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From greenwashing to authenticity: Consumer skepticism and brand trust in India's sustainable marketing campaigns

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how greenwashing (misleading or exaggerated environmental claims) influences consumer skepticism and brand trust in India's rapidly evolving sustainable marketing landscape.

Methodology: Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 32 peer-reviewed studies, industry reports and three in-depth case studies (Hindustan Unilever, Akshayakalpa Organic and Fabindia), this research integrates insights from the Green Trust Model, Attribution Theory and Skepticism toward Advertising Scale to develop a Conceptual Framework.

Findings: The review revealed that the percentage of Indian customers who expose themselves to misleading green claims is 71, as opposed to 29 who believe in corporate sustainability communications. Greenwashing leads to customer distrust, reputational loss and government action and is clearly seen in the case of sustainability problems faced by Hindustan Unilever. On the contrary, genuine sustainability, based on traceability, third party certification and involvement of communities, enhances trust as is the case of Akshayakalpa Organic and Fabindia.

Practical Implications: Brands need to move on to authentic sustainability incorporations. Durability of consumer trust can be established by implementing life-cycle assessments, blockchain-enabled tracing and eco-literacy campaigns.

Originality/Value: The article presents a comprehensive model of explaining one of the psychological and behavioral factors behind consumer trust in the sustainable marketing of an emerging-market context, which gives clear implications to advice brands on how to progress beyond greenwashing towards meaningful sustainability.

Keywords: Greenwashing, Authenticity, Consumer Skepticism, Brand Trust, Sustainable Marketing

1. Introduction

Sustainability in new markets has also changed in the sense that in countries like India, it has not been the exercise of a corporate social responsibility but rather a business requirement. The growing popularity of climate change, escalated digital advocacy and policy regulations like the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) requirements in SEBI have transformed corporate responsibility (SEBI, 2023) ^[32].

However, at the same time that sustainability efforts have undergone this massive increase, there has been another phenomenon that has within the same foundations of setting a good tone in sustainability: greenwashing. The term "Greenwashing" is defined as "the practice of making misleading or unsubstantiated claims about a product, service or company's environmental performance" (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 64) ^[11]. Greenwashing, in fact, hurts the consumer trust and dilutes the credibility of an actual sustainability effort.

As the study conducted in India points out, "Opacity breeds distrust, while transparency leads to credibility" (Campaign India, 2024, p. 3). According to YouGov India research (2023), the problem is that 71% of Indian consumers have allegedly encountered misleading green claims and 29% of them trust marketing content in relation to sustainability. These doubts are the most evident in those consumers that belong to Gen Z, as 45% of them demonstrate strong dissatisfaction with the idea of sustainability messaging (Capgemini Research Institute, 2023).

This growing skepticism raises the following questions: How can Indian consumers separate the wheat and the chaff where authentic sustainability and greenwashing are concerned?

What do people build or destroy trust in green claims? What approach can brands take to negotiate this complex trust landscape?

This study addresses these questions with the help of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with the addition of case study of three Indian brands Hindustan Unilever (HUL), associated with dubious green marketing, Akshayakalpa Organic, a leader in genuine traceable sustainability and Fabindia as a leader in grass möattsoles authentically ethical branding.

We also construct Conceptual Framework by combining theory in the form of the Green Trust Model (Chen, 2010) [8], Attribution Theory (Forehand & Grier, 2003) [14] and the Skepticism Towards Advertising Scale (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) [27] to explain the causal relationships between greenwashing, consumer skepticism, trust and purchase intention.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Greenwashing

Greenwashing is an issue that can be related to multiple dimensions, such as manipulative visualizations, false assertions and omitted information about the environment. TerraChoice (2010), grouped the greenwashing into the seven sins, which include hidden trade-offs (prioritizing one or more green aspects without addressing other significant green aspects) as well as vague, irrelevant and exaggerated claims which are commonly seen in the Indian campaigns. In India, these are some of the tactics used by the brands to tap the still-growing eco-conscious market without necessarily undergoing any operational changes (S. S. Rana & Co).

2.2 The Psychological Impact of Greenwashing

Greenwashing is not only deceptive but works to drain the customer's confidence and brand equity in the long run. According to Nyilasy *et al.* (2014) [26], consumers take unverified green labels to mean that the brands are opportunistic and this develops negative attribution. This confirms to the Attribution Theory (Forehand & Grier, 2003) [14] that consumers will judge the motives of the corporations- authentic sustainability is value-laden and therefore viewed as genuine whereas greenwashing is profit-laden and therefore seen as an effort in deception. According to Chaudhary & Bisai (2018) [7], in the Indian environment, the attitude-behaviour gap in the sphere of sustainable consumption is exacerbated by the practice of greenwashing as consumers tend to preselect green products but when they find them as unsubstantiated claims, they become less willing to buy said products (p. 47).

2.3 Consumer Skepticism Toward Green Claims

Consumer skepticism is like a psychological mechanism that protects the consumer from deceptive marketing (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) [27]. Mohr *et al.* (1998) [24] observed that skeptical consumers would require substantiation and other checks prior to believing the claims of green initiation. Indian consumers track this global trend, 71% of respondents stating that their research includes misleading information about sustainability (YouGov, 2023). In fact, 45% of Gen Z admit to distrusting the brands themselves in pushing a particular narrative (Capgemini Research Institute, 2023).

According to Hickman *et al.* (2022) [16], European consumers are less tolerable of greenwashing, which can be

explained by more strict EU laws (e.g. Green Claims Directive). Compared to the Indian ones, the consumer protection is lower and this means that consumers in India are vulnerable to the existence of ambivalent or false green marketing (Gopal, 2022) [15].

2.4 Brand Trust in Sustainable Marketing

The long term relationship between the brand and a consumer is based on the pillar of trust. Kumar *et al.* (2024) [23] have also discovered that lies are one thing that green advertising cannot help in green brand trust, whereas Saini & Jain (2022) [30] are cautious enough to note that when greenwashing is repeated, they start to lose trust in the whole green economy.

Authenticity, when fulfilled by transparency disclosures, third party certification and value aligned storytelling, becomes one of the important trust building capabilities. In regard to green trust, Chen (2010) [8] points out a positive correlation between the aspect and perceived environmental performance and satisfaction, which may imply that genuine activities lead to loyalty.

Case-specific insights reinforce this

- Akshayakalpa Organic proves providing traceability and the closed-loop production, which increases consumer confidence and justifies high prices (India CSR, 2024).
- Its grassroots sourcing model appeals to the consumers who want culturally rooted sustainability and ethical sourcing (IMARC Group, 2024).

On the international level, de Freitas Netto *et al.* (2020) [10] had demonstrated that certification labels (such as Fair-Trade, FSC) can be used to raise consumer confidence in the brand claims, which is currently not employed adequately in India compared to other Western markets.

2.5 Regulatory Interventions and Cultural Differences

Regulatory changes in India in the recent past have indicated the approach towards fighting false green claims.

- In February 2024, the ASCI issued new Guidelines on Environmental/Green Claims, to ascertain green claims with verifiable evidence (ASCI, 2024).
- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs includes the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) and imposed an increase in scrutiny of misleading green advertisements, which had been included in the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- The regulatory body of the Indian capital market SEBI has decided that the list of the 1,000 biggest listed companies must submit Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reports (BRSR) based on the ESG schemes (SEBI, 2023) [32].

Even though regulatory approval has developed well, there remains huge variation in compliance and enforcement to mid-size and regional brands (Gopal, 2022) [15].

Cultural context further influences consumer expectations:

- In the Western markets, the scientific evidence and life cycle information is valued the most and thus the consumer is driven based on the rationalist approach (Horne, 2009) [18].
- Eco-conscious Indian consumers are still subject to value-based narratives (e.g. community empowerment) and it is possible that dualistic narratives (combining

stories about the environment and community) could be the right approach to reach them (Bhattacharya & Clegg, 2021)^[3].

2.6 The Attitude-Behaviour Gap in the sphere of Sustainable Consumption

A gap between attitude and behavior is also one of the results that are prevalent in the literature where customers have self-reported that they are ready to pay more on environmentally friendly goods though they fail to do the same in reality (Carrington *et al.*, 2014)^[6]. This lack is further propagated by the perception associated with greenwashing (More, 2019)^[25] and price sensitivity in India, despite the fact that, as per 64% of the respondents, the latter maintain they would be ready to pay a higher price in the event of certificated products (Kumar *et al.*, 2024)^[23].

2.7 Theoretical Framework

In this paper, three theories that are suitable to address the components of greenwashing with respect to consumer trust and purchase intention in an Indian setting will be merged:

- **Attribution Theory (Forehand & Grier, 2003)**^[14]: Elaborates on the derivation of motives that consumers place on brand claims. Trust is lost when the efforts towards sustainability are seen to be based on profit and not based on values.

- **Green Trust Model (Chen, 2010)**^[8]: Implicates that green trust is governed by perceived green value and satisfaction to affect the green loyalty.
- **Skepticism Toward Advertising Scale (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998)**^[27]: Makes it possible to measure consumer mistrust in marketing claims to serve as an intermediary between greenwashing and trust outcomes.

Synthesis

Once brands are required to greenwash, consumers will assume that their businesses have ill motives prompting them to doubt their trustworthiness (Attribution Theory). This damages green trust (Green Trust Model) which ends up in deflating loyalty and purchase intention. On the contrary, genuine sustainability which is transparency, third-party certifications and homogenous messaging, increases trust and dampens skepticism.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed framework, mapping the relationships between greenwashing, skepticism, trust and purchase intention, with moderating factors (e.g. certification, transparency). Developed by the researcher based on Forehand & Grier (2003)^[14], Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998)^[27], and Chen (2010)^[8].

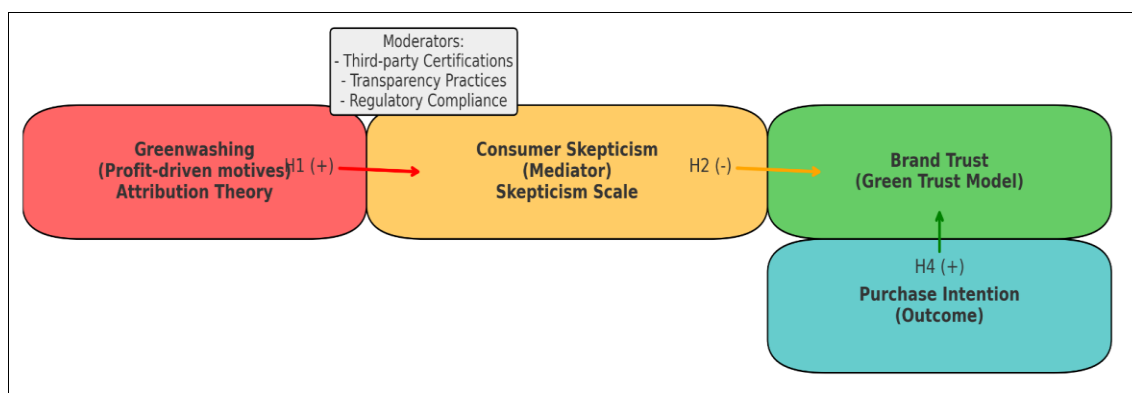


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework: How Greenwashing Influences Consumer Skepticism, Trust and Purchase Intention

Moderating factors

- Third-party certifications (e.g. Jaivik Bharat, Fair-Trade, FSC)
- Transparency practices (e.g. lifecycle disclosure, blockchain traceability)
- Regulatory compliance (ASCI, SEBI BRSR)

These moderating variables weaken the negative pathway between greenwashing and skepticism and strengthen the pathway from authenticity to trust.

2.9 Hypotheses

Based on the framework, we propose

- **H1:** Greenwashing positively influences consumer skepticism toward brand sustainability claims.
- **H2:** Consumer skepticism negatively affects brand trust in sustainable marketing campaigns.
- **H3:** Transparency and third-party certification moderate the relationship between greenwashing and skepticism, reducing its negative impact.
- **H4:** Brand trust positively influences consumer purchase intention toward sustainably marketed products.

3. Methodology

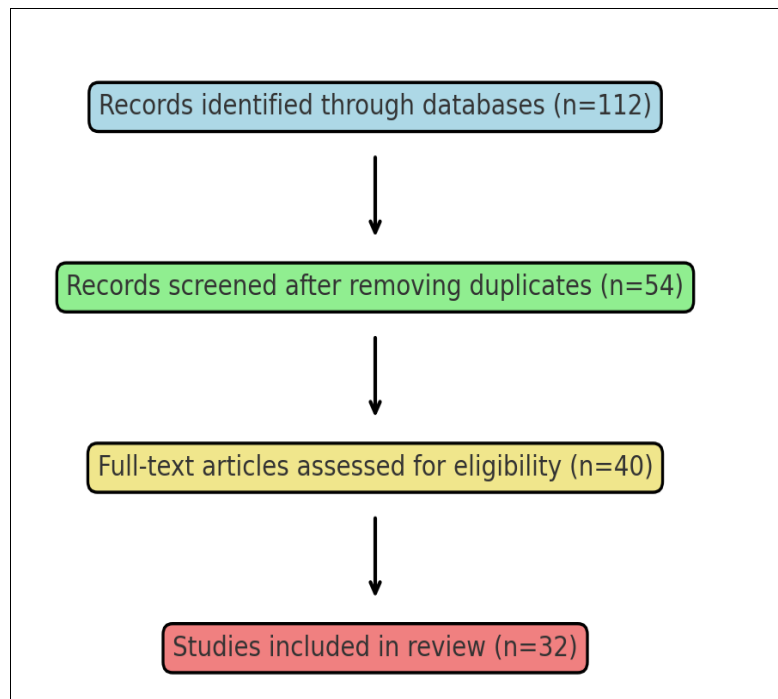
3.1 Research Design

Within the scope of this work, the researcher applied a mixed-methods research design with parallel implementation of the systematic literature review and at the same time, the comparative case study analysis to explore the problem of greenwashing and consumer skepticism and brand building trust in India (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The work coded was carried out using PRISMA 2020 (Page *et al.*, 2021)^[29] and a synthesis of peer-reviewed papers, industry publications and regulatory informational resources published in 2010-2025.

3.2 Systematic Literature Review

The review follows PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page *et al.*, 2021)^[29]:

- **Databases:** Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Shodhganga.
- **Search terms:** “greenwashing”, “consumer skepticism”, “brand trust”, “sustainable marketing”, “India”.
- **Inclusion criteria:** Peer-reviewed articles, industry reports and case studies (2010-2025).



Source: Adapted from Page *et al.* (2021) ^[29]

Fig 2: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for Literature Selection

3.3 Case Study Selection

To reflect the greenwashing to authenticity continuum, we also used purposive sampling to identify three cases.

- **Hindustan Unilever (HUL):** Found guilty of deceptive green marketing communications (ASCI, 2024).
- **Akshayakalpa Organic:** Authenticity leader that uses traceability and closed loop farming to its advantage (Arla Foods, 2021).
- **Fabindia:** Grass-roots ethical brand that incorporates sustainability in artisanal supply chains (Fabindia Ltd., 2023).

3.4 Data Extraction & Synthesis

- **SLR:** Extracted data on study methods, findings and theoretical applications.
- **Case studies:** Compiled secondary data (reports, news articles, sustainability disclosures) to assess brand practices.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Since the research was carried out using secondary data that is freely accessible, no ethics permissions were taken. All the material is referred to according to the APA, 7th edition.

4. Results

4.1 Summary of 32 Reviewed Studies

Table 1: Summary of Reviewed Studies on Greenwashing, Consumer Skepticism and Brand Trust (2010-2025)

Author(s)	Year	Context	Focus/Method	Key Findings	Relevance to Present Study
Delmas & Burbano	2011	Global	Literature synthesis	Defined greenwashing and its drivers.	Foundation for conceptualizing greenwashing.
Obermiller & Spangenberg	1998	US	Psychometric scale	Developed Skepticism Toward Advertising Scale.	Provides tools for measuring skepticism.
Chen	2010	Taiwan	SEM on 294 consumers	Green brand trust enhances loyalty and satisfaction.	Basis for Green Trust Model integration.
Nyilasy <i>et al.</i>	2014	US	Experimental design	Greenwashing creates negative consumer attributions.	Links greenwashing to trust erosion.
Mohr <i>et al.</i>	1998	US	Questionnaire (n=402)	Skeptical consumers demand verification of claims.	Supports mediating role of skepticism.
Chaudhary & Bisai	2021	India	PLS-SEM (n=415)	Green skepticism reduces purchase intention.	India-specific evidence for the model.
More	2019	India	Regression analysis (n=384)	Greenwashing lowers brand trust and loyalty.	Localized trust dynamics.
Khandai <i>et al.</i>	2025	India	SEM (n=500)	Greenwashing triggers brand embarrassment & hate.	Adds emotional responses to the framework.
Kumar <i>et al.</i>	2024	India	Mixed methods	64% Willingness to pay premium for certified products	Empirical support for authenticity payoff.
Bhattacharya & Clegg	2021	India	Qualitative analysis	Narratives influence sustainable consumption.	Explains cultural role in trust-building.
Gopal	2022	India	Policy review	Indian regulations on green claims remain weak.	Highlights regulatory gaps in context.
Campaign India	2024	India	Industry interviews	Transparency builds brand credibility.	Practitioner insights for authenticity.
Capgemini Research Institute	2023	Global/India	Cross-market survey	Gen Z shows high distrust toward brand claims.	Adds generational segmentation context.
YouGov India	2023	India	Quantitative survey	71% encountered misleading	Quantifies exposure to greenwashing.

			(n=1,500)	sustainability claims.	
TerraChoice	2010	Global	Content analysis	Classified 7 “sins” of greenwashing.	Framework for identifying deceptive tactics.
Carrington <i>et al.</i>	2014	Australia	Longitudinal survey	Identified intention-behavior gap in ethical buying.	Supports discussion of attitude-behavior gap.
Hickman <i>et al.</i>	2022	EU	Multi-country survey	EU consumers are less tolerant of greenwashing.	Enables cross-cultural comparisons.
de Freitas Netto <i>et al.</i>	2020	Global	Systematic review	Certifications increase consumer confidence.	Supports the role of certification as moderator.
Horne	2009	EU	Literature review	Eco-labels influence purchase but need verification.	Links eco-labels to purchase behavior.
OECD	2023	Global	Comparative policy analysis	Benchmarked global green claims regulations.	Situates India within global regulation.
ASCI	2024	India	Policy framework	Required substantiation for all green claims.	Adds regulatory guidelines to context.
SEBI	2023	India	ESG policy analysis	BRSR mandated sustainability disclosures.	Shows regulatory push for corporate transparency.
Economic Times	2024	India	Consumer interviews	Consumers avoid insincere green brands.	Provides market perception evidence.
Ipsos India	2024	India	Quantitative analysis (n=1,000)	Greenwashing literacy increases cautious buying.	Links awareness to consumer behavior.
Mondaq	2024	India	Policy commentary	The FMCG sector shows the highest greenwashing risk.	Contextualizes sectoral vulnerability.
IMARC Group	2024	India	Secondary market analysis	Akshayakalpa achieved 80% YoY growth.	Case study evidence of authenticity success.
India CSR	2024	India	Case study	Akshayakalpa’s farmer programs enhance authenticity.	Illustrates cultural-ethical storytelling.
HUL Case Reports	2023	India	Regulatory filings	HUL penalized for unsubstantiated claims.	Demonstrates regulatory enforcement cases.
Fabindia Reports	2023	India	CSR/internal reporting	Grassroots sourcing drives loyalty.	Provides grassroots authenticity case data.
Arla Organic Case	2021	EU	Business case	Traceability boosts brand trust & pricing power.	Comparative case for cross-market analysis.
Page <i>et al.</i>	2021	Global	PRISMA guideline	Standardized SLR reporting process.	Provides methodological rigor for review.
Creswell & Plano Clark	2018	Global	Mixed methods guide	Framework for integrating qualitative & quantitative.	Supports methodological integration.

Source: Researcher Self-Compilation (2025)

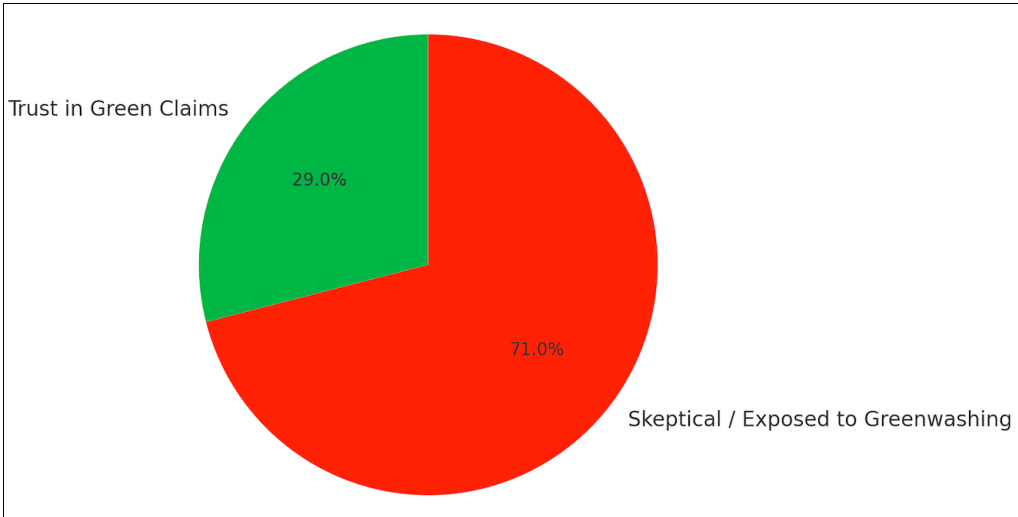
4.2 Quantitative Highlights

Our SLR revealed several key data points shaping consumer trust in Indian sustainable marketing:

Table 2: Key Quantitative Findings on Consumer Trust and Skepticism

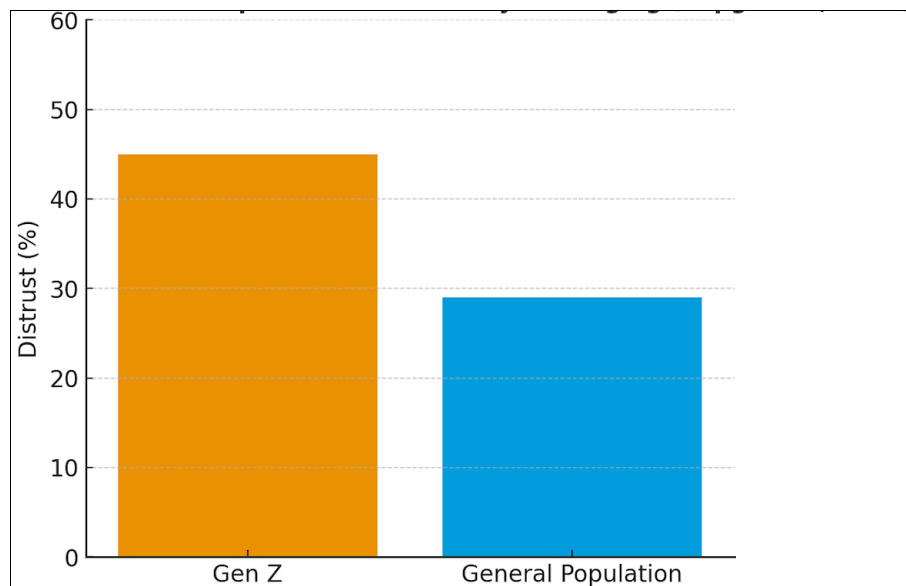
Metric	Value	Source
Consumers exposed to greenwashing	71%	YouGov (2023)
Consumers expressing trust in green claims	29%	YouGov (2023)
Willingness to pay premium for certified products	64%	Kumar <i>et al.</i> (2024)
Gen Z distrust of sustainability messaging	45%	Capgemini Research Institute (2023)

4.3 Visualizing Consumer Perceptions



Source: YouGov, 2023

Fig 3: Consumer Trust vs. Skepticism on Green Claims



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, 2023

Fig 4: Willingness to pay premium for certified products

4.4 Comparative Case Study Insights

To understand the entire greenwash to genuine sustainability, three Indian brands were studied: Hindustan Unilever (HUL), Akshayakalpa Organic and Fabindia. These examples display the effects of various approaches to sustainability that result in consumer mistrust, doubt and brand-loyalty.

Case 1: Hindustan Unilever (HUL) - Greenwashing & Regulatory Backlash

HUL, which holds a significant market share of the Indian FMCG industry, is being in the bad books of overstating its environmental renewal, particularly during the years of its Plastic Neutrality campaigns in which the company boasted of hard-recycling balances during the period when its entire plastic consumption was swelling.

Regulatory response: ASCI (2024) caught a number of HUL advertisements misleading and the CCPA concerned itself with improper substantiation of environmental messages.

Consumer reaction: As YouGov (2023) states, Indian customers consider such propositions as a kind of tokenism, which supports the idea discussed in the Attribution Theory that such campaigns are not aimed at purpose but are aimed at profit.

Effect: The green brand trust that HUL built has suffered and resulted in reputational damage and the increasing backlash of consumers, especially regarding Metropolitans, Gen Z and Millennials.

Case 2: Akshayakalpa Organic- Authentic Sustainability & Growth

Akshayakalpa Organic has also become the leader in terms of trust as it has integrated traceability and closed-loop farming into its business strategy. Consumers will have the

ability to follow products through farm to fridge and this concept is rare in the Indian dairy industry.

Practices: The company participates in recycling initiatives, organics certification (Jaivik Bharat) and the upskilling of the farmer (India CSR, 2024).

Market effect: These activities yielded 80% YoY revenue growth (IMARC Group, 2024) and the customers were ready to pay an extra 10-15% value on the certified organic dairy.

Consumer response: This is considered transparent, ethical and high you name it which compares to the Green Trust Model by Chen (2010) ^[8] that being authentic constructs loyalty.

Case 3: Fabindia- Grassroots Authenticity & Cultural Capital

Fabindia adopts a community based strategy when it comes to sustainability, as it promotes artisan productions and ethical sourcing. The scheme is built around the grassroots model that is more in-sync with Indian culture, establishing an appeal with the customers emotionally and socially.

Practices: Partnership with craft clusters and fair-trade compatible practices expands the economic accessibility and low impact production.

Market implications: Fabindia has a strong following among its urban customers and this draws its brand in the commercial sphere of the cultural and socially responsible.

Consumer reaction: The brand does not include exaggerated marketing claims, so instead it is cushioned with toned-down, factual storytelling that is hard to doubt as greenwashing.

Table 3: Comparative Matrix: HUL vs. Akshayakalpa vs. Fabindia

Feature	Hindustan Unilever	Akshayakalpa Organic	Fabindia
Claim Type	Vague/overstated eco claims	Certified organic & traceable	Ethical sourcing & artisanal sustainability
Certifications	Limited, post-crisis adjustments	Jaivik Bharat, Organic certifications	Fair-trade aligned, artisan-verified sourcing
Consumer Perception	Skepticism, backlash	High trust, premium acceptance	Trust through authenticity and community roots
Regulatory Interaction	ASCI penalties, CCPA scrutiny	Compliance with BRSR, ASCI	Minimal conflicts due to consistent practices
Market Outcome	Erosion of green brand trust	80% YoY growth, premium market	Sustained loyalty, cultural capital

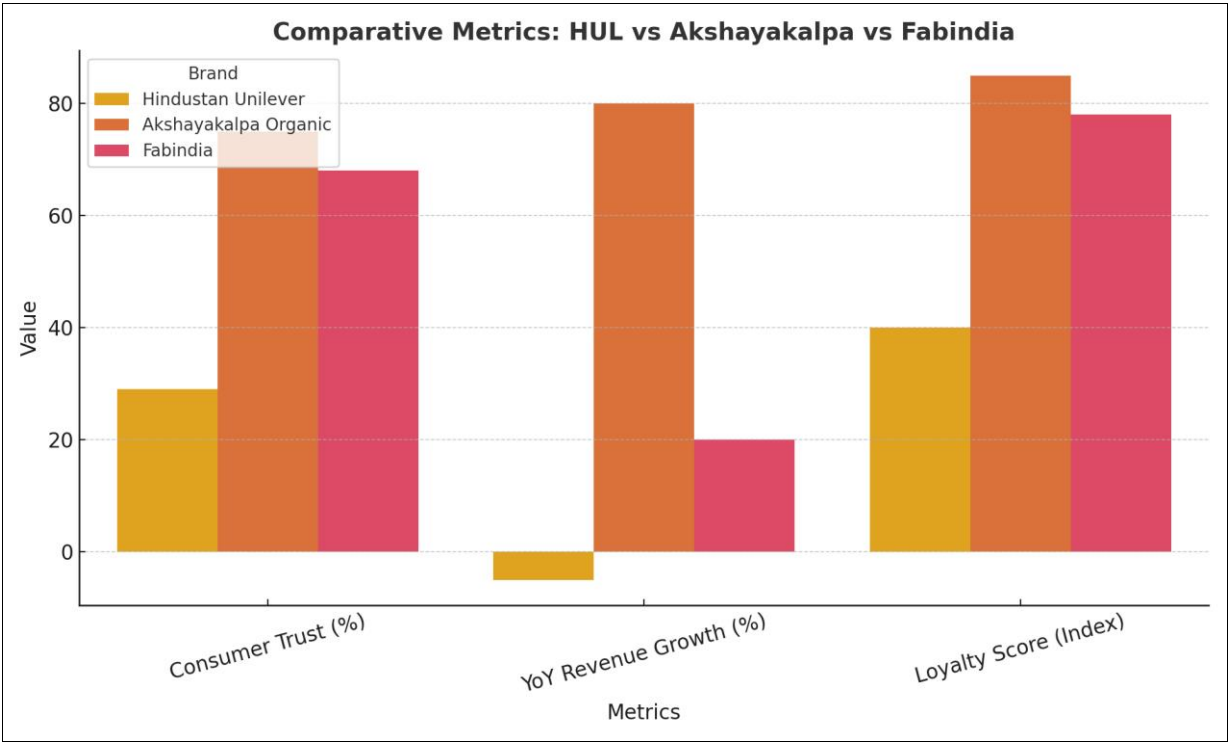


Fig 5: Comparative Bar Chart: Brand Trust, Revenue Growth, and Loyalty Index

5. Discussion

The findings of the study also reveal how central authenticity can be in the practice of sustainable marketing and how greenwashing is costly to a company in terms of its consumer behavior which lends credence to the theoretical formulations that exist.

5.1 Attribution Theory: Motive Perceptions as the Root of Skepticism

Attribution Theory assumes that consumers evaluate the ill motives which guide the actions of the corporations (Forehand & Grier, 2003) [14]. In case brands participate in greenwashing, the consumers assume that this is done with self-interest and profit in mind, thereby reducing credibility. In the case of Hindustan Unilever (HUL), greenwashing its audacious yet unproven initiatives of becoming a positive initiative and avoiding disgorgement was visible. The negative attributions were very high among Gen Z, which is characterized by an increased level of ethical sensitivity (Capgemini Research Institute, 2023). Akshayakalpa Organic and Fabindia, on the other hand, were both seen as values-led, with pro-social and authentic motives showing a sense of traceable supply chains, certifications and community based programs. Such a positive motive assignment decreases skepticism, thus heightening the probability of trust and interaction.

5.2 Green Trust Model: Linking Authenticity to Loyalty

Chen (2010) [8] has developed a Green Trust Model which is useful in explaining the processes through which effective

sustainable activities promote trust in the consumer and hence brand loyalty and premium pricing. The success of Akshayakalpa exemplifies this model: through verifiable organic certifications, transparent sourcing and closed-loop farming, the brand provided high green trust, which led to 80% YoY revenue growth and the acceptance of the premium products (IMARC Group, 2024). Conversely, HUL made false claim commitments, which disrupted the trust relations, resulting in demands of consumer action and regulatory action. The grassroots approach taken by Fabindia exemplifies another form of trust building- cultural authenticity as ethical involvement of communities into the story of the brand has proven to be as powerful as the hard data ESG reports.

5.3 Skepticism toward advertising: The Mediating Mechanism

Skepticism toward Advertising Scale (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998) [27] is based on the assumption that the skepticism towards advertising is a mental sieve that is used by each individual to process advertising messages. Our research shows greenwashing increases the level of skepticism which then has an effect on the interrelation between brand communication and trust outcomes. Consumers who did and saw green claims which are unclear or outlandish (like in campaigns run by HUL) were more skeptical and were found to lose faith. Brands with less conspicuous messages, demonstrable and consistent with observable operational processes, such as Akshayakalpa and Fabindia, lowered the skepticism levels, which supported

trust and loyalty at the respective levels.

5.4 Cross-Cultural Perspective

The cross-cultural difference is also exposed in the integration of these theories. The Western consumers tend to depend on quantitative verification (e.g. lifecycle assessments, third-party audits) and the Indian customers are also biased towards community-focused, moral stories (Bhattacharya & Clegg, 2021) ^[3]. These imply that in the emerging markets, blended approaches that integrate the data-driven transparency with a culturally specific narrative are most effective.

5.5 Implications of Theory-Driven Insights

The theoretical integrations present the necessity of brands to:

- Encourage less profitable attitudes with reduced profit-making perceptions by integrating sustainability into the overall strategy as opposed to the surface treatment of campaigns (Attribution Theory).
- Promote corporate environmental activism to improve green trust (Green Trust Model).
- Marketing communications that minimize their expectations in the market and create a less skeptical consumer by relying on evidence and advertising consistent brand stories (Skepticism Scale).

5.6 Managerial Implications

The implications offered by the findings are strategic imperatives which marketing executives should understand. First, support all of their sustainability claims with life-cycle assessments, independent audit and 3rd party certification to create verifiable credentials. Second, to provide consumers with legendary access, use technology including blockchain-enabled supply chain traceability, QR-code disclosures as a means of providing transparent visibility in the product journey. Three, use culturally relatable stories to integrate sustainability with local community interaction stories and ethical sourcing stories like in the case of Fabindia with its grassroots effort. Finally, create consumer education programs to enhance eco-literacy, so that audiences would be able to critically assess the claims and build trust in real brands. Not only are such measures a mitigation of reputational risk but it also positions brands in a place where premium segments will pay a premium to assure they are dealing with sustainability with authenticity. As one Ipsos study noted: "We discovered that the more consumers understand greenwashing, the more cautious they become in their purchasing decisions" (Ipsos India, 2024). This underscores the urgent need for brands to educate while they market.

5.7 Limitations & Future Research

Although this study builds on findings reported in 32 reviewed works as well as three case studies, the research uses secondary data. A more comprehensive study in the future ought to include longitudinal research and experimental research that would determine causality of relationships between authenticity intervention, consumer trust and purchase behavior. Also, segmentation analysis, investigating the variability on the basis of demographics, psychographics and urban-rural landscapes could help unearth consumer reactions to greenwashing on a finer level. The ROI of investing in being authentic (e.g. the dollar value of traceability systems or certifications) is a

highly untapped area of study where scholars can find plenty of opportunities. Comparative analysis of the emerging and developed markets would also be illuminating to the understanding of the cultural differences in impacts of green trust.

6. Conclusion

India is at the cusp of its sustainable marketing ecosystem. Greenwashing has led to the fading trust in consumers as they are becoming skeptical of the green economy as a whole. However, the brands such as Akshayakalpa Organic and Fabindia show that when it comes to the genuine, verifiable sustainability, it is the same brand loyalty press in reversing this impact and bringing wealth to a company. The Indian brands have a way to go ahead: it is time they step beyond cosmetic sustainability towards integrated, transparent and community aligned practices. Individuals who adopt this change will not only be able to survive in the business world but to be leaders.

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