

## GREEN LOYALTY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF GREEN TRUST AND THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, ENVIRONMENTAL ADVERTISING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

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### ABSTRACT

By catering to the requirements of environmentally concerned consumers and offering them the brands and products they like, businesses may gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. However, marketers must comprehend how growing degrees of green brand loyalty influence other aspects that explain customers' pro-environmental behavior. With the growing trends in green marketing, the general tendency of modern consumers to perceive greener products as information exhibits, and the lack of validation for such practices, it is evident that they require further investigation as determinants of green brand loyalty. This study intends to operationalize and validate a conceptual model for assessing green loyalty that integrates environmental concern, perceived environmental knowledge, environmental advertising, and the mediator predictor of green trust. A systematic literature review revealed the indicators (variables) for each concept. We employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to test our hypothesis after administering a structured questionnaire to 412 respondents. It was revealed that environmental concern, perceived environmental knowledge, and environmental advertising significantly affect green trust, increasing brand loyalty for green products. The current research supports the notion that strong positive connections exist between the selected constructs.

**Keywords:** Environmental concern, Perceived Environmental knowledge, Environmental advertising, Green trust, Green loyalty.

### Introduction

In the past few years, environmental preservation and sustainability have gained popularity. Regard for the environment necessitates vigilance and response to challenges to the natural world (Schuitema, 2013). The notion that environmental concern is an all-encompassing approach to resolving problems in the natural environment was reinforced by Hosta and Zabkar (2021). In responding to challenges, businesses resorted to advertising to persuade customers, the government, and others to adopt environmentally friendly practices (Kinneer & Taylor, 1973; Peattie, 1995). Another group of researchers analyzed the environmental friendliness of advertisements by quantifying the amount of green messaging provided. In terms of their dedication to environmental sustainability, Banerjee. (1995) has categorized environmental advertisements as "shallow", "moderate", or "deep". Most research indicated that advertising claims were predominantly shallow or somewhat green, indicating a lack of depth, breadth, and believability. In contrast, advertising with strong environmental claims was primarily distinguished by its high message delivery efficacy (Manrai 1997).

According to studies conducted by Polonsky (2012), customers informed about environmental issues are also more likely to take action. Trust is associated with a stronger inclination towards green products (Lee 2011). Gaining consumers' trust is vital for advertisers seeking to develop and strengthen partnerships in which neither party can compromise on green claims. Schiffman (2011) describes brand loyalty as the frequency people purchase a certain brand. To identify one seller's goods and services from those of others, a brand may consist of a name, symbol, or design that has been promoted in this manner (Alexander, R. S., 1960). According to Ambler (1992), a customer-centric definition of brand loyalty is a collection of consumer expectations or characteristics of brand familiarity.

Instead, the role of green brand loyalty concerning predictors of environmental concern, environmental advertising, and perceived environmental awareness by the mediators of green trust is still up in the air, and this is where we offer new insights. This study's primary objective is to contribute to and improve the ongoing environmental conversation by shedding light on the function of green trust as a moderator of environmental concern, environmental advertising, perceived environmental knowledge, and green loyalty.

### Literature Review and hypothesis development

#### Environmental Concern

Environmental concern was recognised as a critical predictor of pro-environmental behavior, green motivation, and sustainable consumer behavior by Felix (2018). Customers who have become conscious of environmental issues and are contemplating shifting to green services may be intrigued by the existence of green trust in a company's concerns. As Gil (2018), demonstrated, a customer's disposition may have a substantial bearing on

their propensity to purchase. Environmental awareness and concern may thus significantly impact the demand for green products and services. Chang (2019) describes brand loyalty in green marketing as an environmental concern as one of the main criteria that would be included in influencing customer loyalty to eco-friendly brands. The proposed hypothesis is;

H<sub>1</sub>: Environmental concern has a positive influence on customer's green trust

H<sub>2</sub>: Environmental concern positively influences customer's green loyalty

### Environmental Advertising

Kumar (2017), eco-friendly advertising targets to promote awareness of environmental concerns, credibility in a company's environmental claims, and sales. Mathur (2000), suggested that customers are more receptive to environmentally friendly products due to the increased credibility of environmental messaging in advertising. For an environmental advertisement to effectively affect consumers' perceptions, it must be reliable (Yoon 2016). Hence, trust is seen as a vital quality in intimate partnerships. Consumers are more inclined to commit to a relationship with a trustworthy organization, yet deceitful practices intended to acquire customers' trust may harm a company's image and drive customers away (Ulusoy 2016). Also, customers are more inclined to act on the contents of advertisements if they consider the information offered genuine and trustworthy (Ebrahim, 2019; Shieh, 2018). In light of the above debate, the following idea may thus be proposed:

H<sub>3</sub>: Environmental advertising positively influences customer's green trust

### Environmental Knowledge

The ability to recognise symbols, features, and behaviors linked with the environment and the overall ecosystem is what environmental knowledge assesses, according to Laroche (2001). Environmental or green knowledge refers to an individual's awareness of the environmental norms, ideas, and practices associated with green commodities (Ahmad 2015). Customers' environmental literacy increases confidence in eco-friendly products. There is some evidence that environmental information functions as a moderator in models that explain environmentally amicable behavior, but there have been few attempts to examine the moderating influence of environmental knowledge on the links between trust and loyalty in a green market (Hur, 2013; Martnez, 2015). Consequently, the following hypothesis might be suggested in light of the preceding discussion:

H<sub>4</sub>. Green trust is influenced favorably by Perceived environmental knowledge

H<sub>5</sub>. Green customer loyalty is positively correlated with Perceived environmental knowledge

### Green Trust

The capacity of a product or service to reliably and credibly satisfy customers' perceptions and guarantee environmental preservation is what Chen (2012) calls "green trust." The existence of sustainability as a result of trust strengthens the green trust that connects customers to nature (Alamsyah, 2020). Market demand for environmentally friendly goods and services benefits greatly from consumers' confidence. When consumers have faith in a company because of its environmental practices, such practices can be relied on consistently. Customer loyalty is significantly boosted by establishing trust with them (Iglesias, 2010; Papista, 2018). So, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H<sub>6</sub>. Green loyalty is facilitated through green trust.

### Green Loyalty

"Green loyalty" is "the degree of repurchase intentions generated by a strong environmental attitude and dedication to a company's sustainability" (Chen, 2013). Making eco-friendly products more practical is one way for companies to attract more buyers and increase sales. Brand loyalty is the degree to which customers consistently buy products from the same brand over time (He, 2012; De Villiers, 2015). "Green brand trust" refers to the degree to which consumers have confidence in a firm to deliver on its commitments to environmental responsibility (Chaudhuri 2001). Customers' attitudes and actions are profoundly affected by their level of trust in a company's brand, and more committed customer connections lead to greater brand loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Metzler, 2008).

### Research Methodology

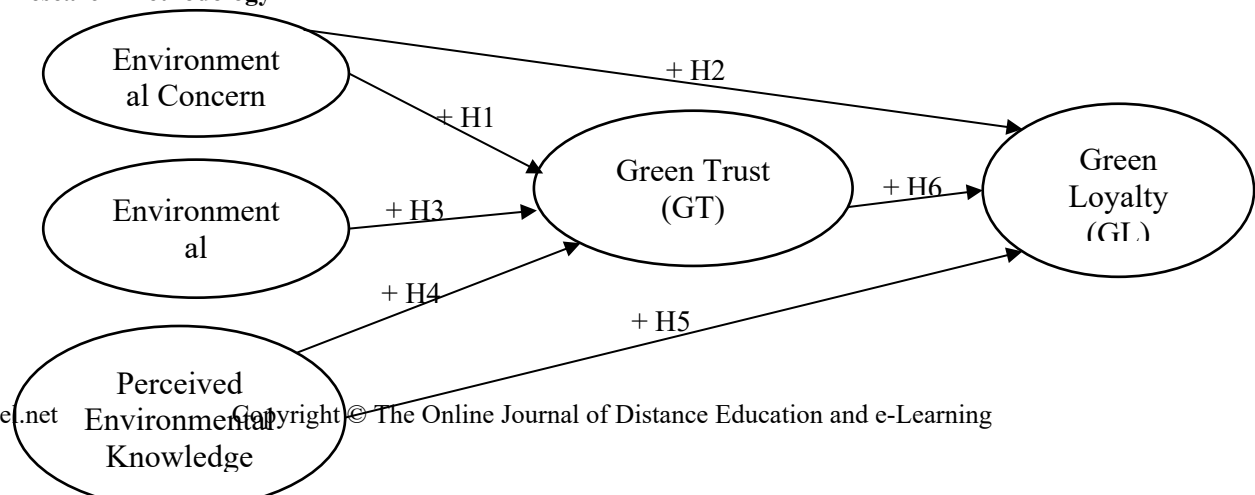


Fig 1: Proposed research framework

**Data Collection**

A structured questionnaire was meticulously created to carry out the quantitative analysis. To reduce the likelihood of mistakes and inconsistencies occurring, a pilot study consisting of a test was carried out with 45 participants. Previous research in environmental disciplines (Han & Kim, 2010) demonstrated that those with advanced education have a clear understanding of the topic and are more likely to submit accurate data than those with a lower level of education. Hence, data was obtained from consumers with degrees, including high school, diploma, graduates, post-graduates, and doctorates.

**Sample Size**

The sample size was determined following Hair (2010), which proposed that there is a necessity of 15 to 20 observations per item. Four criteria and twenty one items are included in the survey, requiring at least 315 responses. Approximately 600 questionnaires were sent out to respondents, and after removing non-responses and duplicates, 412 valid responses were obtained. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the sample using descriptive statistics. Most respondents were male, married, educated, had a four- or five-member family, and earned between 18,000 and 30,000 rupees a month.

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender	Male	241	57.5	1.42	0.495
	Female	171	42.5		
Age group	Less than 23 years	76	18.4	2.68	1.190
	23 to 30 years	113	27.4		
	31 to 45 years	129	31.3		
	46 to 60 years	56	13.6		
	More than 60 years	38	9.2		
Education	High School	19	4.6	3.36	0.971
	Diploma	44	10.7		
	Graduate	163	39.6		
	Post-graduate	141	34.2		
	Doctorate	45	10.9		
Occupation	Student	90	21.8	2.09	0.800
	Salaried	221	53.8		
	Self-employed	76	18.4		
	House-wife	25	6.1		
Marital status	Single	150	63.6	1.36	0.482
	Married	262	36.4		
Family size	1 person	59	14.3	2.66	0.963
	2-3 persons	109	26.5		

Monthly Income	4-5 persons	159	38.6		
	More than 5 persons	85	20.6		
	Less than Rs. 18000	59	14.3	2.73	1.174
	Rs. 18000 to Rs. 30000	137	33.3		
	Rs. 30001 to Rs. 45000	110	26.7		
	Rs. 45001 to Rs. 60000	67	16.3		
	More than Rs. 60000	39	9.5		

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

**Measures**

Prior research was utilized to evaluate and validate the study's instruments. Environmental concern was gauged using a four-item scale based on the research work conducted by Lee (2008) and Lu Zhang (2018). Five items from the research work of Sultana, N., Amin, S., & Islam, A. (2022) were used to develop a perceived environmental knowledge construct. The study of Rahbar, E., & Wahid, N. A. (2011) led to the adoption of a three-item scale to quantify environmental advertising. Five items from Chen Y. S.'s (2010) work were used to design a green trust construct. This study utilized a validated four-item construct of green loyalty from the work of Oliver (1999), Chen (1998), and Y. S. Liu (2001). (2013).

**Data Analysis**

“SPSS 26” and “AMOS 21” were used to analyze the proposed study framework. The SEM analysis was carried out using a method that involved two separate steps. Initially, CFA was performed to assess the measuring instrument's validity and dependability. The second stage of SEM included evaluating the structural model to identify the relationship between latent constructs.

**Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

EFA extracts and rotates all independent and dependent variables using PCA and Varimax. Before extracting the factors, KMO measure (0.882) of sampling adequacy (Table 2) showed that the sample was factorable, above the suggested value of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974) and that the variables were correlated enough to enable EFA.

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
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Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.925
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7103.058
	Df	210
	Sig.	.000

Table 2: Sampling Adequacy

In the Rotated Component Matrix, all items (except PEK1) had loadings on the factors above 0.4, with no items loading on the same factor twice (Table 3). Table 4 shows that 80.16% of the total variance extracted was

accounted for by factors with the extraction sum of squared loadings and the rotational sum of squared loadings and Eigenvalues larger than "1" from both independent and dependent variables (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).

<b>Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
EC1			.823		
EC2			.803		
EC3			.793		
EC4			.828		
<b>PEK1<sup>a</sup></b>		-			
PEK2		.840			
PEK3		.818			
PEK4		.834			
PEK5		.799			
EA1					.846
EA2					.829
EA3					.787
GT1	.867				
GT2	.873				
GT3	.849				
GT4	.884				
GT5	.889				
GL1				.829	
GL2				.811	
GL3				.844	
GL4				.798	

Table 3: Rotated component matrix  
Rotation converged in 5 iterations; Extraction using PCA; Varimax Rotation Method  
<sup>a</sup> Deleted due to cross loading across factors (Kline, 2015)

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.258	44.084	44.084	9.258	44.084	44.084	4.141	19.718	19.718
2	2.833	13.492	57.576	2.833	13.492	57.576	3.934	18.732	38.450
3	1.829	8.711	66.287	1.829	8.711	66.287	3.188	15.181	53.632
4	1.665	7.931	74.218	1.665	7.931	74.218	3.145	14.974	68.606
5	1.247	5.940	80.157	1.247	5.940	80.157	2.426	11.552	80.157

Table 4: Total Variance Explained  
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Validity of Measurement Model**

All five constructs were tested using CFA in AMOS to ensure their validity. The appropriateness of the measurement was assessed by looking at the consistency of the constructs, convergent validity, and divergent

validity. Maximum Likelihood was employed to verify the measurement model (Byrne, 2001). All of the goodness-of-fit indices (GFI, NFI, IFI, TFI, and CFI) should be above 0.90, and the RMSEA should be less than 0.08, according to Hair (2010). All the fit indicators were above the acceptable limit ( $\chi^2/df = 1.323$ ; RMSEA = 0.028; TLI = 0.991; GFI = 0.957; NFI = 0.973; CFI = 0.993; IFI = 0.993). All five constructs were found to be unidimensional, with a CFI = 0.993 and an SRMR = 0.023. (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

**Reliability And Validity Of The Constructs**

Cronbach alpha values were calculated for all five constructs to determine scale validity. The five construct Cronbach  $\alpha$  values varied from 0.884 to 0.944, over the accepted limit of 0.70. (Hair 2010). Evidence of convergent validity includes a high factor loading, high CR, and a high average variance retrieved. All loadings on the factors in Table 5 are more than 0.5. All AVE values and the composite reliability value were higher than 0.6, indicating high levels of convergent validity (Hair 2010). Discriminant validity is established by contrasting the squared correlation between constructs with the square root of the AVE for each concept (see Table 6). Validity, reliability, and capacity to discriminate were all met or exceeded for all five constructs.

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Composite reliability	AVE	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Environmental Concern	EC1	0.787	0.861	0.609	0.919
	EC2	0.767			
	EC3	0.832			
	EC4	0.732			
Perceived Environmental Knowledge	PEK2	0.774	0.854	0.595	0.920
	PEK3	0.734			
	PEK4	0.842			
	PEK5	0.729			
Environmental Advertising	EA1	0.790	0.808	0.585	0.884
	EA2	0.803			
	EA3	0.697			
Green Trust	GT1	0.846	0.931	0.728	0.944
	GT2	0.848			
	GT3	0.825			
	GT4	0.871			
	GT5	0.876			
Green Loyalty	GL1	0.671	0.835	0.561	0.904
	GL2	0.712			
	GL3	0.746			
	GL4	0.855			

Table 5: Standardized FL, CR, AVE, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$ .

	GL	GT	PEK	EC	EA
GL	<b>0.749</b>				
GT	0.298	<b>0.853</b>			
PEK	0.454	0.327	<b>0.771</b>		
EC	0.436	0.334	0.418	<b>0.780</b>	
EA	0.493	0.282	0.436	0.333	<b>0.765</b>

Table 6: Discriminant validity Note: Values across the diagonals show square root of AVE

**Structural Model**

The structural model was estimated using the goodness of fit indices after the measurement model was evaluated. All of the fit statistics were within the acceptable range ( $\chi^2/df = 1.269$ ; RMSEA = 0.018; IFI = 0.997; GFI = 0.996; NLI = 0.998; TLI = 0.988; CFI = 0.997), as suggested by Hair (2010). The path diagram was used to envisage the impact of independent factors on dependent variables using standardized regression weights and P-values. Adjusted R2 indicates the amount to which changes in the model's independent (predictor) variables explain a dependent variable's variation. The proposed model has three predictor variables (EC, PEK and EA) and one mediating variable (GT). Overall, the model's variables accounted for 27.2% of the variation in GBL.

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	p value	Result
H1	EC ----> GT	0.135	0.013*	Hypothesis Supported
H2	EC ----> GL	0.274	***	Hypothesis Supported
H3	EA ----> GT	0.118	0.031*	Hypothesis Supported
H4	PEK ----> GT	0.211	***	Hypothesis Supported
H5	PEK ----> GL	0.234	***	Hypothesis Supported
H6	GT ----> GL	0.182	***	Hypothesis Supported

Table 7: Standardized Regression weights and p-values

Note: \*\*\* Significant at the 0.01 level \* Significant at the 0.05 level.

### Results

The proposed model in the study analyzed the direct and indirect effects of EC, EA, and PEK on GL. The effects were examined indirectly by the mediating role of GT. All of the hypotheses tested were supported by the path analysis, as shown in Table 7 by the standardized coefficient estimates ( $\beta$ ) and P-values.

Based on the data, it's clear that green trust is a key mediator between environmental concern, environmental advertising, and environmental knowledge as it relates to customer loyalty. It is also indicated that GT significantly mediates the effect of EC, EA, PEK knowledge on GL: EC ---> GT ( $\beta = 0.135$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), EA ---> GT ( $\beta = 0.118$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and PEK ---> GT ( $\beta = 0.211$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Green trust has a favorable relationship with green loyalty: GT ---> GL ( $\beta = 0.182$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It was also shown that environmental concern and perceived environmental knowledge significantly affect green loyalty: EC ---> GL ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and PEK ---> GL ( $\beta = 0.234$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). All of the proposed paths in the model were shown to be significant and positive.

### Discussion and Implications

The study's results showed that in addition to acting as a predictor of customers' green loyalty, green trust also plays a pivotal role as a mediator between the factors. The study also confirms that environmental concern is a strong positive indicator of green loyalty. The primary insight from this study is that GT mediated the positive and significant effect of EC, EA, and PEK on the green brand/product loyalty. It has been suggested by Mohd Suki, N. (2016) that the most effective way to get people to buy green products is to educate them about the green brands that are already available to them. Hence, in today's competitive business climate, companies must show their customers they are dedicated to creating a sustainable business culture. The present study's findings indicate that environmental advertising, concern, knowledge, and trust increase green product loyalty. Studies on Green Trust show that they drive consumer preference for environmentally friendly goods. Promoting a product or service amongst educated consumers is a great way to broaden the audience for that product or service. Building and keeping trust is essential to the growth and survival of any company. Marketers can increase consumer trust in their products and the green lifestyle they promote by committing to a more extensive result of advertising claims made for eco-friendly goods. The present study determines the association between environmental concern and green trust. Consumers who care the most about the environment have been found to respond certainly when offered the option to buy environmentally friendly goods. As a result, businesses can modify their strategy to reward consumers concerned about the environment. As presented by the author, the findings can be used by those entrusted with promoting eco-friendly products to win over customers, the paper implies. The marketer should communicate to potential customers to find out how informed they are about environmental problems and which green product brands they have used.

### Conclusion

The significance of green trust and environmental related knowledge in fostering green loyalty is made apparent to marketers. The study's results can help marketers better understand consumers' knowledge and trust in eco-friendly products. Despite the study's limitations, they may be addressed in future studies. As the study's primary target region was consumers from Tamil Nadu, we cannot apply the findings to the Indian context. In addition, the research adopted a cross-sectional research methodology to show interrelationship between variables. However, it is limited in its ability to prove causation over a larger time frame. Hence, further research to identify green loyalty and verify the reliability of the data is suggested, and a longitudinal research approach is recommended. In conclusion, the proposed model does not consider green purchase behavior, limiting the research to green loyalty. To get around these constraints, future researchers in the Indian market might consider adopting a longitudinal technique across the country.

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