

Understanding the Roles of Green Awareness and Green Brand Image in Shaping Eco-Friendly Consumer Decision-Making: A Theoretical Synthesis

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Abstract

This theoretical review examines how Green Awareness and Green Brand Image jointly influence eco-friendly consumer decision-making. Drawing on recent literature, the study synthesizes cognitive and perceptual mechanisms that guide consumers in evaluating sustainable products. The review finds that Green Awareness strengthens consumers' understanding of environmental issues, while Green Brand Image provides credibility cues that build trust and reduce uncertainty. Together, these constructs interact synergistically to motivate eco-friendly purchase decisions. However, challenges such as greenwashing, socio-economic constraints, and cultural differences may weaken this relationship. The review contributes to sustainability marketing theory by offering an integrated conceptual understanding and outlining directions for future research.

Keywords: Green Awareness; Green Brand Image; Eco-Friendly Consumer Behavior; Sustainable

INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability has become a major global concern as societies confront mounting issues such as pollution, resource depletion, and climate change. In response to these challenges, consumer behavior increasingly shifts toward products perceived as environmentally friendly. This trend has stimulated academic interest in understanding the determinants of "green

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consumption" that is, why and under what conditions consumers choose eco-friendly products. Among the factors frequently examined are individuals' environmental awareness and the green image of brands.

Green Awareness refers to consumers' understanding and concern about environmental issues and the ecological impact of their consumption patterns. Research has demonstrated that higher environmental awareness significantly increases consumers' propensity to choose green products (Nawaz, Ye, & Cheema, 2024). Specifically, a recent large-scale study found that consumers' environmental consciousness was a significant predictor of their green purchase intention, underscoring the role of awareness in shaping sustainable consumption.

Complementing awareness, Green Brand Image refers to the perception among consumers that a brand is environmentally responsible through its products, marketing, and overall corporate practices. Empirical studies highlight that brands perceived as "green" enjoy higher trust and stronger purchase intention, as consumers believe these brands align with their environmental values (Apriliani & Aqmal, 2021). The perceived ecological commitment signaled by green branding thus becomes a powerful heuristic for consumers deciding between conventional and eco-friendly products.

Despite a growing number of empirical studies examining these variables separately or in limited combinations, there remains a lack of comprehensive theoretical synthesis that integrates Green Awareness and Green Brand Image within a unified conceptual framework explaining eco-friendly purchase decisions. Many studies rely on quantitative data from specific samples, yet do not fully explore how cognitive (awareness) and perceptual (brand image) dimensions interact theoretically to drive sustainable consumer behavior (Kurnia et al., 2023; Suhaily, 2024). In light of these gaps, a theoretical review that maps and synthesizes existing literature on these constructs is both timely and necessary.

Therefore, this paper aims to conduct a structured theoretical review of Green Awareness, Green Brand Image, and Purchase Decision in the context of eco-friendly products. By drawing on dominant theories in green marketing and consumer behavior including frameworks rooted in the Theory of Planned Behavior and Green Marketing Theory it seeks to integrate past findings, clarify conceptual relationships, and propose a coherent theoretical model. Through this effort, the review is expected to contribute to scholarly understanding and provide a foundation for future empirical research in sustainable consumption.



GREEN AWARENESS

Green Awareness refers to an individual's cognitive understanding and recognition of environmental issues, encompassing knowledge of ecological degradation, climate challenges, and the impact of personal consumption patterns. In sustainability literature, environmental awareness functions as a foundational antecedent of pro-environmental behaviour because it shapes the cognitive schema through which consumers evaluate products and corporate practices. Nawaz et al. (2024) assert that heightened environmental awareness increases an individual's sensitivity to ecological information, thereby strengthening their inclination to prefer products aligned with sustainability principles. Similarly, Rejikumar and Ravindran (2021) demonstrate that environmental awareness enhances evaluative processing, allowing consumers to critically interpret environmental claims and to distinguish between genuine ecological initiatives and superficial greenwashing. Conceptually, Green Awareness operates as a cognitive filter that guides consumers' evaluative judgement, shaping both attitudinal predispositions and behavioural intentions within the context of eco-friendly purchasing.

GREEN BRAND IMAGE

Green Brand Image represents the set of environmentally oriented associations embedded within a brand's identity and perceived by the consumer. It is not merely a reflection of corporate claims but an outcome of consistent sustainability signalling across production, communication, and brand behaviour. Apriliani and Aqmala (2021) identify green brand image as a salient heuristic that consumers rely on to reduce uncertainty regarding the credibility of environmental claims. In markets where information asymmetry is high, consumers often lack the capability to verify ecological attributes directly; thus, brand image functions as a symbolic cue that encapsulates a firm's environmental commitment (Kurnia et al., 2023). Empirical literature consistently shows that a strong green brand image enhances perceived brand trustworthiness and environmental credibility, thereby increasing the likelihood of favourable purchase decisions. Theoretically, green brand image can be understood as a perceptual construct that bridges the gap between consumers' values and organizational sustainability practices.

PURCHASE DECISION FOR ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

The purchase decision for eco-friendly products involves a multi-layered cognitive–affective process in which consumers weigh functional utility against ethical, symbolic, and environmental considerations. Suhaily (2024) notes that consumers often incorporate



sustainability as a criterion within their evaluative framework, leading them to prioritise products that align with personal or societal ecological values. Purchases of green products are thus grounded in two intertwined processes: (1) rational assessment of environmental benefits and (2) moral or identity-based motivation to act responsibly. Nguyen et al. (2022) further highlight that perceived environmental risk, brand credibility, and trust significantly modulate these decisions, indicating that buying eco-friendly products is not purely utilitarian but embedded within value-driven and socially influenced consumption patterns. Consequently, purchase decision-making in this domain reflects a complex interplay between cognition, emotion, moral norms, and perceived authenticity.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The examination of Green Awareness and Green Brand Image on purchase decisions draws upon several key theoretical frameworks. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) provides a robust foundation by positing that behaviour is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In this context, Green Awareness influences attitudinal formation by shaping environmentally oriented beliefs, whereas Green Brand Image contributes to subjective norms by signalling socially desirable or morally approved consumption choices. In addition, Green Marketing Theory emphasises that sustainability-oriented marketing strategies contribute to value formation, shaping consumers' cognitive and emotional responses to green products (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2023). Together, these theoretical foundations suggest that green purchasing behaviour is influenced by a nexus of cognitive awareness, brand symbolism, and normative expectations.

THEORETICAL INSIGHT

A synthesis of the literature indicates that Green Awareness and Green Brand Image are interdependent constructs that collectively shape eco-friendly purchasing decisions. Awareness provides a cognitive baseline that informs consumers about environmental issues, while brand image operates at a perceptual and symbolic level that validates or reinforces these cognitive evaluations. As argued by Nawaz et al. (2024) and Kurnia et al. (2023), consumers do not merely rely on knowledge in isolation; instead, their behavioural responses emerge from an integration of what they know and how they perceive the credibility of the brand offering the product. The interaction between cognition and perception suggests that eco-friendly purchasing is not solely a rational process but a hybrid of knowledge-driven evaluation and brand-mediated meaning-



making. This interplay provides a conceptual pathway for understanding how environmental values are translated into actual market behaviour.

IMPLICATIONS

The theoretical synthesis of Green Awareness, Green Brand Image, and Purchase Decision offers several important implications for sustainability marketing, consumer behaviour research, and corporate environmental strategy. First, the review highlights that consumer decision-making in the eco-friendly product domain is shaped not solely by product attributes but by intertwined cognitive and perceptual drivers. This insight underscores the need for firms to invest in strategic educational initiatives that elevate environmental literacy among consumers. Enhancing Green Awareness strengthens individuals' evaluative capacity and encourages more deliberate and informed purchasing behaviour. As prior studies indicate, consumers who possess higher ecological knowledge demonstrate stronger sensitivity to sustainability cues and are more capable of distinguishing authentic environmental performance from symbolic marketing (Nawaz et al., 2024). This implies that marketing strategies rooted in consumer education, transparency, and credible environmental communication can yield more impactful behavioural outcomes than traditional promotional techniques.

Second, the review demonstrates that Green Brand Image functions as a critical symbolic resource influencing environmentally responsible choices. A strong green brand image conveys trust, legitimacy, and consistency in corporate environmental practices, thereby reducing perceived risk and enhancing brand attachment. This finding suggests that organizations should prioritize long-term sustainability integration rather than episodic or superficial green initiatives. Brand-building efforts that authentically embed environmental responsibility into corporate culture, supply-chain practices, and external communication are more likely to generate durable consumer trust and loyalty. The implication for firms is that green positioning must be holistic and verifiable, as consumers increasingly scrutinize the authenticity of environmental claims in an era of heightened concern regarding greenwashing.

Third, for policymakers and sustainability advocates, the review underscores the importance of strengthening public access to environmental information and promoting regulatory frameworks that ensure accurate environmental disclosures. By fostering a more informed public, regulatory bodies can enhance the effectiveness of sustainability-driven policies and encourage markets to shift toward greener alternatives. Increased Green Awareness at the population level could accelerate demand for eco-friendly products, which in turn incentivizes



companies to adopt more sustainable production practices.

Finally, the implications extend to academic research and higher education. The conceptual integration presented in this review provides a foundation for future empirical studies to examine interactive effects, mediating mechanisms, and contextual moderators. For universities, particularly those seeking to cultivate sustainability-oriented graduates, these findings affirm the importance of embedding environmental education within curricula. Students with higher levels of environmental literacy and brand-critical thinking are more likely to exhibit responsible consumption patterns, reinforcing the broader societal transition toward sustainability.

DISCUSSION

The theoretical synthesis of Green Awareness and Green Brand Image presented in this review demonstrates that eco-friendly consumer decision-making is shaped by a layered interaction between cognitive and perceptual processes. Green Awareness provides the cognitive grounding through which consumers recognize environmental issues, evaluate ecological consequences, and form environmentally oriented attitudes. Prior research confirms that individuals with higher levels of environmental awareness are more likely to engage in sustainability-conscious decision-making because awareness enhances their evaluative capacity and heightens sensitivity to environmental information (Nawaz et al., 2024). Likewise, environmental knowledge strengthens consumers' ability to critically interpret sustainability claims and identify inconsistencies in corporate behavior, thereby making Green Awareness a foundational determinant in green consumption models (Rejikumar & Ravindran, 2021).

Despite its importance, awareness alone does not guarantee eco-friendly behavioral outcomes. Multiple studies have noted the persistence of the attitude–behavior gap in green consumption, whereby consumers express pro-environmental attitudes but fail to translate them into actual purchase decisions (Joshi & Rahman, 2019). This gap suggests that additional motivational drivers are required to move consumers from cognitive recognition to behavioral commitment. Scholars argue that contextual forces such as social norms, product credibility, and brand trust significantly influence the decision-making process, especially when consumers face uncertainty or information overload regarding environmental claims (Nguyen et al., 2022). Thus, while awareness shapes attitudes and internal motivations, it does not operate in isolation; rather, its effect must be reinforced by external and perceptual cues that simplify decision-making and signal trustworthy sustainability performance.



Table 1. Summary of Key Constructs and Theoretical Discussion

Construct	Key Insights	Supporting Literature
Green Awareness	Enhances cognitive evaluation; increases sensitivity to environmental information	Nawaz et al. (2024)
Green Brand Image	Reduces information asymmetry; strengthens trust	Kurnia et al. (2023)
Interaction	Awareness helps interpret brand signals; brand image reinforces motivation	Nguyen et al. (2022)
Theoretical Alignment	Consistent with TPB	Ajzen (1991)
Challenges	Greenwashing, socio-economic factors	Delmas & Burbano (2011)

As summarized in Table 1, the interaction between cognitive and perceptual mechanisms plays a central role in shaping eco-friendly consumer decisions. The table highlights how Green Awareness operates as a knowledge-based antecedent, whereas Green Brand Image functions as a symbolic and affective mechanism that reinforces behavioural commitment. These insights collectively illustrate that sustainable purchasing behaviour is not driven by a single determinant, but rather emerges from a dynamic interplay between how consumers process environmental information and how they interpret brand-related cues in the marketplace. Green Awareness equips individuals with the evaluative competency necessary to decode environmental claims, assess ecological impact, and distinguish authentic sustainability efforts from superficial marketing. In contrast, Green Brand Image provides the emotional validation and trust-based assurance that consumers require in order to translate these cognitive evaluations into consistent behavioural outcomes.

Within this context, Green Brand Image emerges as a pivotal construct that complements and amplifies the effects of Green Awareness. As a symbolic representation of a firm's environmental responsibility, green brand image reduces information asymmetry and enhances consumer confidence in sustainability claims. Prior studies show that consumers rely on brand image as a heuristic cue for evaluating the environmental integrity of products, particularly when they cannot independently verify ecological attributes (Kurnia et al., 2023). A strong green brand



image not only enhances perceived quality and reduces perceived risk but also activates emotional and moral alignments between consumers and the brand, encouraging them to express their environmental values through purchase behavior (Apriliani & Aqmala, 2021). In this sense, brand image serves as a perceptual mechanism that bridges cognitive awareness and actual decision outcomes.

Moreover, the interaction between Green Awareness and Green Brand Image appears to be synergistic rather than independent. Awareness enhances consumers' ability to process and evaluate green brand signals, whereas a credible brand image validates and reinforces the cognitive evaluations formed through awareness. Nawaz et al. (2024) emphasize that environmentally knowledgeable consumers are more responsive to authentic green signals and more resistant to greenwashing, suggesting that awareness strengthens perceptual accuracy. Conversely, a strong green brand image can amplify the behavioral effect of awareness by providing emotional reassurance, identity congruence, and norm-aligned cues that motivate consumers to act consistently with their values (Nguyen et al., 2022). This synergy indicates that green purchasing behavior emerges from a dynamic interplay between what consumers *know* (awareness) and what they *perceive* (brand image).

From a theoretical standpoint, this interaction aligns closely with the core assumptions of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Green Awareness contributes to the formation of favorable attitudes toward eco-friendly products by shaping beliefs about environmental consequences. Meanwhile, Green Brand Image influences subjective norms by signaling the social and moral acceptability of green purchasing, and enhances perceived behavioral control by reducing uncertainty and reinforcing the perceived efficacy of choosing eco-friendly products (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2023). Thus, the integration of awareness and brand image can be understood as a holistic psychological mechanism that conforms to established behavioral theory, while also extending TPB's applicability to sustainability marketing contexts.

However, the review also highlights several conceptual and practical challenges. One concern pertains to the rising prevalence of greenwashing, which undermines consumer trust and weakens the behavioral influence of green brand image. When firms exaggerate or falsify their sustainability claims, consumers may develop skepticism toward green marketing as a whole, eroding the credibility required for brand image to function effectively (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Furthermore, socio-economic constraints such as price premiums, limited availability of eco-friendly products, and situational pressures can inhibit the translation of awareness and positive brand perception into actual purchase behavior (White et al., 2019). These findings suggest that



the impact of Green Awareness and Green Brand Image is context-dependent, and that structural factors within markets and societies significantly moderate green purchasing outcomes.

Another emerging dimension of this synthesis concerns the role of consumer identity. Studies increasingly show that green consumption is motivated not only by rational evaluation or brand perception but also by a desire to express identity, values, and social belonging (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010). Consumers with strong environmental identities may respond more strongly to green brand signals and derive symbolic value from supporting environmentally responsible companies. This indicates that identity-based motivation may function as an additional mediating mechanism linking awareness and brand image to purchasing decisions.

Finally, the review underscores the need for more integrative research frameworks that consider cultural, demographic, and technological contexts. Environmental awareness and brand image perceptions vary across cultures, generational cohorts, and digital environments. For instance, younger consumers tend to exhibit stronger environmental concern but are also more critical of green marketing practices, necessitating different branding approaches (Hsu et al., 2021). Meanwhile, digital environments such as social media and online reviews magnify brand image effects by accelerating the diffusion of environmental information and consumer sentiment.

Taken together, this comprehensive synthesis reveals that eco-friendly purchase behavior cannot be attributed to a single factor. Instead, it arises from an interconnected psychological system involving cognitive awareness, perceptual trust, identity expression, normative influence, and contextual facilitation. Understanding these dynamics is essential for advancing theoretical models of green consumer behavior and for guiding practitioners in designing sustainability strategies that effectively motivate ethical consumption.

CONCLUSION

This theoretical synthesis concludes that eco-friendly consumer decision-making is shaped by a multidimensional interaction between cognitive awareness and perceptual brand evaluation. Green Awareness plays a foundational cognitive role by enhancing consumers' understanding of environmental issues and strengthening their ability to evaluate sustainability information critically. It equips consumers with the knowledge required to recognize ecological consequences and to interpret environmental cues embedded within the marketplace. However, awareness by itself is insufficient to translate pro-environmental attitudes into consistent purchasing behavior, as the attitude behavior gap remains a pervasive challenge within green consumption contexts.



Complementing this cognitive dimension, Green Brand Image operates as a symbolic and affective mechanism that reinforces consumer trust and reduces uncertainty surrounding eco-friendly products. A credible and consistent green brand image functions as a signal of legitimacy that helps consumers navigate complex environmental claims. When consumers perceive a brand as authentically committed to sustainability, their willingness to translate environmental concern into purchasing behavior increases. Thus, brand image not only strengthens emotional and moral alignment with sustainability values but also provides behavioral reinforcement for the cognitive evaluations shaped by environmental awareness.

The theoretical integration presented in this review demonstrates that the strongest predictor of eco-friendly consumer behavior arises from the synergy between awareness and brand image. Awareness enables consumers to decode sustainability claims, while brand image validates and amplifies these evaluations through trust-based and identity-based mechanisms. This dual influence aligns with and extends the assumptions of behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, underscoring that sustainable purchasing emerges from the convergence of attitudes, perceived norms, and trust-driven behavioral control.

Although both constructs are central to green decision-making, their influence is moderated by contextual factors such as socio-economic constraints, greenwashing prevalence, cultural norms, and demographic differences. These contextual barriers explain why environmentally aware consumers do not always act sustainably, and why strong brand image alone may fail in markets characterized by distrust or inconsistent regulatory enforcement.

Overall, this review contributes to sustainability marketing literature by providing a consolidated conceptual understanding of how cognitive and perceptual mechanisms jointly shape eco-friendly consumer decision-making. The findings highlight the need for integrated marketing strategies that combine consumer education with authentic brand-driven sustainability efforts. Future empirical research is encouraged to examine the mediating and moderating pathways identified in this synthesis, as well as to explore how technological, cultural, and generational factors influence the interplay between awareness, brand image, and sustainable consumption patterns.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research should advance the theoretical insights synthesized in this review by exploring the interactive mechanisms linking Green Awareness and Green Brand Image to eco-friendly consumer decision-making. Although current literature acknowledges the



complementary roles of cognition and perception, empirical studies rarely examine how these constructs jointly influence one another over time. Longitudinal research could provide deeper understanding of whether increases in environmental awareness strengthen consumers' sensitivity to brand-level sustainability signals, and whether stronger green brand images reinforce the internalization of environmental values. Such designs would help clarify the causal sequencing and developmental trajectory of green consumer behavior.

Second, future studies should incorporate contextual moderators that may strengthen or weaken the influence of awareness and brand image. Socio-economic constraints, price premiums, cultural norms, regulatory environments, and digital information ecosystems all shape sustainability-related decisions but remain underexamined in integrated models. Comparative cross-cultural research would be particularly valuable, as environmental concern and brand trust vary significantly across collectivist and individualist cultures. Including demographic factors such as generational differences, education level, and digital literacy could also illuminate how various population groups construct and interpret sustainability cues.

Third, researchers should address the growing concern of greenwashing and its impact on the relationship between perception and behavior. As misleading environmental claims become more widespread, consumer skepticism may erode the behavioural power of green brand image. Future studies should therefore investigate how consumers detect authenticity, what cognitive or emotional criteria they use to judge credibility, and how brand transparency or third-party certifications can mitigate distrust. Experimental designs may help uncover the thresholds at which greenwashing undermines not only brand image but also the broader legitimacy of sustainable markets.

Fourth, future research should examine identity-based and psychological mechanisms underlying sustainable consumption. As emerging evidence suggests, environmental identity, moral obligation, and social signaling motives can significantly amplify the influence of awareness and brand image. Studies that integrate identity theory, self-concept frameworks, and moral psychology may yield richer explanatory models of why some consumers remain consistent in their sustainable choices while others do not. Incorporating these variables into structural equation models could reveal mediating pathways that current literature has not yet fully articulated.

Lastly, scholars should explore the implications of digital transformation for green consumer behavior. Social media, algorithm-driven personalization, influencer marketing, and online brand communities now play crucial roles in shaping both awareness and brand perception.



Future research could investigate how digital rhetoric, ecological framing, information virality, and online transparency systems affect consumer beliefs and decisions. Moreover, the integration of artificial intelligence in environmental communication such as eco-label verification, digital footprint calculators, or personalized sustainability recommendations presents new opportunities for empirical and conceptual inquiry.

Taken together, these future research avenues highlight the need for more integrative, interdisciplinary, and methodologically diverse studies to deepen our understanding of how cognitive awareness and brand-based perceptions jointly shape eco-friendly consumer decision-making. By addressing these gaps, scholars can contribute to developing more precise theories and effective sustainability strategies that respond to the evolving complexity of contemporary green markets.

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