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Exploring Green Trust in Sustainable Consumption: A Literature Review on Green Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the cosmetics industry has come under scrutiny for its environmental impact, particularly its reliance on single-use plastic packaging. As consumers become more engaging in environmentally conscious attitudes have begun shaping green consumption patterns. This narrative literature review explores the role of environmental concern, green packaging, and social media exposure in shaping green purchase intention among consumers, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of green trust. Synthesizing studies from 2019-2024 selected academic journals, the review finds that green trust functions as a psychological mechanism that connects consumers' awareness and values to actual purchasing behavior. Packaging and social media exposure act as visible cues and communicative tools, while environmental concern forms the cognitive-emotional base. The findings suggest that in the context of the cosmetics industry, building and maintaining green trust through credible sustainability efforts is central to influence purchase intentions.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior; Green Consumption Intention; Environmental Concern; Green Packaging; Social Media Exposure; Green Trust.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainability has increasingly permeated global discourse in the recent decades, reflecting urgent environmental, economic, and social challenges. The integration of sustainability into business practices has evolved from a peripheral concern to a core strategy, particularly through the lens of the triple bottom line. This framework emphasizes economic viability, environmental responsibility, and social equity (Grădinaru et al., 2022). As sustainability gains prominence in both policy and practice, consumption patterns are undergoing significant change, especially in sectors with high levels of waste and resource use, such as the cosmetics industry.

The widespread issue of plastic waste illustrates the growing tension between consumer culture and ecological sustainability. According to the United Nations Environment Program (2023), over 2 billion tons of plastic waste are generated globally each year. Short-lived plastics, including packaging for cosmetics and consumer products, make up a large portion of this figure. The cosmetics industry, with its consistent global growth and increasing influence, plays a significant role in this environmental challenge. In 2022, the industry generated more than \$430 billion in revenue and continues to expand due to rising consumer demand, particularly in emerging markets across the globe. However, this growth brings environmental costs. The global beauty industry produces an estimated 120 billion units of packaging each year, with approximately 95 percent ending up as waste rather than being recycled (The Upcycled Beauty Company, 2024). While packaging often prioritizes product protection and visual appeal, environmental considerations are frequently overlooked.

In response to these issues, green consumer behavior has gained importance. Increasingly, consumers seek products that reflect their values, particularly those related to environmental protection. Green consumers tend to favor products with sustainable packaging, ethical sourcing, and brand transparency (Gomes et al., 2023; Lopes et al., 2024). Social media also plays a central role in shaping modern consumer behavior. Digital platforms are a primary source of information and influence. Social media shapes awareness, preferences, and buying decisions, especially regarding sustainability issues (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020). Through regular exposure to digital content, consumers engage with brands and environmental messaging in a way that deeply affects their attitudes and intentions.

This narrative literature review explores the factors influencing green purchase intention in the cosmetics sector. It reviews four key drivers, environmental concern, green packaging, social media exposure, and green trust, therefore discusses how these factors influence sustainable consumption behavior. The paper also highlights responses from industry leaders such as L'Oréal and Lush, which demonstrate how sustainability can be integrated into business practices through innovation and commitment to circular principles. This review focuses on three key variables influencing green purchase intention: environmental concern, green packaging, and social media exposure. Central to this discussion is the mediating role of green trust, the degree to which consumers believe in the environmental claims made by brands. The objective is to synthesize current research to explore how these factors interact and shape green purchasing behavior within the cosmetics industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, refers to development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The SDGs, a set of 17 global objectives adopted by the United Nations, provide a strategic framework addressing issues such as poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation. Although not legally binding, the SDGs require global cooperation, innovation, and a long-term commitment to equity and sustainability. Of particular relevance is SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, which includes eleven targets spanning the entire supply chain. It emphasizes the need for sustainable practices in production and consumption (UN, n.d.). Agrawal et al. (2022) highlight the critical role of businesses in achieving these goals. Transparent and ethical communication with stakeholders fosters the collaborative effort required for long-term environmental and social well-being (Salvioni & Almici, 2020).

Triple Bottom Line

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, introduced by Elkington (1994), urges companies to go beyond financial performance by integrating social and environmental considerations into their operations. People, Planet, and Profit serves as a holistic measure of a company’s sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Jeurissen, 2000). Studies show that adopting the TBL framework can yield both social value and financial gain. Štreimikienė and Ahmed (2021) found that firms integrating TBL principles benefit from improved brand image and competitiveness. Gölgeci et al. (2019) noted that applying TBL in supply chains can enhance performance through more sustainable practices. Similarly, Kaur et al. (2024) showed that in the fashion industry, consumer behavior has a significant influence on companies adopting sustainable models, illustrating how market pressure can drive green innovation.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), explains how intentions shape behavior through three constructs: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. TPB is widely used in sustainable consumer research. Liu et al. (2020) showed that attitudes and perceived behavioral control significantly influence green purchase intentions, while Nguyen et al. (2021) expanded TPB by adding environmental values and social influences. Still, the model has limitations, as noted by Guan et al. (2024) and Meet et al. (2024), since it overlooks ethical and emotional dimensions. In green purchasing, attitude reflects evaluations of eco-friendly products, subjective norms represent social pressure, and perceived behavioral control relates to affordability, access, and effort (Zhuang et al., 2021). These constructs remain central but are increasingly supplemented with context-specific variables in sustainability research.

Green Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that a consumer will choose a product in the future (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; as cited in Worthington, 2021). In the context of sustainability, green purchase intention describes the consumer’s motivation to buy environmentally friendly products. Majeed et al. (2022) emphasize that it is a crucial predictor of actual purchasing behavior in green markets. The TPB model supports the view that purchase decisions are driven by intention. Kaur et al. (2022) show that marketing mix strategies, including price, packaging,

and promotion, can significantly shape this intention. Nielsen et al. (2020) further note that green purchase behavior is influenced by a complex mix of individual habits, societal expectations, and media exposure.

Green Trust

Trust is a fundamental aspect of consumer-brand relationships and plays a particularly important role in the context of green marketing. Liang et al. (2022) define trust as the confidence consumers place in a product or company's reliability. Cheng et al. (2023) emphasize that trust reduces perceived risk and increases consumer willingness to support a brand. In green consumption, trust is closely tied to beliefs about environmental integrity and performance (Hossain et al., 2022). Building green trust involves consistent messaging and verifiable environmental performance. Guan et al. (2024) suggest that when businesses deliver on eco-friendly promises, consumers are more likely to develop lasting trust. Amin and Tarun (2021) propose several indicators of green trust, including the reliability of environmental claims and the brand's commitment to sustainable values.

Environmental Concern

Environmental concern reflects the extent to which individuals are aware of and emotionally invested in addressing environmental issues. Dhir et al. (2021) describe it as a form of altruism, where consumers act with the welfare of the planet in mind. Lavuri et al. (2023) identify awareness, ability, and involvement as key aspects of environmental concern. As awareness grows, so does the likelihood of eco-conscious decision-making (Rusyani et al., 2021). Zameer and Yasmeen (2022) list specific indicators of environmental concern, such as worry about the planet's condition, a belief in human responsibility for environmental harm, and a commitment to living in harmony with nature. These attitudes often serve as precursors to green consumption behavior and are strongly associated with green trust and purchase intention.

Green Packaging

Green packaging refers to the use of environmentally responsible materials and design in product packaging. Herbes et al. (2020) describe it as packaging made from renewable resources that is recyclable, biodegradable, or reusable. Patel et al. (2024) add that packaging also functions as a communication tool, informing consumers about environmental credentials through design, size, and labeling. Research suggests that consumers are responsive to visual and textual cues that indicate environmental sustainability. Majeed et al. (2022) found that packaging significantly influences consumers' preference for eco-friendly products. Pan et al. (2021) identify specific elements of green packaging, such as environmental labels and recyclability, that make green products more recognizable and appealing.

Social Media Exposure

Social media exposure plays an increasingly influential role in shaping consumer attitudes, especially among younger demographics. It refers to the degree to which individuals engage with social media content, particularly content related to sustainability (Yanyan et al., 2023). According to Sun and Xing (2022), users actively curate content flows to meet informational needs, thereby influencing what sustainability messages they absorb. Although media feeds can sometimes reinforce existing beliefs, they also offer opportunities for discovery and behavioral change (Merten, 2021). Pop et al. (2020) and Yanyan et al. (2023) emphasize that frequent

engagement with social media, especially when content is perceived as trustworthy, increases awareness and positively affects green purchase intention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Prior empirical studies on green purchase intention were reviewed to establish a theoretical foundation. Literature highlights the roles of environmental concern, green packaging, and social media exposure in shaping consumer behavior, with green trust emerging as a key mediator. Synthesizing these findings offers insights into consistencies and variations, supporting the present research framework. Table 1 summarizes the reviewed literature, including the main variables and key findings.

Table 1. Reviewed Literature

No	Author (Year)	Variable	Finding
1	Yanyan et al. (2023)	Dependent Variable: Green Consumption Intention Independent Variable: Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control, Environment Concern, Social Media Exposure, Habit Mediating Variable: Attitude	This study found that green consumption intention is positively impacted by social media exposure and environmental concern. Green consumption intention is indirectly impacted by environmental concern and social media exposure through attitude.
2	Dhir et al. (2021)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Environmental Knowledge, Environmental Concern, Green Trust, Environmental Attitude, Labeling Desire, Labeling Satisfaction Mediating Variable: Socio-demographic	This study found that green trust is positive significant to green purchase intention, but environmental concern is insignificant towards green purchase intention.
3	Zameer & Yasmeen (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intentions Independent Variable: Environmental Awareness, Green Innovations, Environmental Concerns, Green Product Knowledge Mediating Variable: Environmental Concerns, Green Product Knowledge	This study found that environmental concerns have a positive and significant impact to green purchase intentions. Environmental concerns also partially mediate the relationship among environmental concerns and green purchase intentions.
4	Rusyani et al. (2021)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Environmental Knowledge, Environmental Concern, Green Attitude, Perceived Behavioral, Green Purchasing Behavior	This study found that environmental concern had a good relationship with green purchase intention.
5	Kingston & Paulraj (2023)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention	This study found that Environmental Concern have a

No	Author (Year)	Variable	Finding
		Independent Variable: Environmental Concern, Health Cautiousness, Perceived Green Values	positive and significant impacts on Green Purchase Intention.
6	Guan et al. (2024)	Mediating Variable: Green Attitude Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Promotion Type (Price and Promotion), Purchase Type (Product and Packaging)	This study found that green trust has positive and significant impact on green purchase intention and mediates the relationship of promotion (Price & Promotion) type and purchase (Product and Packaging) type with green purchase intention.
7	Zhuang et al. (2021)	Mediating Variable: Green Trust Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Perceived Value, Green Perceived Quality, Green Perceived Risk, Perceived Behavioral Control, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Environmental Knowledge, Environmental Concern, Green Trust, Positive Attitude, Subjective Norm, Collectivism	This study found that green trust has a positive and significant impact on green purchase intention.
8	Wasaya et al. (2021)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Trust, Green Perceived Risk, Green Perceived Quality, Mediating Variable: Environmental Awareness	This study found that Green Trust positively impacts Green Purchase Intention.
9	Teguh & Ignatia, (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Advertising, Green Products Mediating Variable: Green Trust	This study found that green trust has a positive and significant influence on green purchase intention and mediates the relationship between green purchase intention
10	Lavuri et al., (2023)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Ads, Green Brand Image, LOHAS Consumption Tendency, Perceived Consumer, Effectiveness Mediating Variable: Green Trust, Green Attitude	This study found that green trust has a positive and significant impact on green purchase intention. Green trust also mediates the relationship between the independent variables with green purchase intention.
11	de Sio et al. (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Advertising Skepticism, Perceived Environmental	This study found that Green Trust have positive and significant influence on Green Purchase Intention. Green trust mediates the relationship

No	Author (Year)	Variable	Finding
		Knowledge Mediating Variable: Green Trust	between green advertising and perceived environmental knowledge with green purchase intention.
12	Meet et al. (2024)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Price, Green Advertisement, Green Packaging, Green Washing, Socio Demographic Variables	This study found that green packaging has a positive and significant effects on green purchase intentions.
13	Pan et al. (2021)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Packaging, Perceived Value, Perceived Risk, Green Satisfaction	This study found that green packaging positively and significantly affects consumers' green purchase intention.
14	Majeed et al. (2022)	Dependent variable: green purchase intention Independent variable: eco- labelling, green packaging and branding, green products pricing Mediating variable: green brand image, environmental beliefs	This study found that green packaging and branding with green purchase intention were significant.
15	Pop et al. (2020)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Social Media, Altruistic Motives, Egoistic Motives, Attitude, Subjective Norms	This study found social media have positive and significant impact to green purchase intention.
16	Nekmahmud et al. (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Attitude, Green Thinking, Green Product Knowledge, Social Media Marketing, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behavioral Control Mediating Variable: Green Product Knowledge, Social Media Usage	This study found that social media marketing and social media usage seem to have a positive and significant relationship with green purchase intention.
17	Sun & Xing (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Social Media Information Sharing, Subjective Norms, Green Perceived Value, Occupation	This study found that social media information sharing significantly impacts green purchase intention.
18	Kusnawati & Tiarawati (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Green Perceived Risk, Green Packaging	This study found that green packaging has a positive and significant effect towards green purchase intention.
19	Fadhilla & Astuti (2022)	Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention	This study found that green packaging has a positive and

No	Author (Year)	Variable	Finding
20	Ling et al. (2024)	Independent Variable: Green Packaging, Eco-label Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention Independent Variable: Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, Environmental Knowledge, Social Media Influence Dependent Variable: Green Purchase Intention	significant effect towards green purchase intention. This study found that social media influence a has a positive and significant impacts towards green purchase intention. This study found that social media influence a has a positive and significant impacts towards green purchase intention and
21	Wu & Long (2024)	Mediating Variable: Green Trust, Perception of Information Usefulness Independent Variable: Social Media Marketing	supports the mediating ability of green trust.

Source: Kamila, Fania Trishafa. Permana, Dudi. (2025)

Discussion

Environmental Concern and Green Trust

Environmental concern reflects the degree to which individuals are aware of and care about environmental problems, influencing their attitudes and trust in green products. Prior studies (Zameer & Yasmeen, 2022; Rusyani et al., 2021; Kingston & Paulraj, 2023) show that environmental concern is positively associated with pro-environmental behaviors, including green purchase intention. Dhir et al. (2021), however, suggest that environmental concern alone does not directly predict green purchase intention but can indirectly affect trust toward environmentally friendly products. This indicates that environmental concern plays a significant role in fostering green trust, as consumers who prioritize environmental issues are more likely to trust green products and brands.

Green Packaging and Green Trust

Green packaging is often perceived as a visible and tangible signal of a firm's commitment to sustainability, thereby enhancing consumer trust. Prior evidence shows that packaging attributes such as recyclability, eco-labels, and sustainable appearance strengthen consumer beliefs about environmental responsibility (Majeed et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2021). Studies also indicate that packaging positively influences consumer perceptions of authenticity, which directly fosters green trust (Meet et al., 2024; Kusnawati & Tiarawati, 2022).

Social Media Exposure and Green Trust

Social media exposure enables consumers to access information on sustainability, brand values, and product attributes, which can reinforce trust. Studies confirm that social media acts as a driver of green behavior (Yanyan et al., 2023; Pop et al., 2020), with Nekomahmud et al. (2022) and Wu & Long (2024) highlighting that social media use strengthens consumer perceptions of reliability and mediates the relationship with green trust. This suggests that exposure to environmental campaigns on social media contributes to building consumer confidence in green brands.

Green Trust and Green Purchase Intention

Green trust is consistently highlighted as a strong predictor of green purchase intention across studies. Guan et al. (2024), Zhuang et al. (2021), Wasaya et al. (2021), Teguh & Ignatia (2022), and Lavuri et al. (2023) found that green trust significantly improves consumers' willingness to purchase environmentally friendly products. Furthermore, green trust serves as a bridge that translates environmental values and product attributes into actual behavioral intention.

Environmental Concern and Green Purchase Intention

While some studies suggest a direct positive relationship (Rusyani et al., 2021; Kingston & Paulraj, 2023), others note insignificant or mediated effects (Dhir et al., 2021). Zameer & Yasmeen (2022) support that environmental concern positively influences green purchase intention, reinforcing its role in shaping eco-friendly consumer behavior. Thus, while mixed, most evidence supports its direct influence.

Green Packaging and Green Purchase Intention

Multiple studies have confirmed the positive and significant role of green packaging in encouraging purchase intention. Pan et al. (2021), Majeed et al. (2022), Meet et al. (2024), Kusnawati & Tiarawati (2022), and Fadhillah & Astuti (2022) consistently highlight packaging as a critical determinant of purchase intention. Packaging that clearly communicates recyclability and eco-labels is perceived as trustworthy and valuable, leading to stronger purchase intentions.

Social Media Exposure and Green Purchase Intention

Social media exposure significantly shapes purchase intention by influencing consumer attitudes and decision-making. Yanyan et al. (2023), Pop et al. (2020), Ling et al. (2024), and Sun & Xing (2022) found that social media positively affects green purchase intention, both directly and indirectly. Social media facilitates environmental knowledge sharing, making consumers more inclined toward green purchases.

Mediating Role of Green Trust

Several studies show that environmental concern may not directly lead to purchase intention but works indirectly through trust. Dhir et al. (2021) report that environmental concern was insignificant without mediation, while Zhuang et al. (2021) and Guan et al. (2024) confirm that green trust acts as a crucial mediator. Hence, trust bridges the gap between consumers' concern and their actual purchase behavior. Guan et al. (2024), Teguh & Ignatia (2022), and Lavuri et al. (2023) provide evidence that green packaging influences purchase intention more strongly when mediated by green trust. Packaging signals environmental responsibility, but it is the trust in the brand's credibility that motivates consumers to make actual purchases. Social media exposure shapes perceptions but requires trust to translate into purchase behavior. Wu & Long (2024) emphasize that social media marketing influences purchase intention through green trust. Similarly, Nekmahmud et al. (2022) highlight the mediating role of social media usage in strengthening green purchase intention, suggesting that green trust is an essential pathway.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between environmental concern, green packaging, social media exposure, green trust, and green purchase intention. The findings reveal key insights. Environmental concern, green packaging, and social media exposure significantly enhance green trust, showing that ecological awareness, perceptions of sustainable packaging, and exposure to environmental content are crucial in fostering brand trust. Green trust plays a

central role in driving purchase intention, serving as a psychological mechanism that translates perceptions into behavior. Additionally, environmental concern, green packaging, and social media exposure directly strengthen green purchase intention, while green trust mediates these relationships, highlighting its bridging function.

The implications are twofold. For practitioners, the findings stress building credibility and transparency through eco-friendly packaging, clear communication, and authentic social media engagement. For policymakers, they underscore the need to promote environmental awareness and regulate green communication for trustworthy claims. Future research may integrate green brand image, perceived consumer effectiveness, or cultural values, and explore industry- or demographic-based comparisons for deeper insights.

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