

# Effects of Greenwashing Practices on Consumer Behavior

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## Abstract

Environment friendly, or green advertising increasingly gained popularity, and businesses are continually looking for the most effective strategies to spread their green message to consumers. Consumers have raised their expectations and begun to take environmental concerns more seriously. Because human demands are limitless and limited resources are available, it is crucial for companies to make effective, waste-free use of resources in order to meet organizational goals. Green advertising is, therefore, indispensable. Evidence spread all over the world attests that people care much about their surroundings and the way they adapt to behavior. The primary aim of this research work is an assessment of how green-washing practices impact behavior of consumers. The investigation was conducted among 345 samples. The statistics has been complied through questionnaires and, therefore, SPSS-based analysis and AMOS. Customers are assumed for being aware of greenwashing strategies employed by businesses, which include employing terminology like "herbal", "organic", and "natural", yet when it relates to their behavior, they frequently don't develop educated decisions and become duped. Consumers who are predisposed to purchase the goods find green persuasive logos, photos, wordings, and package appealing.

**Keywords:** Greenwashing, Consumer Behavior, Perceived Benefits, Perceived Risk, Subjective Forces.

## Introduction

As indicated by Moore (2021), greenwashing seems to be a deceptive strategy that businesses use to look greater environmentally conscientiousness than they actually are in an effort to win over environmentally conscious customers and profit from it. Businesses can be described as healthy, emission reduction, products that are environmentally green, and their goods could be organic, recyclable, thrifted, or eco-friendly, among other terms. Unfortunately, many of these signs and sustainability promises are greenwashing, even as some symbols and claims are truthful. Even though this occurs occasionally, it is also possible that corporations don't know which types of claims are legitimate and which aren't. Consumers frequently, in error perceive a business, good or service as being far more environmentally conscious than is the case. The characteristics of green marketing always had the biggest impact on customer happiness and customer purchase decisions. This study comes out to fully comprehend the variables that affect customer's decisions to buy green goods. The study found that socioeconomic characteristics had little impact on consumer behavior to buy green products. A customer's degree of customer satisfaction and service. Though the environmental value of the commodities appeared to have significant impact of these factors with some non-environmental attributes including the outcomes of various types of regarded principles of eco-friendly commodities (such as climate, operational, and fair repartition of resources) in the concept didn't increase the convergent validity (Aravind, 2021).

Daily, customers have to face many choices while buying the commodities of products, and from the perspective of the employer, the consumers' behavior is matters most. So, it is crucial for businesses and organizations to thoroughly investigate these behavioral approaches in order to get higher knowledge about issues like why, how, how much, where, and when customers make purchases. The purchasing behavior of the ultimate customer when they are acquiring products or

offerings for personal consumption is a very sophisticated process (Kotler & Armstrong 2018). It is mainly the process of decision-making that encompasses item conceptualization, acquisition, and use. Kotler and Keller (2016) assert that virtually all purchases made by customers involve a decision-making process. The five stages of consumer behavior are problem detection, search and evaluation, substitute appraisal, acquisition choices, and post-purchase behavior. The acknowledgement of the issue represents the most important phase in this approach since if the consumer fails to perceive an immediate need or a concern, they would be less inclined to continue contemplating about buying a good

(Kotler & Armstrong 2020). By touting their fictitious environmental initiatives to the community, many businesses want to gain credence with ethical customers. This is regarded as greenwashing and an advertisement ploy that helps companies get an advantage over competitors and make them look more environmentally sensitive to consumers. As was earlier said, greenwashing is the act of deceiving customers regarding a company's ethical policies or the environmental benefits of a good or offers. Even so, some of these green statements are true and correctly depict the businesses' environmental actions and endeavors. Greenwashing hurts the company's reputation and prestige is more significant than its financial impact (Delmas & Colgan 2018).

Many companies attempt to portray themselves as environmentally conscious by investing a huge amount in advertising their status as environmentally friendly companies. But the reality is that businesses merely just try to hide their negative environmental effect through selling their products as green ones, rather than truly reducing it (Aggarwal, 2014). As a result, consumers are becoming less certain that marketing is a real form of communication (Obermiller et al., (2005), which makes them wary of it. The green product claims made by the firms are not properly supported by standards or norms. Many people are still unaware of the benefits of green items. To convince customers frequently shy away from altering their buying behavior. When a product meets all the environmental requirements, but fails to satisfy the customer's expectation, it becomes worthless. Hence, the product has to fulfill the criteria of being both environmentally friendly and meeting customer behavior (Chhabra, 2017).

The visual cues in a green clean marketing tend to attract customers because of their passion for nature, although consumers can usually identify the objectives of the campaign (Schmuck et al., 2018). Many companies use well-known celebrities to promote their brands in order to benefit from their legitimacy. By exploiting the consumer's trust in celebrities, the objective is engaging in unethical behavior known as greenwashing (Bhatnagar, 2019). Most companies avoid sincerely living up to the green standards by using greenwashing as a means of increasing their brand awareness and revenue (Saxena, 2015). In order to gain their market share, they exaggerated and unjustified claims that they produced environmentally friendly products and services (Saxena, 2015). Due to such unfounded claims, the firm by its name Enviromedia came up with the greenwashing index in tracking environmental issues made by companies. A number of corporations are now able to get around marketing legislations and advertise their products through greenwashed advertising (Eltell, 2012).

Greenwashing is the term to describe when a company dispenses misleading or partial truths to make it appear an environmentally responsible corporation. The phrase greenwashing that describes the practice of inflating or overstating claims of environmentalism or viability in an effort to dominate markets has become widely accepted and acknowledged since the middle 1980s. Any industry, from clothing to health care, has an overwhelming number of firms that are involved with the practice of greenwashing. Companies ultimately mislead consumers when they claim their products and services are environmentally friendly, securing the consumers' trust. Due to the fact, Customers are paying much more for misleading and fictitious goods. The International Survey Of 18,000 Customers in 2014 concludes that over fifty percent of the respondents show concerned regarding performance measurement. This word greenwashing increased notably over the previous couple of years and also is growing highly controversial as corporations in particular scramble to meet the steadily growing need for environmentally-friendly goods.

According to the American Marketing Association, "greenwashing" is the practice of promoting goods that are deemed to be environmentally friendly (Elam Rehbar, 2011). Hence, a wide variety of actions are included in green advertising, such as the customization of products, adjustments to the manufacturing process, modifications to labeling, and adjustments towards advertising. The prevalence of various social, environmental, and commercial connotations related to this phrase is an example of how difficult it is to define green marketing since different meanings overlap and conflict with one another. (Elam Rehbar, 2011). Environmental advertising and ecosystem marketing are two other phrases with similar meanings. Green advertising is the art of promoting goods and or offerings based on their favorable effects on the economy. Such a good or service may be designed, developed, or promoted in quite an environmentally friendly way.

There are many external influences, including culture, that impact the purchasing behavior of consumers. Thus, a customer's view of a company and its brand often influences their choice to buy. Besides the brand, other factors such as a company's location and appearance may influence how customers view a product. An international company's brand

image, for example may differ across countries. In addition, socioeconomic characteristics such as gender, or age influence how customers view a product and the way they respond to purchasing it. Additionally, scholars claim that variables such as brand awareness and market size could also influence consumer's decision-making (Hsieh & al. 2004). To qualify for green advertising, greenwashing could be portrayed as vague, superficial, ambiguous or non-statistic (Grove & Kangun, 1993). It could also use images, logotypes and words that create a sense of environmental properties which do not come to being (Parguel et al., 2015). Greenwashing also accentuates inconsequential factors that overshadow the bad environmental activities that affects consumers purchasing decisions (Akturan, 2018). The fact that this strategy is tied to longevity and the green economy, which would be gaining steam with customers and providing the impression that "having to look green" is increasingly important, is also very important to notice (Berrone et al., 2015). But too much information may confuse buyers and mislead them (Turnbullet et al., 2000). When firms misrepresent their customers about what constitutes a green product, whether due to inconsistency, exaggeration, or a shortage of knowledge experts refers to this as greenwashing (Mitchell et al., 2005).

Green marketing has evolved over time. Peattie (2001) identified three stages in the development of green advertising. The first stage was called "ecological", and all the advertising operations for a certain period of time were concerned with environmental issues and presented solutions. The second was "environmental", when the emphasis turned to clean technology and the creation of innovative new products to overcome challenges with pollution and waste. The third phase of green marketing is "healthy". During the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s, it became popular.

### **Objectives of the Research**

- To understand the concept of greenwashing from the consumer's point of view.
- To determine the effect of greenwashing on customer behavior.
- To analyze consumer perceptions about products that carry green labels.
- Pursue to analyze the effect that greenwashing has on a customer's behavior.
- Identify the implications resulting from the effects have to influence a customer's purchase goods and services.
- Measuring consumer awareness regarding ecologically friendly products.
- Studying consumer attitudes as well as their habits to utilizing green products.

### **Literature Review**

Harsh Mankodi (2018) in the essay headlined "Green washing or green marketing"? When thinking of the economy, greenwashing has adverse effects on customers and manufacturers. Therefore, it is everybody's responsibility to protect the economy, avoid abusing the privilege that has been given to all of us, and behave in an additional professional manner that will be advantageous in the long run. Paço, A. M. F. & Reis, R., (2012) consumer behavior of the green allegations made in countless adverts have grown more clouded as green marketing gains popularity. The lack of generally agreed definitions for popular allegations made by advertising, which including "environmentally friendly", "recyclable", "ecological", "atmospheric friendly," etc., is one of the main causes of the misunderstanding.

Green marketing, according to Prakash (2002), is an ecologically friendly marketing scheme in which only pertinent data on environmental features is disseminated at various scales, including the corporate, commercial, and manufacturing levels. Welford (2000), on the other hand, views green advertising as a development tool which may be employed to foresee customer demands, meet those wants, and be viable, environmentally benign, and lucrative without undermining the customer's ecosystem functions.

Green marketing, according to Dhalstorm and Ottman (2011), is the fusion of promotional and environmental considerations. Their definition comprised aspects such as pricing, production, location, advertisement, and brand management. Green marketing has been characterized in a broad range of ways during the years, and even though each of them considerably varies from one another, those who ultimately have the same basic concept: enhancing a share profitability, appearance, reputation, and competitive while enhancing its environmental and ethical responsibilities.

The terms "green brands" or "environmental products" are frequently used to refer to goods that have specific qualities and were produced using environment-friendly methods, or in other words, in a way that has the least negative influence on the economy. Some of its characteristics include preserving the economy and using less resources. The connected operations have a tendency to reduce or eliminate the usage of trash, degradation, and harmful goods that pose a risk to the environment. The development, green marketing must integrate organic production version, boost growth and the using of resources, and dematerialize by using less material (Singh and Pandey2012).

According to Kotler and Keller (2009), the companies should take customer satisfaction over market power since both go hand in hand. Customer retention has been perceived to majorly rely on consumer satisfaction. It has been structured so that it can track and analyze all the different advertising concept-related activities. There are some statistics indicating that customer satisfaction drives customer loyalty. The cost of winning new customers is somewhere in between five and ten percent more than the price of keeping the ones you have had. Every year, firms lose between 10% and 30% of their customers. When that rate is reduced by 5%, businesses can increase their income by 25% to 85%. During a customer's lifetime as a retained customer, their profitability increases. In order to get better confidence and trust from customers, businesses should foster high levels of client satisfaction when it happens.

Most often, both the internal organizational factors and external aspects of marketing, which encompass investment opportunities, customer needs and stiff competition, force firms to embrace greenwashing. Companies are being forced to appear environmentally friendly in their operations as customers and financiers are demanding them to be more viable. Together with employer and customer pressure, firms are often exposed to criticism to go green as they fear they will go beyond their competition (Delmas & Burbano 2011).

Amongst the commonest factors of green purchase behavior is consumer awareness of the outcome of their behavior, as concluded from the research by Gleim and Lawson's (2014). The chances that maybe some individual will buy environmentally friendly products get reduced if they feel their personal choices do not matter (Gleim and Lawson's, 2014). Therefore, greenwashing would have a significant effect on customers who wish to purchase environmentally friendly products and think that their personal decisions affect the economy. Definition of green marketing therefore be addressed before addressing the issue of greenwashing.

According to Martinez et al., (2019), there is no single definition of green advertising, also known as eco- advertising, brand management, marketing communications, biological marketing, end longevity marketing. The incorporation of environmental awareness in advertising messages, thus, is a characteristic common to all of the definitions (Martínez et al., 2019).

Green marketing aims to identify the importance of environmental protection measures in the context of consumer behavior in the future (Moravcikova et al., 2017). According to Polonsky (2011), among other thoughts, green advertising aims to improve the organic environment while improving customer health and their standard of living. This is done to make customers understand the issues with product use and appreciate that they can minimize environmental degrading by changing the way they consume. Green marketing also increases consumer knowledge of environmental stewardship, which expands the advantage of the environment as a whole (Fliegelman, 2010).

Nguyen et al. (2019) assert that customers have become less trusting of business continue to emphasize on the green movement. The major problem of the contemporary green advertising is a fall in the loyalty of customers in the green realities which companies use (Chen and Chang, 2013). For Furlow (2010), greenwashing is significant enough to severely affect consumer's trust on eco-friendly products as that will ultimately hurt the efforts of eco-friendly goods and services promotion. The green campaign is associated with their anxieties on disparity observed between the perception and realities of green marketed products, which is difficult for green firms in a saturated commercial due to the presence of too many false green advertising promises (Nguyen et al. 2019). Many of the green advertisement claims are false and vague (Chen and Chang, 2013).

Consumers, according to Hamann and Kapelus (2004), use the economic information provided by the marketing and sales communications. Chen and Chang (2013), argue that since consumers neither appreciate a commodity or a firm if the promises are believed towards being false, they will not initiate a purchase choice. As a consequence, consumers

are becoming less sympathetic of green advertising, which might prove extremely damaging to the entire green market (Hamann and Kapelus 2004). Thus, it is even suggested that greenwashing would ruin the green market by making consumers skeptical of green products (Polonsky et al, 2010). An environmental issue is one of the most important cognitive predictors for green consumer behavior (Jaiswal and Kant 2018). Economically conscious customers are more inclined to look for green products and are often willing to pay more for them (Gyader et al, 2017). Customers seeking environmental goods, in particular, are susceptible to greenwashing because their only source of information is the firm's communication (Hamann and Kapelus, 2004). However, when customers perceive that a firm is practicing greenwashing, it negatively affects both their buying decision and their attitude toward the firm (Parguel et al, 2011). Thus, this increases the probability that the consumer will not be able to make a transaction choice (Chen and Chang 2013).

Due to the rise of environmental issues such as environmental issues, buyers have come to understand that they must adapt their purchasing behavior and implement greener practices (Chen and Chang, 2013). The intention of a green customer is to purchase a brand that satisfies the standards they have set for environmental qualities. As Chen and Chang (2013) indicate, as the green movement has spread, consumers are more concerned about the environmental effects of their purchase, which results in a larger estimated risk of going green. The consumer's inability to trust the veracity of the green promises and the brand's ability to meet their environmental demands as a consequence of greenwashing heightens the risk involved in being green (Gillespie, 2008).

As Chen and Chang (2013) assert, greenwashing is a threat to the emerging green industry because it erodes customers' confidence in environmental responsibility. As Horiuchi and Schuchard (2009), cited in Chen and Chang (2013) point out, greenwashing makes it challenging for consumers to comprehend how their behavior impacts the environment because it falsely claims that the consequences are less severe than they actually are. Because of this, the buyer who decides to trust the bogus green promises believes that their purchase will have a larger positive effect than it actually does. By flooding the market with false green marketing, greenwashing reduces market dominance of authentic green businesses and delays the transition to a greener marketplace (Polonsky et al. 2010). Greenwashing makes people skeptical of environmental data that businesses disclose (Self et al. 2010). Skepticism also has a connection towards the ideas of low reputation and mistrust (Nguyen, 2019). The fundamental tenet of trust, according to Hart and Saunders (1997), is the positive expectation of the other party's behavior. Trust is the readiness to embrace the susceptibility brought on by the other party's actions exceeding one's expectations (Rousseau et al. 1998). Also, when someone relies on someone, they make that decision with the conviction that they will be dependable, upright, and able to behave in a fiduciary capacity (Ganesan, 1994).

According to Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2005), consumer behavior is defined by the direct engagement of consumers in the acquisition, use and disposal of goods and offerings. According to Budica, Puiu, and Budica (2010), a network or an organization can have an impact on a consumer's behavior (for example, friends can have an impact on the sort of apparel they choose). As consumer behavior could have a significant influence on society, the nation, and the environment, they view it as crucial.

According to Ajzen (1991) and Chuttur (2009), subjective forces indicate the sense of emotional constraint people may feel in reaction to their conduct. This is also influenced by how important a whether or not another person in the group and, eventually, other people consider such actions acceptable (Zhan andhe, 2012). This would make them analyze whether society supports them or not in their action to buy environmentally friendly goods. According to Chen and Chang (2013), for instance, a person or group in society who has a positive connection with green washing will be perceived unfavorably by society.

According to Ko, Hwang, and Kim (2013), customer retention and behavior have the most impacts on customers experience a firm. They contend that a strong brand reputation can influence consumer decision to purchase goods from a certain business. Moreover, doing so may result in more content and devoted clients (Kim, Galliers, Shin, Ryoo, & Kim, 2012). Oliver (1999) defined behaviour and Retention as the Will to Repeatedly Buy the Good or Service Even after the Influence of circumstances and Marketing Practices That Call for behavioral changes. Chang, Lv, Chou, He, & Song (2014) believe that Products with Defense and Customer Trustworthiness provide Much-Needed Enjoyment

and Ultimately Provide for Beneficial Link Between Consumer and The Good or Service IN terms of beliefs and opinions because of the phenomenon of greenwashing.

Customers expect a brand's comprehensive benefit to encompass not only their satisfaction with how it works together with other benefits (Drennan, Sullivan Mort, & Previte, 2006). The perceived benefit (PB) is broken down into six elements by Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent (2000): financial savings, clarity, efficiency, significance, expressiveness and amusement. From the customer's viewpoint, Babin, Darden, and Griffin (1994) talk about four conceptualizations of economic usefulness: values refer to the cost, how much we attain beyond that we keep giving, the exchange between apparent value and cost, and along with all the personal and professional aspects establishing the full buying process. According to Mitchell, Walsh, and Yamin (2005), the inability of a consumer to understand the numerous choices for goods and offers from the data presented in the procurement paradigm is a condition of confusion. It might because the data is confusing enough that it might affect consumer's ability to make decisions.

### Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the representation of the link between the variables, or the traits or features we want to investigate. Conceptual frameworks are usually developed through a literature analysis of previous studies on the particular issues. It can be textual or visually presented. The author's summation of the literature pertaining to the explanation of an occurrence is represented by a theoretical base. Based on some of the other researcher's perspectives and personal thoughts about the research topic, on a prior understanding of some of the other researcher's points of view and personal insights on the topic of the research, it outlines the procedures that need to be followed during the course of the study. The conceptual framework is composed of a number of related principles and objectives. The objectives detail the purposes and objectives along with the core concepts that support achieving those achievable.

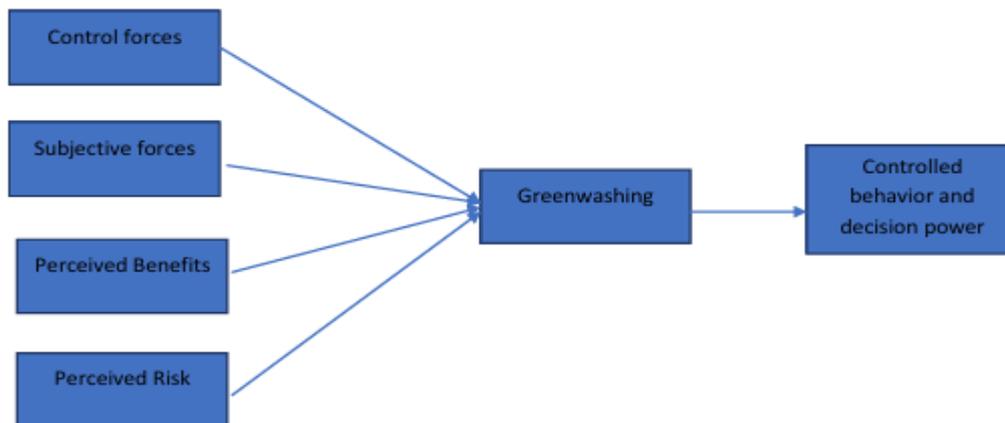


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

### Hypothesis

- Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between control process and greenwashing practices.
- Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between subjective forces and greenwashing practices.
- Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between perceived benefits and greenwashing practices.
- Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between perceived risk and greenwashing practices.
- Hypothesis 5: There is a relationship between controlled behavior & decision power and greenwashing practices.

### Research Methodology

Data collection was done in Salem districts and 217 samplings were collected from employees through questioner later which was tested by AMOS software to validate the structural equation model. Control forces, subjective forces,

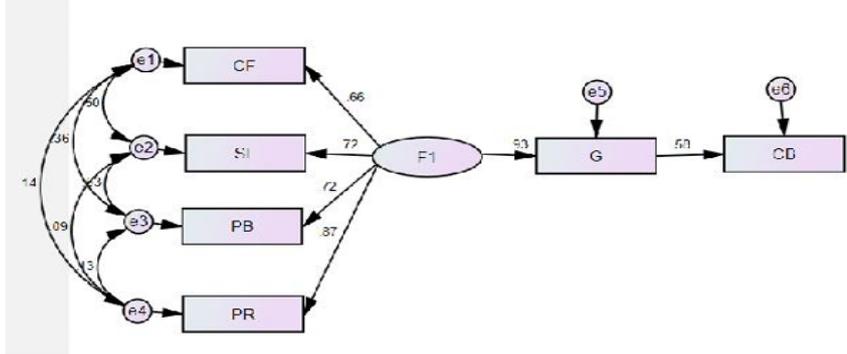
perceived benefits, perceived risk and controlled behavior and decision power were involved in the model. The methodological approach of this research study enabled the researcher to examine the research questions being presented and evaluate and analyze data with regard to the research hypotheses.

**Results and Discussion**

All components have been exposed to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the measurement model (maximum likelihood estimation) using AMOS 22.0 and SPSS 25 was used for other analysis. The resulting fit statistics were all above the minimum acceptable level. Chi square/degree of freedom (CMIN/df) = 2.344; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.994; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.994; root mean square of error of index (RMSEA) = 0.079; Tucker-Lewis’s index (TLI) = 0.978; and goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.986. all the factor loadings are above 0.5 (as shown in Table).

SI.No	Latent Variables and Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach’s Alpha
1	<b>Control Forces</b>		
	CF1	0.872	0.744
	CF2	0.546	
	CF3	0.510	
2	<b>Subjective Forces</b>		
	SF1	0.863	0.797
	SF2	0.622	
	SF3	0.656	
3	<b>Perceived Benefits</b>		
	PB1	PB1	0.853
	PB2	PB2	
	PB3	PB3	
4	<b>Perceived Risk</b>		
	PR1	0.850	0.895
	PR2	0.836	
	PR3	0.865	
5	<b>Greenwashing</b>		
	G1	0.777	0.853
	G2	0.771	
	G3	0.785	
	G4	0.894	
5	<b>Controlled Behavior and Decision Power</b>		
	CB1	0.664	0.733
	CB2	0.641	
	CB3	0.780	
	CB4	0.580	

**Structural Equation Modelling**



Path Way		Standardized Estimate
Control Forces	→	Green Consumption Confusion .662
Subjective Forces	→	Green Consumption Confusion .723
Perceived Benefits	→	Green Consumption Confusion .717
Perceived Risk	→	Green Consumption Confusion .869
Controlled Behavior and Decision Power	→	Greenwashing .583

**Goodness-of-Fit Indices**

Fit Index	Acceptable fit	Indices for data
$\chi^2$		9.376
df		4
p	>.05	0.052
$\chi^2/df$	≤ 2 to 5	2.344
RMR	<0.06	0.025
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.986
RMSEA	≤ 0.05 to 0.08	0.079
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.994

Above table shows causal relationships between greenwashing customer behavior variables with control forces, subjective forces, perceived benefits, perceived risk, and controlled behavior and decision power. From table the beta value, error value and t-value corresponding to the causal relationship between greenwashing customer behavior variables with control forces, subjective forces, perceived benefits, perceived risk, and controlled behavior and decision power. All the customer behavioral intentions variables (control forces, subjective forces, perceived benefits, perceived risk, and controlled behavior and decision power.) have positive impacts on green consumption confusion and their beta values are 0.662, 0.723, 0.717, 0.869 and 0.583 respectively.

Model fit indicate the Bentler and Bonnet (1980) study indicated that the model fit can be checked by RMSEA (Root Means Square of Approximate) which is less than 0.08, has a good fit and less than 0.05 has a closer fit. The Joreskog and Sorbom (1988) study proposed that GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) should be above 0.9 and AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) should be above 0.80. Bentler study suggested that CFI (Comparative Fit Index) should be greater than 0.9. The value of GFI (0.986) and CFI (0.994) indicate the adequacy between the structural model and sample data. The RMR of 0.025 and RMSEA of 0.079 revealed the goodness of fit. This confirms that the available data set moderate the fits into the proposed structural model.

## Conclusion

The respondents of this study were generally well-known about the practices of greenwashing. Several people also had examples of the occurrences that had been, in certain circumstances, fairly precise. The user's willingness to mention particular examples suggests that they had been completely conscious of the greenwashing phenomena and that were capable of describing commercials they believed were greenwashed or accounts of green claims that were later found to be untrue. Not many of the respondents, perhaps because they did not know the term, could not give specific examples of greenwashing. In the process of greenwashing, companies try to improve their image and promote their product strategy. However, the truth is that if the false claims are revealed, the company risks as a greater risk of damaging the reputation of the brand and killing the customer trust that has been built over time, as in the case, which could also lead to ethical problems. Hence, businesses should function organically and customers should be aware and make smart purchasing decisions, like as ensuring that perhaps the marketing materials includes a list of components, checking on the information on the company's site and ensuring that the component has been approved by a legitimate state entity.

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