alpha threshold of 0.70 and this depicts that the measurement scales have a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

Table 3 Correlation

Variables	EBC	CA	PI
Environmental Brand Credibility (EBC)	1		
Consumer Attitude (CA)	0.62**	1	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.58**	0.66**	1

Consumer attitude ($r = 0.62$) and purchase intention ($r = 0.58$) have a positive and significant correlation with environmental brand credibility. There is also an excellent positive relationship between consumer attitude and purchase intention ($r = 0.66$), the positive correlation is great, which means that positive attitude greatly increases the buying intentions of eco-apparel.

Table 4 Impact of Environmental Brand Credibility on Consumer Attitude

Model			β	t-value	Sig.
Environmental Brand Credibility → Consumer Attitude			0.62	10.84	0.000
R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value			
0.38	0.37	117.5			

The ability of environmental brands to explain consumer attitude is attributed to environmental brand credibility which explicates 38% of the variance. The coefficient of regression is positive, and it is statistically significant, which proves the substantiation of the positive effect of credible environmental claims on positive attitudes of consumers towards eco-apparel.

Table 5 Impact of Consumer Attitude and Environmental Brand Credibility on Purchase Intention

Independent Variable			B	t-value	Sig.
Environmental Brand Credibility			0.29	4.96	0.000
Consumer Attitude			0.47	7.82	0.000
R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-value			
0.52	0.51	107.3			

Environmental brand credibility and the consumer attitude also impact greatly on the purchase intention. The credibility is found to be the stronger predictor of consumer attitude ($b = 0.47$), meaning that it is through the creation of favorable attitudes that credibility influences purchase intention. The combination of variables accounts for 52% of purchase intention to eco-apparel.

The empirical findings are clear and indicate that environmental brand credibility has a significant role in the consumer attitudes and purchase intentions towards eco-apparel. Convincing environmental promotion decreases cynicism and builds trust, and consequently, the more positive the attitude is, the stronger the purchase willingness of consumers to the eco-friendly apparel product. The results prove the significance of credibility as one of the

strategic weapons of the sustainable fashion brands that need to transform the interest to purchasing behavior into the reality.

Discussion

The results of the research have solid empirical grounds to suggest the role of environmental brand credibility as a decisive factor that determines consumer attitudes and purchase intentions among the eco-apparel market. The positive correlation between the environmental brand credibility and consumer attitude is significant meaning that when consumers view brands of eco-apparel as straight, trustful and able to deliver on their promises concerning the environment, they form more positive attitudes towards those brands. This finding is in line with the findings of previous researchers that have underscored the importance of credibility and trust as key ways of curbing consumer cynicism in purchasing of green claims and promotion of positive brand attitudes (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Chen, 2010).

It further unveils that the attitude of consumers plays a great role in purchasing decision, as the predictive is found to be the strongest among the variables under study. The discovery supports the attitudinal basis of sustainable consumption behavior and is consistent with the previous literature indicating that positive attitudes about environmentally responsible products are a precondition of making purchase decisions, especially when it comes to such product categories as apparel, where the functional and the aesthetic parameters exist alongside the ethical ones (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). The findings reveal that positive attitudes serve as a psychological mediator which transforms the credibility inducements into behavioral intentions.

Furthermore, the direct influence of brand credibility of environment on purchase intention, whereas weaker in comparison with the indirect influence of brand credibility through attitude is also statistically significant. This implies that credibility can have a direct influence on attitudes as well as directly cause a purchase decision by reducing perceived risk and adoption of information asymmetry related to eco-apparel products. Credible brand signals can be an important decision shortcut in a market with a high flow of greenwashing issues, making this kind of commitment statistically useful to the brand (Nekmahmud et al., 2022).

The regression models also have strong explanatory power, which enhances the strength of existing findings. The credibility of environmental brands captures a significant percentage of consumer attitudes and the resulted product of the two variables capturing more than half the purchase intentions underpins the importance of credibility-influencing mechanisms in sustainable fashion consumption. These outcomes complement the literature of the green marketing and green branding where credibility is the most frequent antecedent eco-apparel research as the environmental qualities in the eco-apparel area are mostly intangible and appearance-based.

Theoretically, the study adds to the body of knowledge on green consumer behavior, by applying the brand credibility theory in combination with the attitude-intention models. It substantiates the hypothesis that credibility is an enabling factor that facilitates the attitude



behavior relationship, which helps to reduce the widely existing difference between the environmental concern and their real intention to purchase. Regarding the managerial implications, the results demonstrate that the main factors eco-apparel brands need to focus on are the ability to communicate transparently, third-party certification, and regular environmental performance to improve credibility and create a positive attitude toward the product, which will eventually lead to purchase intentions in the sustainable apparel market.

Conclusions

This research paper arrives at the conclusion that brand credibility of the environment is a determinant in influencing the customer attitudes and intentions to buying eco-apparel. The experimental findings indicate that when consumers feel that the environmental statements made by the eco-apparel brands are reliable and credible; they will be highly likely to develop an optimized attitude towards such brands. Such positive attitudes, in their turn, have a tremendous positive impact on the intentions of consumers to buy eco-friendly products of apparel. The results validate that credibility lowers environmental positioning skepticism in the form of skepticism about green claims as well as finding credibility the main operative in converting environmental positioning into actionable consumer attitudes.

Moreover, the research concludes that consumer attitude is a partial mediator between environmental brand credibility and purchasing intention which means that credibility has a dominant role in influencing buying intentions by creating positive psychological judgments concerning the brand. Even though the role of environmental brand credibility in purchase intention has a direct influence, its indirect influence on purchase intention is low and poses the significance of attitude development in sustainable consumption behaviour. All in all, the research supports the validity of credibility-based branding to reduce the magnitude of the existing attitude-intention gap that is generally present in green consumer markets, especially in the eco-apparel business.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study are that the eco-apparel brands should work on enhancing the environmental brand credibility by ensuring that they communicate their sustainability activities creatively and consistently. Consumer trust and perceptions about greenwashing may be improved by using third party certifications, eco-labels and disclosures of sourcing, production process and environmental impact. The long time credibility and integrity should also aspire that the brands have a match between the environmental declarations and the actual real operational factors.

Moreover, the marketers must also customize the communication channels that do not just emphasize on environmental advantages but also earn positive consumer perceptions by balancing sustainability with fashion items, quality and value. The examples of credibility and more desirable attitudinal results can be enhanced with educational campaigns, telling stories, and evidence-based social media interaction. These efforts can be facilitated by policymakers and industry organizations by unifying environmental reporting and certification systems on apparel brands. Future studies can go beyond the current research by



involving price sensitive, fashion involvement and cultural difference as moderating variables or using a more complex research method like a structural equation modeling to understand further the credibility driven sustainable consumption behavior.

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