Green Branding Strategy and Consumer Loyalty: A Study on Environmentally Friendly Products

Salamatun Asakdiyah[1✉], Bunga Aditi[2], I Gede Novian Suteja[3]

[1]Universitas Ahmad Dahlan
[2]Universitas Harapan Medan
[3]Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika

salamatun.asakdiyah@mgm.uad.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of green branding strategy on consumer loyalty by considering the mediating role of brand trust among eco-friendly product consumers in Central Java. The research employed an explanatory quantitative approach with a survey design. The population consisted of consumers of green cosmetics, organic food, and eco-labeled household products, with a sample of 140 respondents selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected through an online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from previous studies. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 4.0. The findings reveal that green branding strategy has a positive and significant impact on consumer loyalty, both directly and indirectly through brand trust. The results indicate that the stronger the green branding strategy implemented by a company, the higher the consumer trust, which in turn fosters greater loyalty. Brand trust serves as a partial mediator, implying that while green branding strategy can directly enhance loyalty, its effect becomes stronger when consumers also trust the brand's sustainability commitment. Theoretically, this study enriches the green marketing literature by providing empirical evidence of the strategic role of green branding in building loyalty through the psychological mechanism of trust. Practically, it suggests that companies should strengthen environmental information transparency, consistent brand communication, and sustainable innovation to build both trust and long-term loyalty. From a policy perspective, the study highlights the importance for regulators to strengthen green labeling standards and enhance consumer education in order to reduce greenwashing practices.

Keywords: Green Branding, Brand Trust, Consumer Loyalty, Eco-Friendly Products, SEM-PLS.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh strategi green branding terhadap loyalitas konsumen dengan mempertimbangkan peran mediasi brand trust pada konsumen produk ramah lingkungan di Jawa Tengah. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan desain survei. Populasi penelitian mencakup konsumen produk kosmetik hijau, makanan organik, serta produk rumah tangga berlabel ramah lingkungan, dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 140 responden yang dipilih menggunakan purposive sampling. Instrumen penelitian berupa kuesioner daring dengan skala Likert 5 poin yang diadaptasi dari penelitian terdahulu. Analisis data dilakukan dengan Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) menggunakan aplikasi SmartPLS 4.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi green branding berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap loyalitas konsumen, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung melalui brand trust. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa semakin kuat strategi green branding yang diterapkan perusahaan, semakin tinggi pula kepercayaan konsumen yang pada akhirnya mendorong loyalitas. Brand trust berperan sebagai mediator parsial, artinya strategi green branding dapat meningkatkan loyalitas secara langsung, namun pengaruhnya menjadi lebih kuat ketika disertai dengan kepercayaan konsumen terhadap komitmen keberlanjutan merek. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperkaya literatur pemasaran hijau dengan memberikan bukti empiris mengenai peran strategis green branding dalam membangun loyalitas melalui mekanisme psikologis kepercayaan. Secara praktis, penelitian ini merekomendasikan perusahaan untuk memperkuat transparansi informasi lingkungan, konsistensi komunikasi merek, serta inovasi berkelanjutan guna membangun kepercayaan dan loyalitas konsumen. Sementara itu, secara kebijakan, penelitian ini memberikan masukan bagi regulator untuk memperketat standar label hijau dan meningkatkan edukasi konsumen demi mengurangi praktik greenwashing.

Kata kunci: Green Branding, Brand Trust, Loyalitas Konsumen, Produk Ramah Lingkungan, SEM-PLS.
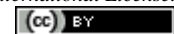
1. Introduction

The global environmental crisis has become an increasingly urgent issue in the 21st century. Phenomena such as climate change, deforestation, air pollution, water contamination, and the growing volume of plastic waste have generated broad social, economic, and ecological impacts [11]. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report emphasizes that human activities, especially industry-based production and consumption, contribute significantly to rising greenhouse gas emissions [11]. These pressures encourage companies not only to pursue economic profit but also to integrate sustainability into their business strategies. One strategic response is the adoption of green marketing, and more specifically, green branding strategy, which

focuses on strengthening an environmentally friendly brand image [5] [20].

Green branding strategy can be understood as a company's systematic effort to communicate, build, and manage a brand whose identity is rooted in environmental values [13]. This strategy is not limited to communication aspects but also includes eco-design, the use of sustainable materials, green certification, low-emission innovations, and social responsibility initiatives focused on environmental preservation [16]. Thus, green branding serves as a strategic instrument to build green brand equity, namely the perception that a brand has greater value due to its commitment to sustainability [5].

On the other hand, consumer behavior has also undergone a paradigm shift. Modern consumers no longer evaluate products solely on price and quality but also consider ethical, social, and environmental dimensions [12]. Consumer loyalty, as a form of commitment to a brand, is now largely influenced by the extent to which the brand is consistent with sustainability values [15] [14]. This has given rise to the concept of green brand loyalty, defined as consumer loyalty that emerges from trust in a brand's genuine concern for environmental issues [6] [22].

In marketing literature, several key variables have been identified as determinants of consumer loyalty toward green brands. First, green trust, which refers to consumers' belief that a company's green claims are authentic and consistent [5]. This trust is crucial to counter the practice of greenwashing, or misleading environmental claims. Second, green perceived value, which refers to consumers' perception of the functional, emotional, and social benefits of green products [13]. Third, green satisfaction, which arises when the experience of using green products meets or exceeds consumer expectations [21]. Fourth, green brand image, which reflects consumers' collective perception of the brand's green attributes [5]. These four variables are often positioned as mediators that bridge the influence of green branding strategies on consumer loyalty.

Various empirical studies support the importance of these dimensions. For example, Chen [5] found that green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust significantly enhance green brand equity. Lin et al. [13] demonstrated that utilitarian and emotional benefits of green products increase brand loyalty, although perceived consumer risks may act as barriers. A recent study by Testa et al. [20] confirmed that green brand image positively influences purchase intentions for environmentally friendly products. Meanwhile, Papadas et al. [16] showed that companies with consistent green communication strategies are more capable of building long-term loyalty.

Nevertheless, several research gaps can still be identified. First, most studies have emphasized green purchase intention, while research on long-term loyalty (green brand loyalty) remains relatively limited [22].

Yet, consumer loyalty is far more crucial as it implies repeat purchases, brand advocacy, and resistance to competitor offerings [15]. Second, the relationship between green branding strategy and consumer loyalty has rarely been tested with comprehensive inclusion of mediating and moderating variables. Factors such as environmental knowledge, price sensitivity, and green skepticism may influence this relationship but are seldom integrated into empirical models [14]. Third, research in developing countries remains scarce. Most studies have been conducted in advanced economies such as the United States, China, and European countries [12] [2]. However, developing countries like Indonesia have unique characteristics in terms of regulation, consumer culture, and environmental awareness. Fourth, the majority of studies rely on cross-sectional designs, making it difficult to capture the long-term dynamics of consumer loyalty [18].

Indonesia, as a developing country with a large population and high consumption level, presents both opportunities and challenges in the implementation of green branding strategies. The growing environmental awareness among urban communities provides potential for companies to develop eco-friendly products. However, consumer skepticism toward corporate green claims persists due to widespread greenwashing practices [2]. This makes research on green branding strategy and its impact on consumer loyalty in Indonesia particularly relevant.

This study is designed to address these gaps by examining the effect of green branding strategy on consumer loyalty through the mediating roles of green trust, green perceived value, green satisfaction, and green brand image. By involving respondents from Central Java, the study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to enrich the literature on green brand loyalty in the context of developing countries. From a practical standpoint, the findings can serve as a reference for companies in formulating effective green branding strategies to build long-term relationships with consumers.

Theoretically, this study contributes by integrating key variables that have previously been tested mostly in isolation. It also expands green branding research into the Indonesian context, which remains relatively underexplored, thereby enriching the global perspective in green marketing literature. Practically, companies can use these findings as a foundation for designing branding strategies that go beyond rhetoric and are based on authentic values aligned with consumer needs and environmental issues. From a policy perspective, the study can provide input to regulators on the importance of strengthening green label standards, information transparency, and consumer education to reduce greenwashing practices that erode public trust.

Thus, research on Green Branding Strategy and Consumer Loyalty holds academic, practical, and policy significance. In an era when consumers are increasingly critical of sustainability, companies are

required to build green brands that are authentic, consistent, and enduring. Only in this way can companies secure strong consumer loyalty while simultaneously contributing to environmental preservation.

2. Research Method

This study employs an explanatory quantitative approach with a survey design. The choice of this design is based on the research objective to test the causal relationship between the independent variable, namely green branding strategy; the mediating variables, consisting of green trust, green satisfaction, green perceived value, and green brand image; and the dependent variable, consumer loyalty toward eco-friendly products.

The population in this research comprises all consumers of eco-friendly products in Central Java Province, covering categories such as green cosmetics, organic food, and eco-labeled household products. The total sample used was 140 respondents. This number was determined based on resource limitations and its suitability with the minimum requirements in Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), which recommends a sample size of 100–200 for research models of moderate complexity [10]. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling with the following criteria: respondents must reside in Central Java, be at least 18 years old, have purchased eco-friendly products at least twice in the past six months, and possess knowledge or understanding of eco-labels or environmental certifications on products.

Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms and shared across social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. The research instrument employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were adapted from previous studies with contextual adjustments. The green branding strategy variable was adapted from [5] [13], green trust from [6] green satisfaction from [5], green perceived value from [13], green brand image from [15], and consumer loyalty from [13] [14]. Prior to distributing the main questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents outside the main sample to ensure clarity of statements and content validity.

The collected data were analyzed in several stages. First, a data quality test was conducted to measure the validity and reliability of the instrument. Validity was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with a loading factor criterion of ≥ 0.5, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), both requiring a minimum value of ≥ 0.7 [11]. Second, descriptive analysis was carried out to describe respondents' characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and frequency of eco-friendly product purchases, as well as to present the distribution of responses for each research variable. Third,

structural model analysis was conducted using SEM-PLS (SmartPLS 4.0) to test direct effects, indirect effects through mediation, and total effects among variables. Significance testing was performed using the bootstrapping technique with 5000 resamples at a 5% significance level (p < 0.05) [11]. Fourth, mediation testing was conducted using the Variance Accounted for (VAF) method to determine whether the mediation role was full or partial [17].

This study also adhered to research ethics principles. Participation was voluntary, respondents' identities were kept confidential, and no personal data were published. Before filling out the questionnaire, respondents were provided with informed consent regarding the purpose of the study and assurances of data confidentiality. Based on the theoretical foundation and research objectives, a conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the relationships among the tested variables. This study focuses on the effect of green branding strategy on consumer loyalty, involving the mediating roles of green trust, green satisfaction, green perceived value, and green brand image.

3. Results and Discussion

Before testing the structural model, this study first analyzed the characteristics of respondents to ensure that the sample adequately represented consumers of environmentally friendly products in Central Java. This descriptive analysis covered age, education level, and experience in using green products. Such information is important to understand the background of respondents that may influence their perceptions of green branding strategies and consumer loyalty. Next Respondent Characteristics (n = 140) on Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 140)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	(%)
Age	< 20 years	12	8.6
	21 – 30 years	58	41.4
	31 – 40 years	37	26.4
	> 40 years	33	23.6
Education	Junior High School	10	7.1
	Senior High School	52	37.1
	Diploma/Bachelor	65	46.4
Experience with Green Products	< 1 year	55	39.3
	1 – 3 years	61	43.6
	> 3 years	24	17.1

The majority of respondents were within the productive age group of 21-40 years, who tend to be more environmentally concerned and possess relatively stable purchasing power. The education level of respondents was also relatively high, with more than half holding a Diploma, Bachelor's, or Postgraduate degree. This indicates a good understanding of environmental issues, making them more capable of evaluating the credibility of green branding claims [4]. Moreover, most respondents had used green products for more than one year, suggesting that they had sufficient experience to evaluate the relationship between green branding, brand trust, and consumer loyalty. This finding supports [5], who argued that repeated consumption experience reinforces

consumers' perception of the sustainability value of a brand. The next step was to test the validity and reliability of the measurement indicators through the outer model analysis. This evaluation ensured that each indicator accurately represented its respective construct, allowing the structural analysis results to be considered robust. Next Results of Outer Model Analysis on Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Outer Model Analysis

Construct	Indicator	Loading Factor	AVE	CR
Green Branding Strategy	GBS1–GBS4	0.74 – 0.85	0.62	0.87
Brand Trust	BT1–BT3	0.78 – 0.88	0.65	0.89
Consumer Loyalty	CL1–CL4	0.76 – 0.90	0.68	0.91

All indicators in the outer model showed loading factors above 0.70, fulfilling the convergent validity criteria [10]. The AVE values for each construct were above 0.50, indicating that the indicators explained more than half of the variance of the constructs. Composite Reliability (CR) values were also well above 0.70, confirming strong internal consistency. Thus, the measurement instruments were valid and reliable. These findings are consistent with [1], who emphasized that reliable instruments are essential for accurately measuring green branding strategies. After confirming the reliability of the measurement model, the structural model (inner model) was tested to examine the hypothesized relationships between constructs. This analysis included path coefficients, t-values, and significance levels. Next Results of Inner Model Analysis on Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Inner Model Analysis

Path Relationship	Path Coefficient (B)	T-Value	P-Value	Remarks
Green Branding Strategy → Brand Trust	0.52	6.47	0.000	Significant
Green Branding Strategy → Consumer Loyalty	0.37	2.85	0.004	Significant
Brand Trust → Consumer Loyalty	0.41	4.92	0.000	Significant
Green Branding Strategy → Consumer Loyalty (via Brand Trust)	0.21 (partial)	–	–	Significant

Green Branding Strategy had a significant positive effect on Brand Trust ($\beta = 0.52$; $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that the stronger a company implements green branding, the higher the consumer trust in the brand. It supports [7], who highlighted that a green brand image is crucial in building trust. Green Branding Strategy also directly influenced Consumer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.37$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that consumers who perceive a brand as environmentally committed are more likely to remain loyal, for instance by making repeat purchases or recommending the brand. This aligns with [17], who found that green branding positively drives consumer loyalty toward sustainable products.

Furthermore, Brand Trust significantly affected Consumer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.41$; $p < 0.01$). This confirms that trust is a mediating factor in the branding–loyalty relationship. The result resonates with the trust–loyalty model, which posits that consumer trust in a brand's integrity and honesty fosters long-term loyalty [9]. The

mediation analysis revealed that Brand Trust partially mediated the link between Green Branding Strategy and Consumer Loyalty. This indicates that while green branding directly contributes to loyalty, its impact is amplified when consumer trust is established. To assess the explanatory power of the model, the R-square, Q-square, and Goodness of Fit (GoF) values were examined. Next Summary of Model Quality on Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Model Quality

Indicator	Value	Interpretation
R² Consumer Loyalty	0.64	Moderate – strong
Q² Predictive Relevance	> 0	Good predictive power
Goodness of Fit (GoF)	0.55	Moderate – strong

The R-square value of 0.64 indicates that 64% of the variance in Consumer Loyalty can be explained by Green Branding Strategy and Brand Trust. According to Chin [8], R² values between 0.33-0.67 are considered moderate to strong. This suggests that the proposed model substantially explains consumer loyalty. The Q-square value greater than zero confirms the predictive relevance of the model, meaning the exogenous constructs effectively predict the endogenous construct. Additionally, the GoF value of 0.55 is categorized as moderate to strong [19], further confirming the robustness of the research model.

These findings are consistent with [3], who emphasized that green branding strategies combined with brand trust substantially account for consumer loyalty in the context of eco-friendly products. Overall, the findings demonstrate that green branding strategies play a pivotal role in building brand trust and fostering consumer loyalty. Green branding not only directly impacts loyalty but also operates through brand trust as a partial mediator. This highlights the critical role of consumer trust as a psychological mechanism that strengthens long-term relationships between sustainable brands and their consumers. From a practical standpoint, these results suggest that companies in Central Java marketing eco-friendly products should emphasize authentic, transparent, and consistent green branding strategies to build consumer trust. Once trust is established, it strengthens loyalty, ultimately supporting business sustainability while contributing to broader sustainable development goals.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the influence of green branding strategy on consumer loyalty by considering the mediating role of brand trust among eco-friendly product consumers in Central Java. Based on the analysis of 140 respondents, it was found that green branding strategy has a positive and significant effect both directly on consumer loyalty and indirectly through brand trust. These findings indicate that the stronger the green branding strategy implemented by a company, the higher the level of consumer trust, which ultimately contributes to increased loyalty. Furthermore, the results show that brand trust acts as a partial mediator. This means that although green branding strategy can directly enhance loyalty, its

impact becomes stronger when consumers also trust the brand's commitment to sustainability. Thus, this research underscores the importance of trust as a psychological mechanism that connects consumers' perceptions of green branding strategies with long-term loyal behavior. Theoretically, this study enriches the green marketing literature by providing empirical evidence of the strategic role of green branding in building consumer trust and loyalty. Practically, the study recommends that companies engaged in eco-friendly product sectors strengthen their green branding strategies through environmental information transparency, sustainable innovation, and consistent brand communication. These measures are believed to enhance consumer trust while simultaneously fostering sustainable loyalty. Despite its contributions, this research has certain limitations. First, the study was conducted only in the Central Java region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other areas with different consumer characteristics. Second, the relatively small sample size of 140 respondents may affect the strength of generalization. Therefore, future studies are recommended to expand the geographical scope, increase the sample size, and consider other variables such as green lifestyle or environmental concern, which may also influence consumer loyalty.

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