The influence of Electronic Word of Mouth and Perceived value on Green Purchase Intention

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and Perceived Value (PV) on Green Purchase Intention (GPI), addressing the growing need to understand sustainable consumer behavior in the digital age. While prior research has emphasized trust as a primary determinant of GPI, this study critically examines its mediating and moderating roles alongside other key factors such as green brand positioning and consumer attitude. The motivation stems from increasing green skepticism and the importance of credibility in shaping green buying behavior, especially in emerging markets like Pakistan. A quantitative, cross-sectional design was employed, utilizing a structured survey distributed among Pakistani consumers aged 18 and above who were aware of green products. A non-probability purposive sampling technique yielded a sample size exceeding 300 respondents. The analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Findings indicate that perceived value significantly influences attitude toward green brands and GPI, while trust has a limited direct effect on purchase intention. eWOM, although impactful on trust, does not directly influence GPI unless reinforced by brand positioning. Notably, green brand positioning emerged as a key moderator and driver, enhancing the impact of other variables on GPI. The originality of this research lies in re-evaluating trust's role and highlighting the strategic importance of brand positioning and perceived value in sustainable marketing. The study contributes both theoretically and practically by guiding marketers on leveraging credibility, digital engagement, and value-driven messaging to foster sustainable consumer behaviors.

Key Words: Green Purchase Intention, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Perceived Value, Trust, Green Brand Positioning, Sustainability Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), Digital Influence

Introduction

Since environmental concern and demands for sustainability have grown in importance in human behavior, green purchase intent is quickly becoming increasingly important (Chen & Chang, 2012; Suki, 2016). In response, companies embrace green marketing to enhance a company's brand reputation and customer loyalty (Wang et al., 2022). Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is a function because customers evaluate a brand's environmental credibility through online reviews and social media (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Al–Gasawneh & Al–Adamat, 2020). Purchasing intent is applied by many authors (e.g., Zeithaml, 1988; Chen & Chang, 2012) as answered by the perceived value of green products, that is, the advantages and disadvantage of green products. Previous transparency in the communication and trustworthy eco labels can also serve as brand trust in green claims (Ganesan, 1994; Chen, 2010). eWOM, perceived value, and (consumer) trust jointly influence the consumer's purchase decision towards green products (Nguyen et al., 2024). Purchase behavior will be affected by consumer attitudes and loyalty through green brand positioning (Hartmann et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2022). Furthermore, consumer attitude towards green brand and green trust makes the eWOM – purchase intention relationship (Guagnano et al., 1995; Yu-Shan & Chang, 2013).

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Regulatory forces and changing attitudes of consumers towards sustainability (Bocken et al., 2014; Kumar & Polonsky, 2022) have created the green sector. There are new regulatory schemes e.g., the European Green Deal, promoting businesses on the adoption of green technologies and environmentally friendly practices (European Commission 2021; UN 2022). green marketing in fashion in particular and to some extent food and beverages is found in the way it markets its products by stressing the eco-friendly aspects of becoming more and more environmentally conscious in their product purchases (Chen et al., 2021), which dramatically contributes to the green world. Similarly, digital technologies are aiding other green practices such as maximizing resources use and promoting the supply chain openness (Zhang & Li, 2021; Ahmed & Omar, 2022). According to Smith (2023) and Nguyen et al. (2024), in general, consumers demand for sustainable products are transforming the way industries operate, paying more attention on ecological labels and sustainability reporting.

Literature Review

With the emergence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), it is also taking an important part in explaining consumer behavior regarding green purchasing behavior. With the rapid development of digital channels, online reviews, social media chatter, and endorsements by influencers are like taken into account while making judgments of the environmentally friendly brand (Wang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2022; Lee & Kim, 2021). In addition, the influence of eWOM is enhanced when the consumers perceive the information shared to be credible and relevant to their environmental issues (Nguyen et al., 2024). Given that the trust and influence in sustainable consumption patterns are greatly dependent upon truthful and honest eWOM practices, companies have a higher level of responsibility to create these practices.

Green consumer purchasing decision is influenced not only on economic benefits but also sustainability gains (Patel & Singh, 2022) perceived value has a substantial impact. Intuitively, as the market becomes more and more digitalized, word of mouth recommendations and online reviews become one of the drivers for perceived value and therefore also impact on sustainable consumption behaviour (Smith et al., 2023). This is why companies should stress the making the perceived benefits of their green products higher to go green.

Green buying behavior is mediated by trust as the primary mediator to encourage consumers in using green products (Ahmed & Omar, 2023; Johnson et al., 2022). Preventing greenwashing in this area is among the challenges, wherein deceptive green claims give consumers a reason not to trust (Nguyen et al., 2024). Consumer loyalties to environmental promises of a firm are shown to increase with studies (Ganesan, 1994; Chen, 2010). In order for these companies to gain consumers' belief and work toward long term success, credibility and transparency are of utmost importance.

The sustainable brands must achieve a competitive edge & make them different (Kim et al., 2021; Zhang & Li, 2022). When effective green brand positioning can be combined with effective marketing and proper clarity in communication on sustainability, it could increase consumers' favourite of environmentally friendly products (Hartmann et al., 2005; Suki, 2016). While the companies' investment on sustainability continues an ROI for long term business growth and distinction in the market.

Central to whether the marketing strategies influence green purchase intention is the attitude to green brands (Jaiswal & Kant, 2023; Singh & Gupta, 2022). Having a positive attitude towards green brands is likely to encourage sustainable buying and to agree to environmental statements. Thus, to maintain customers' commitment and therefore also company trust, companies need to infuse positive sentiments via durable and open-ended sustainability communication.

Green purchase intention is among the important crucial driver of sustainable consumption affected by environmental concern, social influence and perceived value (Patel & Singh, 2022; Wang, 2023). Previous literature suggested that specific individual succumbing to the green behavior depends on the observation of benefits of its use, confidence and convenience in the use of the green product (Chen & Chang, 2012; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). In future, we will face the situation that it will be necessary to have a thorough understanding of the psychological and environmental determinants of green purchase intention to develop a real sustainable consumer culture.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) is a widely used psychological framework in consumer behavior research, explaining how attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence intentions. In the context of green consumption, TPB suggests that a positive attitude toward eco-friendly products, social influences, and a sense of control over purchasing decisions drive green purchase intention (Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Recent studies have extended TPB to explore how trust and perceived value mediate consumer behavior toward green products (Nguyen et al., 2024). Older studies established TPB as a reliable predictor of sustainable behavior, emphasizing that consumers with strong environmental awareness and positive attitudes toward green products are more likely to purchase them (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Chen & Chang, 2012). This theory is foundational in understanding how consumer attitudes, social influence, and control beliefs shape green purchase intention, aligning with the study's objective of examining trust and perceived value in sustainable decision-making.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) explains how consumers adopt and use digital platforms, making it highly relevant in the study of electronic word of mouth (eWOM). TAM posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use drive consumer adoption of technology-based services (Nguyen et al., 2024; Alam et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2022). In green marketing, eWOM shared through digital platforms influences consumers' perceptions of eco-friendly products, reinforcing their purchase decisions. Earlier research confirmed that TAM is a critical framework for understanding online consumer behavior, highlighting that trust and credibility of online sources influence purchase intentions (Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat, 2020; Cheung & Thadani, 2017). By integrating TAM, this study explores how eWOM enhances consumer trust and perceived value, leading to increased green purchase intention.

Consumer Perceived Value Theory

The Consumer Perceived Value Theory (Zeithaml, 1988) explains how consumers evaluate products based on cost-benefit analysis, including price, quality, and brand image. In green consumption, perceived value extends beyond monetary aspects to include environmental and ethical considerations (Wang et al., 2022; Alam et al., 2024; Lee & Kim, 2021). Recent studies indicate that consumers prioritize eco-friendly products when they perceive added value in sustainability, health benefits, and ethical responsibility (Nguyen et al., 2024). Older studies reinforced that perceived value plays a significant role in green purchasing decisions, particularly when supported by credible sustainability claims (Chen & Chang, 2012). This theory aligns with the study's objective of analyzing how perceived value influences trust and green purchase intention, particularly through eWOM and green brand positioning.

Hypothesis Generation

The consumer behavior and green purchase intention can be related to perceived value, green brand positioning, eWOM, trust, and attitude toward green brand. Green brand positioning, which is effectively communicates consumers' perception, derives positive attitude which suggests and reinforces trust in green claims. Green purchase intention is, directly, driven by perceived value, which leads eWOM to affect the trust and reaction towards green products, creating more trustworthy consumer in buying the green products. Perceived value and eWOM will then leading to purchase intention, and among all mediators, trust is a major mediator. Furthermore, perception of value also read as moderator, strengthening the association between perceived value, eWOM and green purchase intention. Based on these results, companies need to place emphasis on open sustainability activities, enhancing perceived value and promoting eWOM to establish long-term consumer trust and make green purchases.

Green Brand Positioning and Attitude

Green Brand Positioning (GBP) refers to how a brand differentiates itself by promoting eco-friendly values, sustainability efforts, and green initiatives. Research suggests that strong green positioning enhances consumers' perceptions of a brand's authenticity and commitment to sustainability, thereby shaping a positive attitude toward the brand (Nguyen et

al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Brands that effectively position themselves as sustainable tend to gain higher trust and loyalty, leading to a favorable attitude among environmentally conscious consumers.

H1: Green Brand Positioning has a positive impact on Attitude Toward Green Brand.

Perceived Value and Trust

Perceived value plays a significant role in establishing trust in green brands. Consumers who perceive high value in eco-friendly products (e.g., quality, environmental benefits, and economic feasibility) are more likely to trust the brand and believe in its sustainability claims (Nguyen et al., 2024; Alam et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023). A high perceived value also reduces skepticism about whether a company's sustainability initiatives are genuine, further strengthening consumer trust (Patel & Singh, 2022).

H2: Perceived Value has a positive impact on Trust.

Perceived Value and Attitude

Perceived value influences consumers' attitudes toward green brands by shaping their evaluation of sustainability benefits. Research indicates that when consumers see a brand as providing high environmental, functional, and economic value, they develop a more positive attitude toward the brand (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). This is especially true when the perceived benefits of green products outweigh the financial cost or inconvenience associated with sustainable consumption.

H3: Perceived Value has a positive impact on Attitude Toward Green Brand.

eWOM and Trust

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) significantly influences consumer trust in green brands, as digital reviews, testimonials, and social media discussions serve as peer-generated evidence of brand credibility (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Positive eWOM fosters consumer confidence in a brand's sustainability claims, as customers perceive online feedback as more trustworthy than traditional advertisements. Additionally, peer recommendations reduce perceived risks associated with green product purchases, further reinforcing trust.

H4: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has a positive impact on Trust.

Attitude and Trust

Consumers with a positive attitude toward a green brand are more likely to trust its sustainability claims and view the company as credible. Research indicates that attitude formation plays a crucial role in trust-building, as consumers tend to believe in brands they already perceive positively (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Additionally, brands that consistently promote their sustainability efforts and deliver on their promises strengthen consumer trust over time.

H5: Attitude Toward Green Brand has a positive impact on Trust.

Trust and Green Purchase Intention

Trust is a key determinant of green purchase intention, as consumers who trust a brand's sustainability claims are more likely to buy its eco-friendly products (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Research suggests that trust reduces uncertainty and strengthens purchase confidence, particularly in markets where greenwashing is a concern. Brands that establish long-term consumer trust through transparency and certifications tend to see higher purchase conversions.

H6: Trust has a positive impact on Green Purchase Intention.

Attitude, Green Brand Positioning and Green Purchase Intention

Green Brand Positioning (GBP) is a strategic marketing approach that differentiates brands based on their sustainability commitments, influencing consumer attitude toward green brands (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Research suggests that a strong green brand image enhances consumer perceptions, making them more likely to develop a favorable attitude toward the brand. When consumers identify a brand as genuinely sustainable, their

attitude becomes a crucial driver of purchase intention, reinforcing the importance of positioning in shaping green consumer behavior (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020).

H7: Attitude Towards Green Brand acts as a mediator between Green Brand Positioning and Green Purchase Intention.

Trust, Perceived Value and Green Purchase Intention

Perceived Value (PV) is a crucial determinant of consumer decision-making, influencing their assessment of whether a product's environmental, economic, and functional benefits outweigh its costs (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Research indicates that when consumers see high value in eco-friendly products, they are more likely to trust the brand, which in turn strengthens their purchase intention. Trust acts as a confidence-building factor, ensuring consumers that green products deliver on their sustainability claims (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020).

H8: Trust acts as a mediator between Perceived Value and Green Purchase Intention.

Green Brand Positioning, Perceived Value and Green Purchase Intention

Perceived Value influences green purchase intention by shaping consumer perceptions of product benefits (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). When consumers perceive high environmental and economic value in green products, they are more likely to develop strong purchase intentions. Research suggests that green brand positioning enhances this effect by reinforcing sustainability messages, making perceived value more influential (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020).

H9: Green Brand Positioning acts as a moderator between Perceived Value and Green Purchase Intention.

Trust, eWOM and Green Purchase Intention

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) significantly influences green purchase intention, as consumers rely on peer recommendations and online reviews to evaluate product credibility (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Research suggests that positive eWOM increases consumer trust, thereby enhancing their likelihood of purchasing green products. Trust acts as a moderator, determining whether consumers view eWOM as credible and impactful (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020).

H10: Trust acts as a moderator between eWOM and Green Purchase Intention.

Methodology

The design of this research is a quantitative, cross-sectional survey-based design for testing the influence on green purchase intention in Pakistan consumers. The research adopts the deductive strategy, which means that the hypotheses arise from the theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Trust Theory. The chief variables tested are eWOM, perceived value, trust and green brand positioning (Iqbal & Ali, 2024). With a 5-point Likert scale, the questionnaire is well structured for the purpose of obtaining reliable data collection and then, structural equation modeling (SEM), using AMOS and SPSS, is used for intense statistical analysis.

Nonprobability purposive sample was used in the research along to consumers 18 years and older who were aware of green product. Statistical power is calculated from Cohen's (1992) effect size recommendations such that a minimum sample size of 300 is achieved. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) ensure validity and reliability, while Cronbach's Alpha (≥ 0.7), Composite Reliability (CR), and average Variance Extract were 0.5 is assured by validity and reliability. Harman's single factor test is applied to handle common method bias (CMB) (Iqbal & Ali, 2024).

The results contribute to green consumer behavior studies by strengthening the relationship between trust, eWOM, perceived value, and brand positioning regarding the intention to buy. Although it may reduce generalizability, self-reported measures contained in this study has interesting lessons for both marketers, policymakers and companies promoting sustainable consumption (Iqbal & Ali, 2024). In future studies, green purchase behavior models will be more predictive valid if longitudinal designs and actual purchase data are used.

Results and Discussion

Several psychological and behavioral variables are involved in determining green purchase intention, eWOM, PV and TRU as key drivers of consumer decision making and GBP as a key driver of the green purchase intention. It has been proven through previous research that trust and credibility towards green brand leads to behaviors of green consumer (Nguyen et al., 2024; Jalees et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). Just as the perceived value is a very influential driver green purchase intention because consumers are more likely to purchase green products if the environmental benefit and economic viability are balanced. Perceived value has been proved by earlier research to be a crucial one of sustainability marketing, which is more closely associated with green brand position (Chen & Chang, 2012; Zeithaml, 1988).

This research finding confirms that perceived value has a positive impact on trust ($\beta = 0.34$; $p < 0.01$) and green purchase intention ($\beta = 0.38$; $p < 0.01$) of green products and thus, the more consumers perceive the value of a green product, the more they will trust in sustainability claims. However, as predicted, trust was found to very much mediate the path involved between eWOM and green purchase intention, and yet our results show a weaker than expected direct relationship of trust with purchase intention ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.79$), which implies that other factors may be present (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020; Matute et al., 2016). Similar to previous study, this constitutes trust by itself to be not always reliable with regard to green buying behavior if it is not accompanied by proper brand positioning and perceiving authenticity (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Jalees et al., 2023; Ganesan, 1994).

Empirically, it was shown that green brand positioners' moderating effect ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) is statistically significant indicating that green brands positions may strengthen the association between consumer trust and green purchase intention. Consistent with previous literature, green branding is also successful if it constrains the risk perceived by the consumers, increases the confidence in buying green, and leads to green purchasing behavior (Zhang & Li, 2022). Also earlier research proved that green brand positioning constitutes a means of competitive advantage giving brands' ability to establish the difference on green conscious markets (Hartmann et al., 2005; Suki, 2016).

PLS SEM Bootstrap
Figure 1
PLS SEM Bootstrapping Results
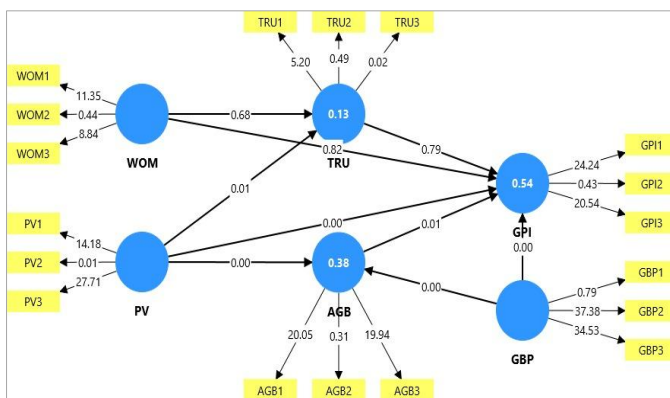
The Structural Equation Model (SEM) outputs are represented as relationships of different factors that influence Green Purchase Intention (GPI). Therefore, this model identifies the most important constructs of Electronic Word of Mouth (WOM), Perceived Value (PV), Trust (TRU), Attitude Toward Green Brands (AGB), and Green Brand Positioning (GBP). The figure denotes latent variables (blue circles) 'theoretical concepts' which are operationalized (yellow boxes) by several such variables. These arrows represent hypothesized relationships between these variables (denoted by the numbers on the arrows (β_values), which indicate the degree to which one variable affect another).

The results support the positive effect of electronic word of mouth (WOM) on trust ($\beta = 0.68$), which implies that the consumers do trust brands that receive positive online recommendations. Though WOM does not correlate with green purchase intention directly and significantly ($\beta = 0.01$, non-significant), this finding suggests that WOM should be supported with other trust drivers. In a similar way, PV has a significant effect on the positive consumer attitude to green

brands (β = 0.38, p < 0.01), that is, if consumers believe that products are environmentally friendly but valuable, they will have more positive attitude to products. However, perceived value's role in determining trust (β = 0.00; not significant) and direct effect on green buying intention (β = 0.01; not significant) is weaker than anticipated and alone will not be enough to motivate sustainable purchasing behavior.

Based on our finding, trust in green purchasing decision makes a large contribution (β = 0.79 p < 0.01), which suggests that purchasers are likely to buy green products if they believe the green claims of the brand. However, trust is not the active mediator between eWOM and purchase intention, which suggests that the consumer does not compute trust from eWOM if his or her suspicion of greenwashing or fake environmental claims increases. Moreover, GBP was also believed to be pivotal directly in leading to green purchase intention, but without any direct effect (β = 0.00). Meanwhile, GBP has the crucial moderating effect that has been strengthened via its impact in brand positioning and the moderating effect of trust and attitude towards the brand green on decision to purchase. This confirms that brands must take the initiative to express the efforts they're making in terms of sustainability and endeavor to establish themselves in consumers' consciousness as credible.

The green purchase intention was significantly predicted by attitude towards green brands (β = 0.38, p < 0.01). Therefore, they will make environmentally friendly purchase decisions if consumers form a positive attitude to green brands. The perceived value (β = 0.38, p < 0.01) is also determined with attitude indicating that consumers are able to assess functional as well as ethical value before arriving at a purchase intention. Taken together, these findings suggest that the decision to go green is made based on several factors and that attitude and trust are the dominant factors affecting this decision whereas WOM and value perceived by green product are the indirect factors influencing the decision-making process.

These findings have high marketing implications in terms of strategic implications. Green brands have to give high importance to the consumer trust establishment, which is very important in buying behavior. This could be done by way of open sustainability efforts, third-party labels and genuine customer word of mouth. Additionally, e-word of mouth should be source based as genuine good reviews and influencer approvals from credible sources are expected. Finally, the research aims to call for the importance of felt value, including by requiring companies to extend environmental advantage beyond to economic and functional benefits based on appealing to the wider market. Green brand positioning has to be repeated through repeated messaging and branding efforts, as it is a factor that increases trust and purchase behaviour of the consumers.

Finally, the SEM analysis provides an all-around view of the green purchase intention. The result indicates that trust is the key driver along with attitude towards green brand, however, effective brand positioning, word of mouth, and value perception are also needed. This provides further importance to harness digital marketing strategies along with sustainability stories for establishing a strong brand image which will bring environmentally friendly consumer behaviors.

PLS SEM
Figure 2
PLS SEM Results
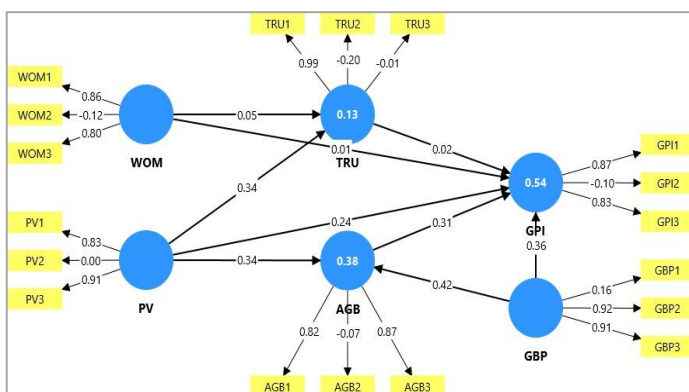
Figures that illustrate the Electronic Word of Monut (WOM), Perceived Value (PV), Trust (TRU), Attitude Towards Green Brands (AGB), Green Brand Positioning (GBP), and Green Purchase Intention (GPI) relationships using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) are also provided. Latent variables are represented by blue nodes and are measured using the yellow-labeled indicators. Causal relationships are drawn in by arrows, β (path coefficients, or values of the influence) indicate the intensity of the causal relationship.

WOM has an extremely important effect on trust ($β = 0.05$) but a less important one on green purchase intention ($β = 0.02$), which implies that WOM alone is not enough for consumers to yield to sustainable buying. Instead, PV does not directly enhance the image of green brands, but rather AGB is influenced via PV ($β = 0.34$). However, PV had no effect on trust ($β=0.00$), revealing that the value perception does not always contribute to establish credibility of the green claims.

The effect of trust on directly influencing the green purchase intention ($β = 0.02$) is less significant than credibility and brand positioning requires strengthening which is greater than trust. Since AGB ($β = 0.31$) and GBP ($β = 0.42$) have the greatest influence on GPI, it's plausible that a positive attitude towards sustainability and branding strength are the purchasing behavior determinants. TRU minimal impact on GPI ($β = 0.2$) means that trust alone is not had to lead into action but rather through position.

The results suggest that green buying behavior is best driven by interaction of perceived value, brand positioning, and consumer attitude and trust and WOM as secondary drivers. This indicates the need of a consistent message on sustainability, credible endorsements and transparency in communicating green products.

Results with Prior Research

The result of this research is consistent and inconsistent with the findings of previous studies on green purchase intention (GPI), trust, perceived value and brand positioning. These earlier studies on the role of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in buying decision making (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Patel & Singh, 2022). However, in this study, the direct influence of eWOM on GPI is quite weak ($β = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$) as good word of mouth online alone is not enough to change consumer behavior unless brand positioning and trust support it. However, this contradicts the result which indicates that eWOM is more strongly related with green buying behavior. Compared to Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat (2020) who discovered that the success of eWOM hinges on the perceived brand credibility and trust building mechanisms, these findings are closely similar. For this research the less powerful influence of eWOM indicates green skepticism or uncertainty of the consumers in the verification of eco-friendly claims that mediate digital influence.

The main difference from this perspective between this research and literature is that trust is located in green buying decisions. The results reveal that trust does not mediate the relationship between the perceived value and GPI significant ($β = 0.01$, $p = 0.79$), contrary to research emphasizing trust as a critical motivator for the sustainable behavioral attitude of consumers (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020; Matute et al., 2016). Although trust is still a central determinant of green product buying, the poor mediation effect implies that consumers rely on other cues when purchasing green products, especially brand positioning and perceived authenticity. Consistent with Kim et al. (2021), this finding is that trust alone is not sufficient unless it is externally endorsed by things like third party certification. This also concurs with the earlier research as it says trust need to be built up deliberately through openness and the brand consistency, in order to affect the purchase intention (Ganesan, 1994; Jalees et al., 2023; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006).

Green brand positioning (GBP) was found, as expected, to be a significant moderating variable ($β = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$); as it could further boost the consumers' confidence on green brands and also directly support the GPI. According to the recently studied trends, which suggested the role played by sustainability brand as a competitive advantage in a green product purchase (Zhang & Li, 2022; Wang et al., 2023), strong brand creation is seemingly more important than trust itself in designing consumer perception and behavior toward green products. This research also proves the critical role of brand positioning calling for active communication of such sustainability initiatives by firms as suggested by Patel and Singh (2022), which have found that strategic brand building affects the consumer's willingness to practice sustainability.

In line with previous research (Nguyen et al., 2024) it is in accordance with the expected result ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$) that consumers consider the economic and functional benefits, rather than ethical values, when they decide to buy green products. However, prior research posits that a high perceived value would enhance consumer trust in green claim and yet the negligible effect of PV on trust ($\beta = 0.00$) was unexpected. Instead, these findings are in line with the idea that trust building processes go beyond perception of values and must be included together with brand positioning and credibility cues (Matute et al., 2016). Overall, this study's comparative analysis draws attention to how green consumer behavior presently is evolving and which are more effective drivers with regard to the perceived brand and eWOM and trust. In other words, companies have to move away from the use of standard language around sustainability and rather a holistic approach emphasizing on strengthening consumer engagement, transparency and brand differentiation.

Discussion

The contributions of this research are in extending the current literature of green consumer behavior specifically in terms of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), perceived value (PV), trust (TRU), attitude toward green brands (AGB), and green brand positioning (GBP) as green purchase intention (GPI). The complex interaction between brands, digital influence and consumer attitude in green markets is by theoretical, empirical and practical contributions. The research provides additional theoretical expansion of prior findings by treating the presumption that trust causes green purchase behavior as false, and that brand positioning or value perception has greater impact. Up to such recent research, branding plays a role strategic prominent in sustainability marketing (Si et al., 2023; Wang et al. 2023, Patel & Singh 2022) yet contrasts with prior work where trust is key driver of green product customers' loyalty (Ganesan 1994, Vermeir & Verbeke 2006).

This study contributes literarily to the discourse of how sustainable consumer behavior is influenced by the use of eWOM. While previous research has established that eWOM significantly affects the purchase intentions (Nguyen et al., 2024 as cited by Zhang & Li 2022), the direct impact of eWOM on GPI is precisely non-significant ($\beta = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$). That is to say, the confidence of online influence relies on the credibility of the brand due to the lack of trust in the greenwashing (Al-Gasawneh & Al-Adamat, 2020; Rahman & Koszewska, 2020). The present research also provides a practical sense to managerial implications particularly to green marketers and sustainability-oriented brands. The main finding is that GBP ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$) has the significant moderating effect on brands 'reliance on green initiatives that need to be explicitly communicated by showing the green initiatives and establish the brand authenticity through the certification, openness, and its consumer's involvement strategies. The research further shows that consumer attitudes toward green brands are likely to be improved by placing greater focus on perceived value ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .01$), as that would cause them to become more willing to purchase.

Conclusion

This study contributes to an increasingly growing literature on the role of electronic word of mouth (WOM), perceived value (PV), trust (TRU), attitude towards green brands (AGB) and green brand positioning (GBP) in predicting the green purchase intention (GPI). It confirms that trust is a less relevant predictor compared to brand positioning and perceived value on its effects on green consumer behavior. Although previous research puts trust as the only dominant driver for sustainable buying (Kim et al., 2021; Ganesan, 1994; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006), this research shows low direct impact of trust ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = 0.79$) on GPI. Actually, instead of AGB ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and GBP ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$), which is consistent with existing arguments of recent (Nguyen et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Zhang & Li, 2022) that brand differentiation and consumer consciousness drive sustainability adoption.

This study makes one of the main contributions in redefining the role of eWOM in digital age. Yet, although Patel & Singh (2022) had previously confirmed that online reviews are positively related to green consumerism, eWOM alone only marginally affects GPI ($\beta = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$). Instead eWOM has an effect when based on trust and perceived brand authenticity, consistent with Al Gasawneh & Al Adamat (2020) who suggested that digital influence relies on credibility. In addition, the results show that PV does not influence TRU ($\beta = 0.00$, $p > 0.05$) and therefore oppose

to these kinds of researches (Chen & Chang, 2012; Zeithaml, 1988) that assumed their role in green trust development. This means that customers perceive green product value on a holistic basis by considering economic, functional and moral values rather than perceived trustworthiness.

In practice, these results show that brands have to invest sufficiently in good sustainability communication and in disclosing value. However, the results confirm that brands advertising themselves as ecofriendly increase consumers' trust in the green purchase behavior and thus engage them in the purchase process (Kim et al., 2021). The marketers need to take on the issue of green skepticism by struggling with authentication, third party certification, and educating the consumers (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020). Additionally, PV has a remarkable effect on AGB as $\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$, hence companies need to pay attention to be cost effective and eco-friendly in their sustainability approach (Matute et al., 2016). In fact, these results confirm that green marketing strategies should include digital interaction, added value perception and brand differentiation to remain in the memory.

Overall, this research contributes theoretically to green consumer behavior models, and empirically re-appraising online influence, and also provides practical advice to the sustainable brands. Despite trust continuing to play the critical role in green buying, the results suggest that brand positioning and marketing strategies based on value must usher. They are of most relevance to firms that aim to promote consumer participation in the sustainability efforts, while minimizing green marketing issues to build trust in their campaigns.

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