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Investigating the Role of Sustainability in Enhancing the Brand Image and Boosting the Purchase Intention

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Abstract

The brands play a pivotal role in the purchase patterns, unlike earlier days now the consumer sees a brand as a mode of expression and makes the choices accordingly. They are more driven towards those brands which reflects their ideology as well as thought process. With this, increased the concepts such as sustainable branding, green branding, but regardless there is a major behavioral gap in these studies as the market for the consumers who prefer the sustainable and green brands are comparatively low. The below article is focused on finding the impact of the sustainability on brand image along with similar other drivers of the brand image further enhancing the purchase intention.

Keywords

Sustainability, Brand image, Green branding, Brand equity, Green Service, Purchase intention

1. INTRODUCTION

In literature, the words "green" and "sustainable" are frequently used interchangeably. In this sense, the characteristics of green brands are "ecological," which means reducing the negative effects on the environment, "equitable," which means preventing the marketing promotion of unsustainable social practices, and "economic," which means promoting long-term economic growth through brands. The degree of integrated green issues distinguishes different brands from one another. Green service quality is one of the important parts of the sustainability consist of an overall amalgamation of the services which are done

in a sustainable manner.

As a result, "greenness" can be categorized into three groups: Green is a core value, it is integrated into core values, and it is the 21_{st} guarantee. The effects of green branding and sustainability strategy on brand equity have received little research. Consequently, this article's objectives are to provide insight into sustainable branding, emphasize its significance and function in boosting brand equity, and analyze how sustainable practices can be included into the brand concept. The psychological makeup of the buyer may have a big impact on their propensity towards eco-friendly purchases.

A win-win situation could be created by integrating sustainable brand management into business practices by bringing together various demands from customers, businesses, and society. This article lists both the benefits of a sustainable branding strategy and the essential components for putting it into practice. First off, being responsible for the environment and "doing the right thing" can assist a business achieve its strategic and financial goals. Businesses should recognize their intrinsic interdependence with society. Consumers are also "attracted to brands they trust, companies that are unique, original, that appeal to the emotions, that represent something intelligent or fascinating about the user, and brands whose parent firm conducts well," according to research.

Third, sustainable brands can be an important tool for influencing society's response to the environmental crisis since they reflect the values and cultures of the firms they represent. Linking sustainability with brand perception and marketing effectiveness is necessary to reap all these benefits. However, scientific research into the practice of sustainable branding is just getting started. Understanding consumers, implementing environmentally friendly corporate practices and marketing strategies, and motivating a large audience to embrace sustainable behavior will be some of the most important demands in the future. The major drawback of this study is that not many companies has incorporated the concept of sustainability.

Brand positioning as a "green brand" entails active communication about the company's distinctive green values, which come from its ecologically friendly characteristics and target clients. Green brand positioning strategies are a crucial element of effective green branding strategies because, according to the majority of academics, green branding cannot gain commercial advantage if the company's positioning strategy cannot clearly represent a brand's green features. The process of positioning a brand as a "green brand" involves actively communicating with target customers about the company's distinctive green value derived from its environmentally friendly features. Most studies concur that green branding cannot be successful commercially if the brand's positioning strategy cannot properly communicate its green credentials.

There has been an increase in awareness over the past ten years of the serious environmental problems that both present and future generations must deal with. Environmental issues are receiving so much attention that they may end up being "the biggest commercial concern of the 1990s." Consumers that support environmental protection, or what has come to be known as a "green orientation," are becoming more prevalent. In fact, a survey found that up to eight out of ten American customers today identify as environmentalists. Therefore, it is not surprising that many businesses have made an effort to take advantage of the public's interest in environmental issues by portraying themselves as environmentally conscious groups.

Based on what the client demands and how the company satisfies it, service quality has taken on an integrative role, helping the production and marketing functions coexist. Companies should regularly communicate with customers, improve service personalization, and involve more customers in the sourcing and procurement processes to better grasp the changing service requirements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ian Scoones (Scoones et al. 2007) [1] Sustainability is the most used buzzword in the past two decades. The term was for the very first time was coined in a book called Sylvicultura Oeconomica in the year 1713 by Hans Carl von Carlowitz, this was used to refer to the long-term management of the forest. The concept of sustainability although had been into the minds of the policy makers, it is only recently that the idea of sustainability has emerged as a mainstream issue [2].

According to Horlings S. sustainability will be the main drivers to stay in business in upcoming future rather than the traditional sourcing and selling techniques [3]. The most influential marketing strategy which uses sustainability as the key driver is the branding area. [4] Green branding is one of the recent tactic which many brands are using and according to (Grubor et al. 2017) [5], brand equity is tightly knitted with the consumer's perception towards the brand as a green brand.

Sustainability helps in enhancing the public recognition of the brand (Kotler et al. 2005) [6] along with which it also reduces the long-term financial risks and gives a brand competitive advantage. The Tandberg and Mori Survey [7] states that almost 50% of their test subjects preferred to purchase products from an environmentally responsible company which stressed over the interconnection between the brand equity and sustainability.

Furthermore, in a survey by Gidwani (Gidwani et. al, 2013) [8] it is found that the measure between brand strength and brand image have a strong correlation. This correlation is consistence across wide ranges of brands, the reason stated in the study suggest the cause of the correlation as the wide coverage of sustainability along with better advocacy by the non-governmental agencies for the brands which promotes themselves as sustainable.

This literature investigates the impact of sustainability as a driver for brand image along with other similar factors which has an impact on the brand image. The idea of sustainable branding and the customer perception on the idea of sustainability as key driver to build a brand image are some of the major goals for the investigation.

According to (Hart 1997 et al.) [9], There is a push towards sustainability in the private sector which is driving the sector towards the sustainable practices. The factors such as the depleting natural resources, the injustice within the society, the cultural beliefs and values, government is also responsible for these types of changes. Nowadays there is an ever-rising pressure from various bodies including stakeholders, the public interest communities, Non-governmental Organizations. Radical, haphazard change has become common; issues appear to have several causative causes; and, in the face of such instability, outdated solutions are distressingly overly simplistic. In other words, what was once definite is quickly becoming out of date.

According to (Callaway et al. 2009) [10], There are various ways to look at the GS implementation. While others think of Green Services as ancillary services, such product upkeep and life-cycle extension.

According to (Sasser 1978), the service providing considers environmental impact while providing a collection of tangible goods and services that are not visible but nevertheless strive to meet client demands and cut expenses.

According to (Chan et al. 2012, Kristianto et al. 2015) [11][12], improving environmental performance and satisfying consumer expectations need the production of ecologically friendly goods with features like modular design and recyclable materials.

According to (Heiskanen et al. 2003) [13], another way to think of GS is as rethinking customer service processes to increase efficiency, like by providing an online inquiry system. The research that is now available acknowledges the negative effects that service activities have on the environment and how closely they are related to physical goods. Prior research, however, has mostly ignored the negative environmental impact introduced at many supply chains stages in support of product development and only provides insights regarding isolated and specific GS activities. It is crucial to construct Green Services from the supply chain viewpoint to account for the procedures involved in offering products as part of Green Services because it is concerned with the environmental impact generated by the provision of tangible items and intangible services (Bartolomeo et al. 2003) [14].

According to (Sarkis et al. 2011) [15], With a focus on product manufacturing, Green services expands the idea of "green supply chain management," which is primarily concerned with incorporating environmental protection concepts into the already-existing supply chain activities. Through the provision of intangible services in addition to the environmental advantages of tangible products, Green service may assist customers in meeting their demands and interests in environmental protection.

According to (Ottman et al. 2006) [16], This notion promotes the necessity for businesses to provide both goods and services that can help customers, as opposed to only concentrating on product features, functions, and effective production. The green marketing myopia theory expands on this idea by emphasising both customer satisfaction and environmental quality improvement. This implies the need of providing customers with services that give advantages like ease and savings in addition to providing environmentally friendly products. Additionally, the features of products and production methods are generally stiff, adjusting them challenging.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study mainly focused on two of the objectives which are

- To determine the effect of sustainability on the purchase intention of the customers.
- An examination of how sustainability affects customer purchasing decisions and how this influence differs by the various factors in this study that is procurement activities, product design, after sales activities and information system.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data collection

To empirically test, a survey was conducted in the vicinity of Kapurthala region of Punjab, India. The objective of the study was to determine the effect of sustainability on the purchase intention of the customers. During these various factors and antecedent were considered to form the questionnaire. The data gathering process contained individual responses on the questionnaire to reduce any non-sampling bias. Convenient sampling technique was used for the sampling procedure.

4.2. Sampling Technique

In this study, we are using Convenience Sampling technique which involves a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or to reach and the respondents chose as per their convenience to respond.

The sample frame is the source of the material from which the sample is derived and drawn. A list of all those who are in the middle of the population can be sampled and which may include different consumers. In this research, we will target all the consumers who are more fascinated towards sustainability through its activities.

4.3. Sample size

A sample size of 119 is taken for the research.

4.4. Scaling Technique

For the scaling a 5-point Likert scale is chosen for the questioner to be responded.

4.5. Statistical Technique

For the statistical analysis PLS-SEM was used. The PLS-SEM or Partial least square structural modelling is one of the widely used methods for analysis of the multivariate data. It is used for mostly the business and social research purposes. The reason is being it's easy to use interface which gives the user potent to observe the relationship among the observe and latent variables. Another aspect for its wide acceptance is its robustness assessment also called as the endogeneity test this is in consideration with the measurement error which is inherent with the abstract concept evaluation (Hair et al., 2019) [17]. SmartPLS is one such application which is a commercial "stand alone" PLS-SEM application available. It is built on the Java based programming and was built by Christian M. Ringle, Sven Wende and Jan-Michael Becker. The first release of SmartPLS was in the year 2003, subsequently newer versions are being released for use. The software works on the scientific principal and is scientifically grounded, its prime principle is the implementation of algorithms along with model statistics which have already been under testing and

published in the journals of academia and are also backed by peer review for quality assurance. The software gives a user the leverage to buld a PLS path model in a graphical manner further estimating it with the help of data using PLS-SEM (Lohmöller et al., 1989) [18]. The results are then provided in the form of structured Tabular manner along with graphical results (Hair et al., 2021) [19]

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is of casual research with the object to obtain the relationship of cause-and-effect evidence between the variables.

Table 1: Table of Hypothesis

H1	Procurement activities	Procurement activities have a positive and significant effect on the Green service quality
H2	Product design	Product design has a positive and significant effect on the Green service quality
H3	After sales activity	After sales activities have a positive and significant effect on the Green service quality
H4	Information system related activities	Information System Related Activities have a positive and significant effect on Green service quality
H5	Green service quality	Green service quality has a positive and significant effect on the Brand image
H6	Brand image	Brand image has a positive and significant effect on Purchase intention

Conceptual Framework

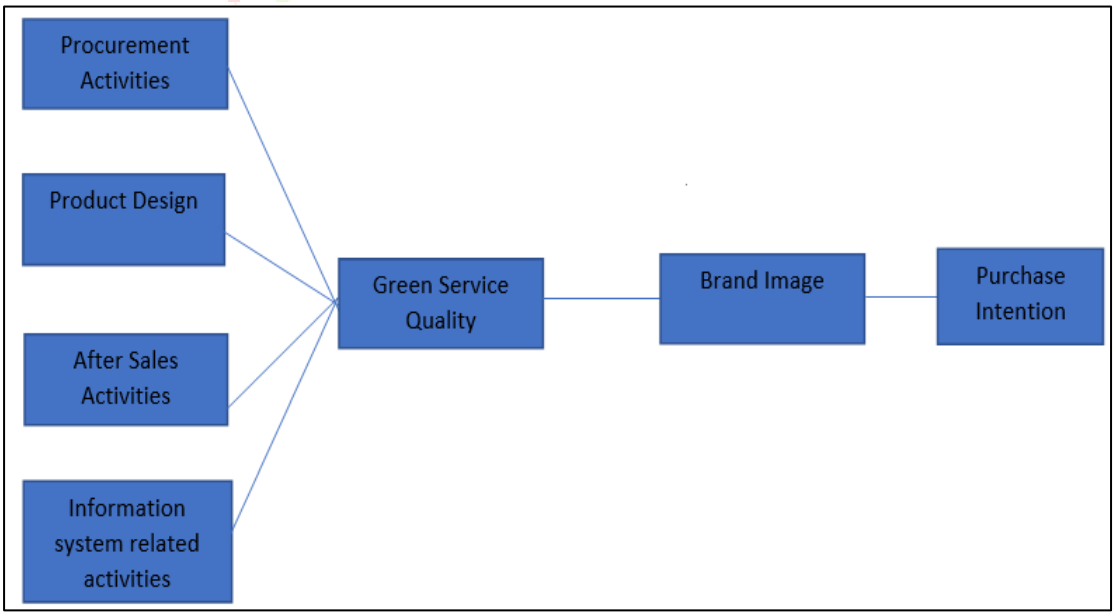

Fig. 1. Business Model

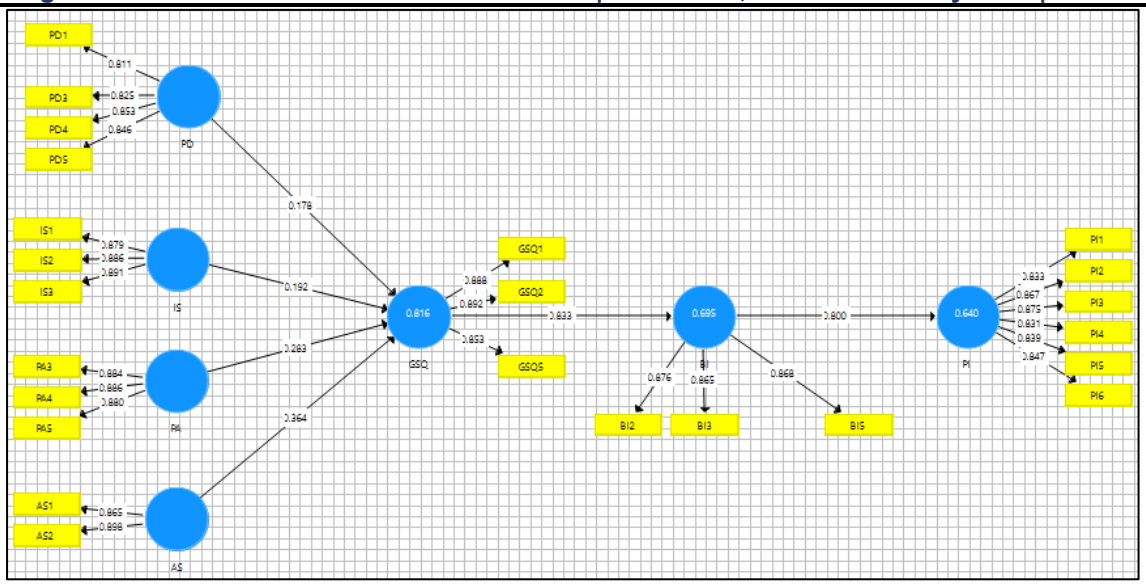

Fig. 2. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model here is the framework representing the factors which are in association with the purchase of the sustainable products.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is a type of Factor analysis used in the research purpose linked to social science related research work. It is to test whether there is an existence of the relation between the observed variable and the latent constructs. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis mostly works on authenticating a single model in assessing the loading values of an object further to assess the relation withing factors.

The working of the CFA is on validity and reliability, the validity is further of two types which are Convergent and Divergent Validity which are used for assessing the validity of constructs (Campbell et al. 1959) [20] whereas reliability is of Composite and Internal Reliability.

6.2. Reliability Analysis

The composite reliability also known as construct reliability is to measure the consistency in scale items. The below formula is to measure the composite reliability.

$$\frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{p}\lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{p}\lambda_i\right)^2+\sum_{i}^{p}\mathrm{V}(\delta)}$$

Fig. 3. Formula of Composite Reliability

Where,

λ_i = completely standardized loading for the *i*th indicator,

$V(\delta_i)$ = variance of the error term for the *i*th indicator,

p = number of indicators

On the other hand, the Internal reliability is in order to assess the consistency within a test for the results across the items, in other words it's to measure the consistency within itself.

The CFA could be impacted by various factors some of which are outliers, the hypothesis, sample size, missing data, interpretation of model fir indices (Schumacker et al. 1996) [21]

6.3. Cronbach Alpha

It is a measure for the internal consistency, this is to measure the degree of relation between the items as a group, this is a measure for the reliability. The acceptable level of the Cronbach Alpha is above 0.7 but in no case, it should go below 0.6. It is not any statistical test but a coefficient of reliability or consistency.

Abbreviations

1. AS: After sales activities
2. IS: Information system related activities
3. PD: Product Design
4. PA: Procurement activities
5. GSQ: Green service quality
6. BI: Brand image
7. PI: Purchase Intention

Table 2. Results of Cronbach Alpha

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
AS	0.714
BI	0.838
GSQ	0.851
IS	0.862
PA	0.859
PD	0.854
PI	0.922

Table 3: Results of Outer Loadings

Construct/Variables	Items	Loadings
After sales activities	AS1	0.865
	AS2	0.898
Brand image	BI2	0.876
	BI3	0.865
	BI5	0.868
Service quality	GSQ1	0.888
	GSQ2	0.892
	GSQ5	0.853
Information system	IS1	0.879
	IS2	0.886
	IS3	0.891
Procurement activities	PA3	0.884
	PA4	0.886
	PA5	0.88
Product design	PD1	0.811
	PD3	0.825
	PD4	0.853
	PD5	0.846
Purchase intention	PI1	0.833
	PI2	0.867
	PI3	0.875
	PI4	0.831
	PI5	0.839
	PI6	0.847

6.4. Variance Inflation Factor

The VIF is used to measure the severity or the amount of the multicollinearity in regression analysis. The multicollinearity is when there exists a correlation between various independent variables in a multiple regression. The VIF is able in assessing and estimating the amount of variance of a regression coefficient which is inflated due to the multicollinearity. This is used in statistical analysis research to test the effects of multiple variables on any particular outcome. The higher the multicollinearity the harder it is to estimate the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable.

- A VIF of less than or equal to three is acceptable but with increase in the VIF the reliability of regression results decreases.

- A VIF which is equal to one is an indicator of nonexistence of multicollinearity and the variables and not correlated.
- If the VIF is 1 then the variables are not correlated, if VIF is within the range of 1 to 5 then there is a moderate correlation between variables and if the VIF is greater than 5 there is a high correlation among variables.

Table 4: Results of VIF

Items	VIF
AS1	1.446
AS2	1.446
BI2	2.014
BI3	2
BI5	1.899
GSQ1	2.331
GSQ2	2.361
GSQ5	1.808
IS1	2.104
IS2	2.255
IS3	2.256
PA3	2.187
PA4	2.226
PA5	2.09
PD1	1.866
PD3	1.925
PD4	2.181
PD5	2.157
PI1	2.599
PI2	3.007
PI3	3.203
PI4	2.666
PI5	2.77
PI6	2.823

From the above data it is evident that there are only two variables highlighted in above table where a moderate amount of multicollinearity is seen although a moderate amount is acceptable, apart from them the tables show no significantly high value of VIF which shows that the variables does not show multicollinearity and hence the regression results are reliable.

6.5. Validity

6.5.1. Convergent Validity

The convergent validity is when the two questions give the same results, in other words it refers to the degree of close relation between a new scale and the other variables and other indicators of the same construct. Here there should be the correlation between the related variables and construct, and it should not correlate with the dissimilar variables. This validity is often times used as a parameter in sociology, behavioural sciences, and psychology. The convergent validity can be calculated via using the correlation coefficients, and a successful validity test is an indication of strong correlation between a concept test and other tests which are designed in order for evaluating that the concepts are logically identical in nature.

The intercorrelation between two different measures should be low whereas the correlation between the two similar measures should be significantly high.

Table 5: Result of convergent validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
AS	0.714	0.874	0.777
BI	0.838	0.903	0.756
GSQ	0.851	0.91	0.771
IS	0.862	0.916	0.784
PA	0.859	0.914	0.78
PD	0.854	0.901	0.695
PI	0.922	0.939	0.72

Only PD has a value of 0.695 but it is close to 0.7 hence acceptable, therefore the internal reliability is established. Composite reliability of each construct is greater than 0.7 hence reliability is established.

6.5.2. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is for showing the extent to which the test is not related to the other tests which are for measurements of other constructs. The discriminants validity coefficients should be smaller than the convergent coefficient of validity. The discriminant validity is evident when the coefficient values does not exceed the values when the constructs are compared to itself.

Table 6: Result of Discriminant Validity

	AS	BI	GSQ	IS	PA	PD	PI
AS	0.881						
BI	0.778	0.869					
GSQ	0.802	0.833	0.878				
IS	0.685	0.829	0.796	0.885			
PA	0.652	0.803	0.805	0.748	0.883		
PD	0.685	0.763	0.806	0.803	0.793	0.834	
PI	0.728	0.8	0.805	0.74	0.756	0.814	0.849

The criteria in about table has been taken from (Fornell et al. 1981) [22] where the highlighted values in about table are the result of square root of AVE. the value below each highlighted diagonal cell is lower than that of the highlighted cells in each column hence the discriminant validity is proven.

6.6. Hypothesis Analysis

Table 7: Results of Hypothesis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Analysis (Alternative Hypothesis)
AS -> GSQ	0.364	0.353	0.075	4.877	0	Accepted
BI -> PI	0.8	0.798	0.057	13.927	0	Accepted
GSQ -> BI	0.833	0.83	0.037	22.75	0	Accepted
IS -> GSQ	0.192	0.201	0.083	2.32	0.021	Accepted
PA -> GSQ	0.283	0.273	0.089	3.201	0.001	Accepted
PD -> GSQ	0.189	0.207	0.096	1.98	0.048	Accepted

The R-square is a measure used in statistical studies in order to measure proportion of variance in the dependent variables which could be examined by the independent variable. It is to show the degree of fit of the data in the regression model. Other name for R-square is Coefficient of Determination.

From the table it is evident that After sales has the greatest amount of influence in the Green service quality followed by Purchase intention, Information system related activities and product design. The product design has least influence on the green service quality.

Formula of R-square:

R-Square = 1 – Unexplained variation/Total Variation

6.7. Path Analysis

Table 8: Results of Path Analysis

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Analysis	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)	Predictive Relevance
BI	0.695	0.692	Medium	357	172.474	0.517	Substantial
GSQ	0.816	0.81	Substantial	357	135.898	0.619	Substantial
PI	0.64	0.637	Medium	714	389.978	0.454	Substantial

The Path analysis is a multiple regression measure, it is used for the estimation of the casual models via examination of the relation between a dependent and multiple independent variable quantities. This is helpful to researchers in estimation of magnitude as well as the significance of casual connections between the variables. The method to do this is done in following steps:

- Construction of Input diagram
- Statistical analysis
- Construction of output path diagram
- Analysis of the output path diagram

7. LIMITATIONS

- The data collection is only done via online methods.
- The study group was of 119 respondents which is comparatively small hence if the respondents were high in number more precise values could have been achieved.
- The study does not through light on other factors which might be related to sustainability which could play major driver in the purchase intentions.

8. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights significant antecedents from corporate and customer characteristics that are likely to influence green buying intention in shopping environments from a theoretical perspective. An organization's production and marketing processes are integrated to better meet customer expectations through high-quality service. This idea suggests that flexibility and superior service design have taken the place of mass production as the most significant factor.

Customers are more inclined to purchase a sustainable product and the business will eventually achieve profitability if they believe that a company's product offering is accompanied by improved service quality. Setting greater charges for its green products and services will also help the company meet its goals. This is due to the increased cost of premium green items for clients that are environmentally sensitive. Consumers do not make a trade-off between a product's high-quality attributes and its environmental friendliness. It is obvious that consumers will choose service quality over environmentally friendly products if there is a trade-off between product quality and greenness. Therefore, consumers' preference for environmentally friendly products is based on the product's green value. This study has significant ramifications for e-commerce companies. Green production may now be used to set oneself apart and position oneself. Therefore, instead of just promoting their green products, businesses can include an environmentally friendly objective into their corporate strategy. As a result, authorities and manufacturing companies need to come up with communication techniques that will encourage green consumption. Additionally, actions like tight quality control through certifications, such as ISO certified goods/services, and environmental education would support the cause of green consumerism among consumers.

9. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From a management standpoint, the study offers guidance for managers to create more efficient strategies that will assist enterprises realise green benefits but also benefit society and the environment. The goal of this study was to identify the key predictors in order to present new levers of action that encourage people to buy green products. Additionally, by providing intangible services (such as convenience, knowledge, friendliness, and efficiency), the company may raise the perceived value and attraction of green products and help manufacturers avoid the trap of declining product margins. A company gains a competitive edge by combining ethereal e-services with tangible items to generate causal ambiguity, which is hard to copy. A company should therefore aggressively incorporate environmental considerations into its strategic planning and services implementation. The second is for producers of green goods to continue to be very dedicated to environmental responsibility. To support eco-friendly products, they must run vigorous and energetic promotional programmes. Hence in order to enhance the purchase intentions of a sustainable product the company could work on their Green service quality which include procurement activities such as the sourcing of goods which are energy efficient, enhancing the recycling process, along with working on the product design such as designing an environmentally friendly product, along with After sales activities and information system related activities.

10. CONCLUSION

This study analysed perceptual and attitudinal effects of the implementation of sustainability on purchase intention. Results of Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) seem to support the hypothesis of Procurement Activities(H1), Product Design(H2), After sales Activities(H3), Information system related activities (H4), Green service quality (H5), Brand Image (H6). Convergent validity and discriminant validity are used to check the acceptance of all the hypothesis formed in the research work. The Path analysis is a multiple regression measure which is used in the research for the estimation of the casual models via examination of the relation between a dependent and multiple independent variable quantity. This is helpful in estimation of magnitude as well as the significance of casual connections between the variables. If a company wants to enhance the purchase intention for their sustainable products they are required to enhance the factors given in this study such as the Product design, Procurement activities, Information system related activities and after sales activities. The study throws a light on the fact that by doing so the company can enhance their Brand image which again will increase the purchase intention of the products. However, apart from the above mentioned factors there may be other factors which influence the purchase intention of buyer for sustainable products hence the study throws only partial light on the factors of the purchase intention.

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