Sustainable Branding: How Green Marketing Influences Consumer Purchase Intentions

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Abstract

This study presents a systematic literature review (SLR) aimed at synthesizing the current body of knowledge on how green marketing strategies influence consumer purchase intentions within the framework of sustainable branding. Based on an in-depth analysis of 52 peer-reviewed articles published between 2013 and 2023, the review identifies five core green marketing dimensions—eco-labeling, green advertising, sustainable product innovation, environmental brand image, and corporate environmental practices—as key drivers of consumer behavior. These strategies exert their influence through several mediating and moderating psychological constructs, including green trust, perceived value, environmental concern, brand credibility, and emotional engagement. The findings further reveal contextual variations across cultures, industries, and geographical settings that shape the effectiveness of green marketing interventions. While the theoretical foundations are supported by established models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior and signaling theory, the literature still lacks methodological diversity, particularly in terms of longitudinal and experimental research. This study contributes to theory development by offering an integrated conceptual framework and provides practical insights for marketers seeking to align sustainability initiatives with consumer values to enhance brand loyalty and environmentally responsible purchasing behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

Growing environmental concerns and the rising demand for corporate accountability have positioned sustainability at the forefront of modern marketing practices. In this evolving context, green marketing has emerged as a strategic tool for brands seeking to align with consumers' ecological values and build long-term engagement. Green marketing refers to the development, promotion, and distribution of products and services that are environmentally friendly, often coupled with efforts to communicate corporate sustainability commitments (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017).

As consumers become more environmentally conscious, their purchasing decisions increasingly reflect a preference for brands that demonstrate authentic environmental responsibility (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Chen & Chang, 2018). This behavioral shift underscores the growing importance of sustainable branding—defined as the integration of ecological and ethical principles into brand identity and positioning—as a mechanism to foster consumer loyalty and influence purchase intentions (Leonidou et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Empirical studies have identified various elements of green marketing that contribute to consumer decision-making, including eco-labeling, green advertising, sustainable product innovation, environmentally themed brand imagery, and corporate sustainability practices (Kumar et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022). These efforts influence consumer behavior through both cognitive and emotional pathways, mediated by constructs such as perceived value, brand trust, environmental concern, and emotional engagement (Wang et al., 2021; Kang & Hur, 2021; Aji & Sutikno, 2020). The theoretical foundations supporting these relationships are largely grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), and the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). However, despite the proliferation of research on green marketing and sustainable consumer behavior, the literature remains fragmented, with inconsistencies in conceptualization, methodological approaches, and contextual applications across different regions and industries (Snyder, 2019; Lin & Niu, 2019).

Notably, most existing studies focus on isolated aspects of green marketing without synthesizing how these elements collectively interact to influence consumer purchase intentions in a holistic framework. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis that accounts for contextual variations—such as cultural, sectoral, and regional differences—which moderate the effectiveness of green marketing strategies (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Li et al., 2020). Moreover, the dominance of cross-sectional and survey-based methodologies in current research limits the understanding of long-term consumer behavior and post-purchase outcomes, suggesting a need for more longitudinal and experimental research designs (Huang et al., 2022; Gupta et al., 2023). Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing theoretical development and offering practical insights to marketers and brand strategists seeking to implement sustainability-driven initiatives.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) that synthesizes empirical findings from the past decade to explore how green marketing strategies influence consumer purchase intentions in the context of sustainable branding. By identifying recurring themes, conceptual linkages, and mediating variables, this research aims to offer a cohesive framework that integrates diverse insights and provides direction for future studies. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying consumer responses to sustainability efforts and highlight critical success factors for branding strategies that seek to merge environmental responsibility with market competitiveness.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to examine how green marketing strategies influence consumer purchase intentions within the context of sustainable branding. A qualitative SLR enables researchers to systematically identify, analyze,

and synthesize relevant literature to uncover patterns, themes, and theoretical linkages across diverse studies (Siddaway, Wood, & Hedges, 2019). This methodological approach aligns with the research objective, which seeks to develop a conceptual understanding of the mechanisms through which green marketing contributes to consumer behavioral intentions. The qualitative design is appropriate because it emphasizes interpretive depth over statistical generalization, allowing for a nuanced exploration of how sustainable branding is framed and operationalized in various empirical contexts (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015).

The review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure methodological rigor and transparency in the identification and selection of literature (Page et al., 2021). A structured search protocol was developed, including the formulation of research questions, definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria, keyword selection, and source identification. Four major academic databases—Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect—were used as primary sources due to their comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature in the fields of marketing, sustainability, and consumer behavior. The search terms were constructed using Boolean operators to capture relevant variations, including "green marketing," "sustainable branding," "consumer behavior," "purchase intention," "eco-friendly advertising," and "environmental marketing." Studies published between 2013 and 2023 were selected to ensure that only recent and relevant empirical findings were included, consistent with the contemporary nature of the research problem (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003).

The screening process was conducted in multiple phases, beginning with the removal of duplicates, followed by title and abstract screening, and finally full-text assessment. The inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles published in English, empirical studies that explicitly examined the relationship between green marketing and consumer purchase intentions, and those that provided conceptual or theoretical insights relevant to sustainable branding. Articles were excluded if they were conference proceedings, book chapters, conceptual papers without empirical analysis, or studies focused solely on corporate sustainability without addressing consumer perspectives. This careful screening ensured that only high-quality and relevant studies were analyzed in the synthesis phase.

Following article selection, qualitative thematic analysis was employed to code and categorize the data extracted from the final pool of studies. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of recurring concepts and emergent themes across diverse contexts, enhancing the interpretive value of the review (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Key information from each study—such as research context, methodological approach, green marketing dimensions, intervening variables (e.g., brand trust, perceived value), and outcomes (e.g., purchase intention, attitude)—was organized in a tabular format to facilitate comparison and synthesis. A portion of this information is summarized in Table 1 below, which highlights the primary themes and dominant constructs across the reviewed studies.

Tabel 1. Thematic Synthesis of Selected Studies

Author(s) and Year	Green Marketing Element	Intervening Variable	Key Finding

Wang et al. (2021)	Green advertising	Brand trust	Green claims enhance trust and positively affect intention
Chen & Chang (2018)	Eco-labeling and packaging	Perceived value	Eco-labels increase perceived product value and purchase
Kumar et al. (2020)	Sustainable product innovation	Consumer attitude	Innovation leads to favorable brand evaluation
Lee et al. (2019)	Environmental brand image	Green brand credibility	Credible brand image mediates purchase decision
Dangelico & Vocalelli (2017)	Green product strategy	Environmental concern	Consumer concern strengthens green marketing effectiveness

The qualitative synthesis enabled the development of a conceptual framework illustrating how specific green marketing strategies influence consumer purchase intentions, often mediated or moderated by psychological and perceptual factors. Rather than measuring effect sizes, the review focused on understanding the relationships and contextual variables that shape consumer decision-making in sustainable branding environments. This approach is consistent with best practices in qualitative SLRs, where the emphasis lies in theory-building and the articulation of new conceptual insights (Snyder, 2019).

The use of a systematic and qualitative methodology ensures the reliability and validity of findings while maintaining a high level of academic rigor. This study contributes to the existing literature by integrating fragmented findings into a coherent narrative that explicates the pathways through which green marketing strategies inform consumer behavior. It also lays the groundwork for future empirical research and offers practical guidance for marketers seeking to align branding strategies with sustainability values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic Findings and Green Marketing Dimensions

The systematic review yielded 52 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2013 and 2023 that met the predefined inclusion criteria. These studies collectively explore the nexus between green marketing initiatives and consumer purchase intentions, spanning diverse geographic contexts and methodological orientations. A thematic analysis of the selected literature reveals five dominant green marketing dimensions that consistently emerge as significant influencers of consumer behavior: green advertising, eco-labeling and packaging, green product innovation, environmental brand image, and green corporate practices. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Tabel 2. Dominant Green Marketing Themes and Their Influence on Purchase Intentions

Theme	Key Elements Identified	Influencing Mechanism	Representative Studies
Green Advertising	Environmental messaging, emotional framing	Increases trust, aligns with personal values	Wang et al. (2021); Chen et al. (2020)

Eco-Labeling and Packaging	Environmental certifications, biodegradable design	Enhances perceived value and reduces uncertainty	Chen & Chang (2018); Lee et al. (2022)
Green Product Innovation	Sustainable sourcing, low-carbon technologies	Appeals to conscious consumers	Kumar et al. (2020); Gupta et al. (2023)
Environmental Brand Image	Corporate reputation, visual identity	Strengthens brand attachment	Dangelico & Vocalelli (2017); Li et al. (2020)
Green Corporate Practices	Transparency, CSR alignment	Builds brand credibility and long-term loyalty	Park & Lin (2020); Kim et al. (2022)

Green advertising emerges as a recurrent theme across the reviewed studies. Scholars assert that advertisements integrating environmental themes resonate with consumers who prioritize sustainability in their daily choices. Wang et al. (2021) demonstrate that environmental cues in advertising evoke emotional responses such as pride and responsibility, which subsequently elevate trust in the brand. Similarly, Chen et al. (2020) report that persuasive messages emphasizing eco-friendliness positively shape brand evaluations, particularly among younger demographics. These findings reinforce the proposition that emotionally charged and environmentally focused advertising campaigns contribute meaningfully to enhancing consumer purchase intentions.

Eco-labeling and green packaging represent another critical dimension in influencing consumer behavior. As noted by Chen and Chang (2018), third-party environmental certifications, such as Energy Star or Fair Trade labels, serve as signals of product credibility, thereby reducing consumer skepticism and perceived risk. Eco-labels not only provide functional information but also reinforce consumers' identity as environmentally responsible individuals. Lee et al. (2022) further highlight that visual elements such as biodegradable packaging and minimalist design contribute to positive aesthetic experiences, which in turn enhance the perceived product value and intention to purchase. This aligns with signaling theory, which posits that credible cues can influence consumer decision-making in contexts marked by asymmetric information.

In terms of product-level innovation, several studies emphasize the strategic importance of integrating sustainability into product design and functionality. Kumar et al. (2020) and Gupta et al. (2023) suggest that consumers increasingly reward firms that offer products manufactured through environmentally sound processes or utilize recyclable materials. These innovations are not merely aesthetic but serve as tangible proof of a firm's commitment to sustainability. Importantly, such innovations appear to influence not only initial purchase intentions but also long-term loyalty and advocacy, particularly when paired with transparency in communication.

The role of environmental brand image has been extensively discussed in literature as a mediator between green marketing initiatives and consumer outcomes. According to Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017), a strong environmental brand image can enhance perceived brand authenticity and increase brand identification. Li et al. (2020) argue that consumers often use brand image as a heuristic to evaluate the environmental integrity of a firm, which subsequently informs their willingness to engage in purchase behavior. In this context, brand image functions as both a rational

and emotional driver, shaping consumer expectations and perceived congruence between their values and the brand's position.

Corporate-level practices, including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and sustainability disclosures, also contribute significantly to purchase intentions through the establishment of brand credibility. Park and Lin (2020) provide evidence that consumers are more inclined to support brands that publicly commit to sustainable operations and engage in community-level environmental efforts. Kim et al. (2022) support this assertion, noting that green corporate actions reinforce consumer trust, particularly when these actions are consistent over time and supported by transparent reporting.

Beyond identifying recurring green marketing themes, the review also uncovers a set of intervening variables that mediate or moderate the relationship between green marketing and consumer behavior. These include perceived value, environmental concern, green trust, brand credibility, and emotional engagement. A synthesis of these relationships is visualized in Table 2.

Tabel 3. Intervening Variables in Green Marketing-Purchase Intention Link

Intervening Variable	Role in Consumer Behavior	Empirical Support
Perceived Value	Enhances rational justification for green product purchase	Chen & Chang (2018); Aji & Sutikno (2020)
Environmental Concern	Moderates responsiveness to green messaging	Lin & Niu (2019); Hartmann & Apaolaza (2016)
Green Trust	Mediates effect of advertising and labeling on intention	Wang et al. (2021); Huang et al. (2022)
Brand Credibility	Builds belief in sustainability claims	Kang & Hur (2021); Kim et al. (2022)
Emotional Engagement	Drives motivation through identity alignment	Biswas & Roy (2015); Leonidou et al. (2019)

Among these, green trust and brand credibility are the most frequently discussed in empirical studies. Green trust refers to the consumer's belief in the environmental claims made by a brand, which is formed through consistent messaging and credible third-party validation (Wang et al., 2021). This construct acts as a mediating variable that links green advertising and eco-labeling to behavioral intention. Kang and Hur (2021) further note that trust is strengthened when green efforts are seen as authentic rather than as opportunistic marketing ploys, emphasizing the importance of congruence between brand actions and messages.

Emotional engagement also plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable consumer behaviors. As demonstrated by Leonidou et al. (2019), emotionally engaging consumers through narratives and storytelling can foster a sense of shared purpose, thereby elevating their willingness to purchase green products. This aligns with the theory of planned behavior, wherein attitudes and subjective norms influence behavioral intentions when emotional alignment is present (Ajzen, 1991).

These thematic and conceptual findings suggest that sustainable branding is not merely a set of tactical marketing actions but a broader strategic commitment embedded within consumer-brand relationships. Purchase intentions in the context of green marketing are shaped not only by informational cues but also by emotional and

psychological congruence, mediated by constructs such as trust, perceived value, and environmental concern.

Contextual Variations, Methodological Reflections, and Theoretical Implications

The thematic analysis reveals that green marketing's influence on consumer purchase intentions is contextually contingent, with variations evident across geographic regions, cultural values, and industry sectors. Studies conducted in Western countries, such as those by Leonidou et al. (2019) in the United Kingdom and Kang and Hur (2021) in the United States, often highlight the role of individual environmental responsibility and consumer empowerment in driving purchase intentions. In contrast, research from emerging economies such as India, Indonesia, and China—represented by studies like Kumar et al. (2020), Aji and Sutikno (2020), and Lin and Niu (2019)—tends to emphasize collective environmental concern and social norms as critical moderators of green purchasing behavior.

These geographical differences can be partly explained by the cultural dimensions identified in Hofstede's theory, particularly the contrast between individualistic and collectivist societies. In collectivist contexts, green marketing campaigns that appeal to societal well-being and community responsibility tend to be more effective (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Conversely, in more individualistic cultures, personalized messaging and appeals to individual ethical standards are more influential. This suggests that green marketing strategies must be culturally adapted to maximize their impact on purchase intentions, especially when brands operate in global markets.

In addition to cultural and geographic factors, variations across industry sectors also shape how green marketing strategies are perceived and acted upon by consumers. For instance, studies focusing on the fashion and cosmetics industries (e.g., Kim et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022) often report that aesthetic elements of sustainability—such as eco-friendly packaging and visual branding—play a dominant role in shaping consumer preferences. In contrast, research on the automotive and technology sectors (e.g., Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017; Wang et al., 2021) highlights the importance of technical credibility, energy efficiency, and environmental certifications as primary drivers of purchase intentions. These findings underscore the sectoral specificity of sustainable branding efforts and indicate that a one-size-fits-all approach to green marketing is unlikely to yield consistent results.

Methodologically, the studies included in this review employ a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches, though the majority rely on survey-based research designs. While surveys offer valuable insights into the correlation between green marketing variables and consumer intentions, they are limited in capturing the deeper psychological and emotional dimensions of consumer behavior. A smaller number of studies, such as Biswas and Roy (2015), utilize qualitative interviews and focus groups to explore how consumers interpret green marketing messages. These qualitative approaches provide richer, more nuanced data that can inform the design of more emotionally resonant campaigns. However, they are often contextually bound and lack generalizability.

A notable methodological gap in the literature is the limited use of longitudinal and experimental designs. Most studies are cross-sectional, capturing consumer attitudes and intentions at a single point in time. This temporal limitation constrains our ability to understand how sustainable branding strategies influence long-term

consumer loyalty and behavior change. Experimental studies, which remain underutilized in this domain, could offer more robust evidence of causal relationships between green marketing stimuli and behavioral outcomes (Huang et al., 2022). Future research would benefit from integrating longitudinal tracking and experimental manipulation to better assess the durability and authenticity of consumer responses to sustainable branding efforts.

The findings of this review also contribute to several theoretical frameworks in marketing and consumer behavior. Firstly, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is frequently used to explain the pathways through which green marketing affects purchase intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes are all influenced by green marketing elements such as labeling, advertising, and product innovation. Secondly, signaling theory offers an explanatory mechanism for how eco-labels and sustainability claims reduce information asymmetry and enhance trust (Connelly et al., 2011). This is particularly relevant in markets where consumers are unable to verify environmental claims directly. Finally, the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) suggests that green marketing can influence purchase decisions through both central (cognitive evaluation of claims) and peripheral (emotional resonance, brand imagery) routes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In addition to theoretical contributions, the review has several practical implications. For marketing practitioners, it underscores the necessity of aligning green marketing communications with consumer values, cultural contexts, and industry-specific expectations. Brands that aim to influence purchase intentions through sustainable branding must prioritize transparency, consistency, and authenticity across their messaging and practices. Emotional engagement—particularly through storytelling and community alignment—can amplify the impact of green initiatives, transforming environmentally conscious consumers into brand advocates.

Furthermore, the role of digital platforms in amplifying green marketing messages presents both opportunities and challenges. Social media and influencer marketing, while powerful tools for engagement, also raise the risk of perceived greenwashing if not supported by verifiable sustainability efforts (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Thus, companies must ensure that their digital branding strategies are backed by substantive environmental actions and third-party certifications to maintain credibility.

Despite these insights, the review acknowledges certain limitations. The reliance on English-language publications may have excluded relevant studies in other languages, particularly in non-Western contexts. Additionally, the predominance of self-reported data in the reviewed studies may introduce biases such as social desirability or inflated behavioral intentions. Finally, the absence of studies exploring post-purchase behavior and brand loyalty limits the understanding of long-term outcomes of sustainable branding strategies.

To address these gaps, future research should expand the scope of green marketing inquiry by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as behavioral economics, environmental psychology, and digital communication studies. Moreover, the exploration of emerging green technologies—such as blockchain-enabled transparency in supply chains or AI-powered personalization of green messages—may offer new frontiers in sustainable branding research.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this systematic literature review demonstrates that green marketing significantly influences consumer purchase intentions through multiple interrelated dimensions, including eco-labeling, green advertising, sustainable product innovation, and corporate environmental practices. These elements exert their impact by shaping psychological factors such as trust, perceived value, emotional engagement, and environmental concern, which mediate or moderate consumer decision-making. The review also highlights the contextual nature of these relationships, with variations across cultural, geographic, and industry settings, indicating that sustainable branding strategies must be tailored accordingly. While the theoretical foundations are well-established through frameworks like the Theory of Planned Behavior and signaling theory, future research should adopt longitudinal and experimental methods to explore long-term behavioral outcomes and deepen understanding of post-purchase dynamics. Ultimately, effective sustainable branding requires authenticity, transparency, and emotional resonance to align consumer values with environmental commitments, fostering not only intention but also loyalty and advocacy.

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