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Introduction

Welcome to the Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research (IJLAR), a distinguished platform dedicated to the dissemination of comprehensive legal scholarship and academic research. Our mission is to foster an environment where legal professionals, academics, and students can collaborate and contribute to the evolving discourse in the field of law. We strive to publish high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that provide insightful analysis, innovative perspectives, and practical solutions to contemporary legal challenges. The IJLAR is committed to advancing legal knowledge and practice by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

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Preface

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence in legal scholarship. This volume presents a curated selection of articles that reflect the diverse and dynamic nature of legal studies today. Our contributors, ranging from esteemed legal scholars to emerging academics, bring forward a rich tapestry of insights that address critical legal issues and offer novel contributions to the field. We are grateful to our editorial board, reviewers, and authors for their dedication and hard work, which have made this publication possible. It is our hope that this journal will serve as a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and will inspire further inquiry and debate within the legal community.

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Description

The Indian Journal of Legal Affairs and Research is an academic journal that publishes peer-reviewed articles on a wide range of legal topics. Each issue is designed to provide a platform for legal scholars, practitioners, and students to share their research findings, theoretical explorations, and practical insights. Our journal covers various branches of law, including but not limited to constitutional law, international law, criminal law, commercial law, human rights, and environmental law. We are dedicated to ensuring that the articles published in our journal adhere to the highest standards of academic rigor and contribute meaningfully to the understanding and development of legal theories and practices.

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IMPACT OF GREENWASHING PERCEPTION ON CONSUMER TRUST AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Greenwashing conveys a misleading impression of a brand's environmental concern, which has emerged as a critical threat to sustainable marketing trustworthiness. This study examines how consumers' perception of greenwashing influences their trust in organic product brands and, in turn, their purchase intention. Using a structured questionnaire responded by 210 consumers of organic products, the study applies Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test two hypotheses: (H1) greenwashing perception negatively affects consumer trust, and (H2) consumer trust positively affects purchase intention and mediates the relationship between greenwashing perception and purchase intention. The measurement model showed strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.82-0.86; composite reliability above 0.87) and convergent validity (AVE above 0.50). The structural model confirmed that greenwashing perception significantly reduced trust ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$) and that trust significantly increased purchase intention ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$). A Sobel test confirmed significant partial mediation ($z = -4.01$, $p < 0.001$), with trust accounting for roughly 51% of the total effect. Findings highlight the importance of authentic environmental communication for sustaining consumer trust and purchase behaviour in the organic-products market.

Keywords: Greenwashing Perception; Consumer Trust; Purchase Intention; PLS-SEM; Organic Products.

1. Introduction

The global shift towards sustainability has encouraged the firms to spot themselves as environmentally responsible, but not all such claims are proved. “Greenwashing” means exaggerated, vague, or false environmental claims has become gradually common in the organic and eco-product sector, where consumers depend heavily on brand communication to judge the product authenticity. As consumers grow more sceptical of unsupported green claims, their trust in brands and willingness to purchase organic products may be compromised.

This study investigates the mechanism by linking greenwashing perception to purchase intention, proposing consumer trust as the mediating variable. Understanding this mechanism is valuable academically, by extending trust-based models of sustainable consumption, and practically, by helping organic-product marketers design reliable communication strategies that protect consumer confidence.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Literature Review

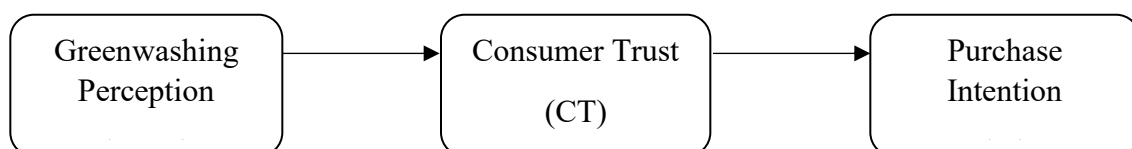
2.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested:

- H1: Greenwashing perception has a significant negative effect on consumer trust.
- H2: Consumer trust has a significant positive effect on purchase intention and mediates the relationship between greenwashing perception and purchase intention.

2.1 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model positions Greenwashing Perception (GWP) as the independent variable, Consumer Trust (CT) as the mediating variable, and Purchase Intention (PI) as the dependent variable, following the structure: $GWP \rightarrow CT \rightarrow PI$, with a direct path $GWP \rightarrow PI$ retained to test partial versus full mediation.



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sample

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design with a data collected from 210 consumers who had purchased organic products within the past six months, using a structured online questionnaire distributed through convenience sampling. After removing incomplete and straight-lined responses, 210 valid responses were retained for analysis, exceeding the minimum sample size recommended for SEM models with three latent constructs and twelve indicators (10:1 ratio rule). The sample comprised 47% male and 53% female respondents, with the largest age group being 26-35 years (32%) and 18-25 years (28%), reflecting the typical profile of urban consumers who consumed organic products.

3.2 Measurement Instrument

All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree), adapted from established green-marketing and trust scales and refined through a pilot test with 20 respondents to ensure clarity and contextual relevance to organic products. Each construct was operationalized with four reflective indicators and are summarized below.

Table 1: Questionnaire Items by Construct

Construct	Code	Item
Greenwashing Perception (GWP)	GWP1	This brand exaggerates the environmental benefits of its organic products.
	GWP2	The eco-friendly claims made by this brand are vague or unclear.
	GWP3	I feel this brand's green claims are not fully supported by evidence.
	GWP4	This brand uses environmental claims mainly as a marketing tactic rather than genuine commitment.

Construct	Code	Item
Consumer Trust (CT)	CT1	I trust this brand's claims about its organic products.
	CT2	I believe this brand is honest about its environmental practices.
	CT3	This brand keeps its promises regarding sustainability and product quality.
	CT4	Overall, I have confidence in this brand's integrity.
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	I intend to purchase organic products from this brand in the future.
	PI2	I am willing to recommend this brand's organic products to others.
	PI3	I would choose this brand over non-organic alternatives.
	PI4	I am likely to continue buying this brand's organic products.

Demographic items (age, gender, education, and frequency of organic-product purchase) were included for descriptive profiling but were not used as model constructs.

3.3 Analytical Approach

Data were analyzed in two levels, consistent with standard PLS-SEM practice. First, a measurement-model (CFA-equivalent) assessment evaluated internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha), composite reliability (CR), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion). Second, a structural-model assessment estimated path coefficients for H1 and H2 using ordinary least-squares regression on standardized construct scores, with significance assessed via t-tests, and mediation tested using the Sobel test alongside variance-accounted-for (VAF) calculation, in line with PLS-SEM convention for indirect-effect testing.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha values for all three constructs exceeded the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong internal consistency. Composite reliability values exceeded 0.87, and AVE values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs, confirming adequate convergent validity.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Greenwashing Perception	0.820	0.879	0.645
Consumer Trust	0.838	0.890	0.670
Purchase Intention	0.857	0.903	0.701

Table 3: Standardized Factor Loadings (CFA)

Item	GWP	CT	PI
Item 1	0.81	0.89	0.84
Item 2	0.90	0.82	0.86
Item 3	0.74	0.80	0.86
Item 4	0.76	0.75	0.79

All standardized loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, supporting indicator reliability for the measurement model.

4.2 Discriminant Validity

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to assess discriminant validity by comparing the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs. The square roots of AVE

(0.80, 0.82, and 0.84 for GWP, CT, and PI respectively) exceeded all inter-construct correlations, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 4: Construct Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	GWP	CT	PI
Greenwashing Perception (GWP)	3.02	0.73	1.000	-0.321	-0.279
Consumer Trust (CT)	3.05	0.76	-0.321	1.000	0.487
Purchase Intention (PI)	3.00	0.79	-0.279	0.487	1.000

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was estimated using regression-based path analysis on standardized construct scores (N = 210). Hypothesis 1 examined the direct path from greenwashing perception to consumer trust. Hypothesis 2 examined the path from consumer trust to purchase intention while controlling for the direct effect of greenwashing perception, and tested the mediating role of trust using the Sobel test.

Table 5: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path	B	SE	t-value	p-value	Result
H1: GWP → CT	-0.334	0.068	-4.893	< 0.001	Supported
H2: CT → PI (controlling GWP)	0.460	0.066	6.987	< 0.001	Supported
Direct: GWP → PI (controlling CT)	-0.148	0.069	-2.162	0.032	Significant
Total: GWP → PI (no mediator)	-0.302	0.072	-4.196	< 0.001	Significant

The model explained 10.3% of variance in consumer trust ($R^2 = 0.103$) and 25.4% of variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.254$), indicating moderate explanatory power consistent with comparable studies in green-marketing literature.

4.4 Mediation Analysis

The Sobel test was used to evaluate whether consumer trust mediates the relationship between greenwashing perception and purchase intention. The indirect effect ($a \times b$) was -0.154 (SE = 0.038), yielding a z-value of -4.008 ($p < 0.001$), confirming statistically significant mediation. Because the direct effect of greenwashing perception on purchase intention remained significant after accounting for trust ($\beta = -0.148$, $p = 0.032$), the result indicates partial mediation rather than full mediation.

Table 6: Mediation Effect Summary

Effect	Coefficient	SE	z-value	p-value
Indirect effect (GWP $\rightarrow$ CT $\rightarrow$ PI)	-0.154	0.038	-4.008	< 0.001
Direct effect (GWP $\rightarrow$ PI)	-0.148	0.069	-2.162	0.032
Total effect (GWP $\rightarrow$ PI)	-0.302	0.072	-4.196	< 0.001
Variance Accounted For (VAF)	50.9%	—	—	—

With a VAF of approximately 51%, consumer trust accounts for roughly half of the total effect of greenwashing perception on purchase intention, confirming that trust is a substantial — though not the sole — mechanism through which greenwashing perception undermines purchase intention.

5. Discussion

The results provide strong empirical support for both hypotheses. Consistent with H₁, higher perceived greenwashing was significantly associated with lower consumer trust, supporting the view that consumers penalize brands whose environmental communication appears exaggerated or unsubstantiated. This finding line up with signalling theory, whereby inconsistent or unverifiable green signals harm perceived brand credibility.

Consistent with H₂, consumer trust was a strong positive predictor of purchase intention, reinforcing the well-established role of trust as a risk-reduction mechanism in green consumption decisions. The significant Sobel test result and the moderate-to-large VAF of 51% confirm that trust is a key psychological pathway when greenwashing perception rises, the resulting erosion of trust substantially though not completely. It explains the decline in purchase intention of organic products. The remaining direct effect suggests that greenwashing perception also influences purchase decisions through channels other than trust, such as perceived brand authenticity, ethical judgment, or anticipated regret, which were not modelled here and merit future investigation.

From a managerial standpoint, these findings suggest that organic-product brands should prioritize transparent, verifiable environmental communication such as third-party certification, traceable supply-chain information, and specific (rather than vague) sustainability claims since even modest increases in perceived greenwashing translate into measurable declines in trust and, through that channel, in purchase intention.

6. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

This study confirms that greenwashing perception negatively affects consumer trust, and that consumer trust positively affects purchase intention while partially mediating the relationship between greenwashing perception and purchase intention towards organic products. Both hypotheses were statistically supported using survey data from 210 consumers, analyzed through CFA-based measurement validation and PLS-SEM-style structural path estimation.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, the sample was drawn through convenience sampling and may not generalize to all

consumer segments, and the study relied on self-reported purchase intention rather than observed purchase behaviour. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, test additional mediators or moderators such as brand reputation or environmental concern, and validate the model across different product categories and cultural contexts.

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