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**GREEN BRAND IMAGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH WOMEN'S PURCHASE DECISION  
TOWARD APPAREL BRANDS****Sumona De Sil\* and Kavita Kamath****ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** *The emphasis on environmental sustainability in the apparel industry has been significant in recent years as apparel brands adopt various eco-friendly and green initiatives to build a responsible brand image. This study identifies the determinants of “green” brand image among women apparel shoppers and examines its relationship with their purchase decision toward apparel brands.*

**Methodology:** *The study adopted a quantitative research methodology where primary data was collected from 200 women apparel shoppers aged between 18–45 years in Pune with the help of a structured questionnaire; where responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's coefficient of correlation to examine the relationship between green brand image and women's purchase decision, with Cronbach's alpha confirmed reliability above 0.82.*

**Findings:** *The results indicate that sustainability-oriented green practices such as eco-friendly materials, recycling initiatives, and green brand communication contributes to a favorable green brand image among women apparel shoppers and subsequent purchase decision ( $r = 0.58, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that when apparel brands position themselves as environmentally responsible, it positively influences women consumers' purchase decisions.*

**Research Implications:** *The study underscores incorporating and communicating sustainability practices into branding strategies within the apparel sector. Apparel brands should strengthen their green brand image by clearly conveying their sustainable campaigns and responsible practices to women consumers who constitute a majority in the market. The findings provide useful insights for marketers to position sustainability as an important element of brand communication that can shape women's apparel buying behavior.*

**Keywords:** *Green Brand Image, Sustainable Branding, Purchase Decision, Apparel Industry, Women Consumers, Environmental Sustainability, Buying Behavior.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The global apparel industry is undergoing a transformation as it is shifting to a sustainable and a circular sector due to the increasing environmental hazards and rising consumer awareness. According to UNEP<sup>1</sup> (2025), the global textile waste amounts to 92 million tonnes and every second, trucks filled with clothes are burnt or dumped in landfills making it one of the highest contributors of pollution. As the global consumption is forecasted to increase by 60% till 2030, the pressure on the environment is also expected to aggravate. Recent reports highlights those 79 trillion liters of water is consumed by the fashion industry alone, and is also responsible for 10% of the global carbon emissions and around 20% of waste water production<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, green marketing practices have become the need of the hour and is essential to be integrated into each and every segment within the industry. Brands are also proactively building a “green brand image” to reach out to the eco-conscious consumers who account for 66% of the global consumers and are willing to pay premium prices for the sustainable brands<sup>3</sup>.

According to Tryphena and Aram<sup>4</sup> (2023), the consumers form their associations and perception towards the brand based on cues that the product or the brand provides and form an image on their own. Some of the cues in the context of green branding are product benefits, perceived quality, contribution to the preservation of the environment, ethical sourcing techniques, fair pricing, and aesthetic appeal. Once the consumers interact with these touchpoints along with the green communication, a significant positive image is reinforced. The consumers perceive the brand as credible, trust-worthy and a green brand and in turn is motivated to purchase when it matches with their values<sup>5</sup>. In the context of apparel industry, sourcing organic raw materials, sustainable fabrics, packaging and maintaining an eco-friendly retail outlet highly influences consumers intention to purchase. FabIndia is one such brand that proactively follows sustainable path as it replaced plastic hangers to wooden ones in their retail outlet<sup>6</sup>. Doodlage<sup>7</sup> is another sustainable brand which sources 60% of its fabric from the traders and factories in New Delhi and Jaipur and utilizes old fabrics to produce new clothes.

Women's purchase decisions toward green apparel brands are influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and product-related factors that interplay to shape their buying intentions and behavior. In India, women make up 47% of the nation's online shoppers, demonstrating a decrease in inequality and acceptance of new

trends. Women in tier 1 cities are adept at using digital platforms and have developed into seasoned, self-assured consumers<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, they value product functionality, fashion, comfort, and versatility. The decision-making is also greatly influenced by social influences and prefer well-known sustainable businesses free from deceptive advertising. Here, transparency and reliability of sustainability claims becomes crucial<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, this underscores to identify the green brand image determinants and its relationship with women's purchase decision toward apparel brands in Pune.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chen<sup>10</sup> (2010) describes green brand image as the set of perceptions held in the minds of the consumers with respect to a brand's environmental commitments and concerns. It is not an identity that the brand declares, instead it is the active construction of an image through observation, experience, beliefs, and environmental conduct that is strategically "positioned" by the brand. Whereas, according to Bashir<sup>11</sup> et al. (2020) a brand's functional, emotional and green benefits shapes the consumer perception and builds a favorable image. Functional benefits like sustainable production, ethical sourcing, efficient use of resources and emotional benefit like the feeling of contributing to the environmental protection results in a positive perception.

Sharma and Kushwaha<sup>12</sup> (2019) have pointed out that in the recent years' brands have positioned themselves as green through various mediums, eco-labels being one of them. These are not mere symbols but "information tools" that convey the sustainable features of the products and distribution network. According to Rahbar and Wahid<sup>13</sup> (2011), eco labelling and green certifications are one of the primary drivers of green brand perception. When a brand positions itself as sustainable with the help of certifications, eco-labels and credibility signals, the consumers also perceive the brand as eco-conscious rather than just viewing it as decorative additions. It was observed that consumers are more likely to assign positive environmental attributes and call it "high quality" when the clothes are produced from durable, functional, and eco-friendly materials<sup>14</sup>. In the Indian apparel sector, brands like FabIndia<sup>5</sup> (2025) source their raw and organic materials from rural artisans and promotes eco-friendly production. While No Nasties positions itself a carbon-negative company by using 100% GOTS-certified organic cotton and it also holds Fair Trade certification<sup>15</sup>.

Ottman<sup>16</sup> (2017) highlights that green advertising is an important element which influences consumer perception of a brand's "environmental commitment". An authentic, transparent, reliable, environment-friendly and consumer-oriented communication from the company is the foundation of green advertising as it brings clarity to vague information. Due to the communication of functional benefits including reduced harm to the environment, the skepticism among consumers are considerably reduced. According to Liu and Tang<sup>17</sup> (2023), the "two-way communication" and "user-generated" influence is a more fruitful approach to green branding. The active engagement nature of social media platforms to share, co-create green brand narratives enables the consumers to form a brand image easily in comparison to traditional mediums of green advertising. As the social media provides real-time feedback, group discussions, review, and "electronic word-of-mouth" through community validation, consumers find the brands trustworthy and transparent.

Sustainable product attributes of the apparel also influences consumer perceptions towards such brands. Conscious use of natural resources, ethical sourcing, reduction of by-waste, environmentally responsible methods of production and disposal contributes to how consumers interpret the brand's environmental stance. When apparel brands integrate sustainability throughout the different phases of the product life cycle, it conveys a deeper meaning than conventional fashion brands. This strengthens a brand's authenticity and ethical identity in the market<sup>4</sup>. A brand's corporate social responsibility and reputation has also emerged as a significant driver of green brand image. When apparel brands undertake CSR work for the benefit of society, the environment, and workers, consumers develop more favorable perceptions of a brand's products and services. It results in a significant improvement in brand image and stronger consumer retention<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, according to CSR<sup>19</sup> (2021), clothing brands like W for Woman and Biba have also begun including sustainable fabric lines into their collection as part of Project SU.RE (Sustainable Resolution) under the Union Ministry of Textile as part of their pledge to protect the environment.

According to Plotkina<sup>20</sup> et al. (2025), the use of green packaging also directly shapes the consumers' perception of a brand's environmental responsibility. Here, the tangible cues of sustainability are eco-friendly packaging that are produced with biodegradable, recyclable, or reusable materials. Packaging was found to be a major touchpoint as it influences first impression and reinforces the green messaging over repeated interaction. This allows the consumers to feel positive from supporting a responsible brand as they recognize environmental benefits like reduced carbon footprint and form a favorable brand image. Indian fashion brands like Doodlage, RawMango, Rustic Hue package their clothing items using biodegradable materials in alignment with their

sustainable identity. They also use recycled paper, minimum materials, and simple designs that reduce environmental impact<sup>21</sup>

Women are sensitive and responsive to environmental signals communicated by the brands such as sustainable practices, green communication or eco-labels. Furthermore, when women shoppers see that their values and the green initiatives by the green brands are aligned, they are more likely to accept green products<sup>22 23</sup>. However, price is an important factor when purchase decisions are concerned. According to Kumar<sup>24</sup> et al. (2020), the price perception is an important antecedent to green brand image, as consumer discern and evaluate the brand or a product's credibility and value based on its price and offering. When the consumers feel the price is justified for the product against the brands' sustainable efforts, ethical sourcing, product benefits, quality, and fairness, they are willing to pay premium price for the same products<sup>25</sup> (Pardeshi et al., 2024). Tryphena and Aram<sup>4</sup> (2023), discovered that urban middle class places particular importance on pricing even when expressing eco-friendly preferences. In the context of green marketing, consumers' beliefs about a brand's environmental responsibility are shaped through cues such as product attributes, eco-labels, and communication. This can also be explained using the "Stimulus–Organism–Response Model", where sustainability cues act as stimuli influencing green brand image, which in turn leads to purchase decision<sup>26</sup>.

Additionally, the "Theory of Planned Behavior" developed by Ajzen<sup>27</sup> (1991) stated that consumers form purchase decisions based on their evaluation of the behavior and the social pressure associated with it. When consumers develop a positive attitude toward a brand's sustainability practices, they are more likely to make favorable purchase decision. This is based on attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control.

The literature on green branding is growing, however, existing studies examines the determinants like green labels, green advertising, sustainable product attributes or CSR independently, and overlooks its influence on formation of green brand image. Furthermore, there is limited literature which compares the effect of traditional sustainable signals against the digital channels like social media and its role in influencing consumer perception. Also, there is limited behavioral insights as previous studies focus on purchase intention instead of the actual purchase decision. Additionally, gender specific empirical study in the context of Indian apparel sector is less. Therefore, this study addresses the above gaps by examining the influence of green brand image and its impact on women's purchase decision toward apparel brands in Pune

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Objectives:

1. To identify the determinants of green brand image among women shoppers of apparel brands.
2. To examine the relationship between green brand image and women's purchase decision toward apparel brands.

### SAMPLE DESIGN

The samples size was determined using Cochran's formula for proportion (suitable for large or unknown population) at first and further filtered based on the geographical scope of the study. Quota sampling was employed as the sampling technique with age as the quota control variable, ensuring proportionate representation across the three age groups within the 18–45 years range based on Pune's urban female population distribution<sup>28</sup>. Gender was controlled through the screening section, limiting participation to female respondents only. Drawing on precedent from comparable city-level consumer behavior studies by Chen<sup>10</sup> (2010) Rahbar and Wahid<sup>13</sup> (2011), a total of 235 questionnaires were distributed through online and offline modes including WhatsApp, Instagram, Meta groups and personal networks in Pune. Screening criteria were embedded within the Google Forms questionnaire to ensure only eligible respondents were included. The final valid sample retained for analysis was 211 after removing discrepancies.

Screening Parameters	Inclusion Criteria
Gender	Female respondents only
Age	18-45 years
Green Brand Awareness	Aware of at least one green or sustainable apparel brand (reference: H&M Conscious, Fabindia, Biba, Levi's, Marks & Spencer)
Purchase timeline	Made at least ( $\geq 1$ ) apparel purchase from a phygital brand in last 6 monthd

**Research Hypotheses:**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** No significant relationship exists between green brand image and women's purchase decision toward apparel brands in Pune.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** A significant positive relationship exists between green brand image and women's purchase decision toward apparel brands in Pune.

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation (two-tailed) followed by a t-test to validate the significance of the correlation, with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27.0. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha for each construct. The value obtained for the green brand image construct was 0.83, and for the purchase decision construct was 0.81, both exceeding the standard threshold of 0.80, indicating good reliability. The overall instrument reliability stood at 0.82, confirming adequate internal consistency across all items.

The study refers to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework which explains the influence of external factors (sustainability-related cues- product attributes, eco-labels, green advertising, and social media) on consumer perception and purchase decision. In this context, act as stimuli that shape green brand image. The study also refers to Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that positive attitudes toward a brand’s sustainability practices can lead to favorable purchase decisions.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The analysis of the data collected from 211 valid respondents is presented as demographic profile of respondents and hypothesis testing.

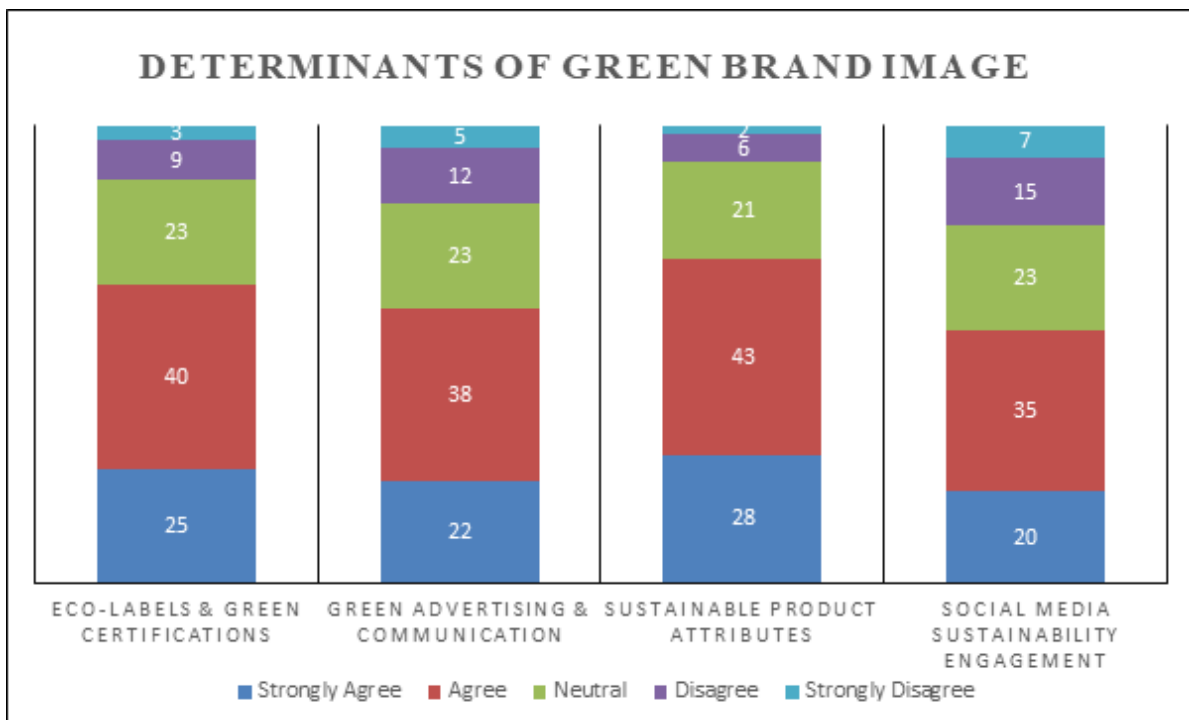
**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

**Table 1.** Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Target Respondents	Valid Respondents	Percentage
18-25 years	70	70	33%
26-35 years	85	85	40%
36-45 years	56	56	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source:* Primary Data

In **Table 1.** The sample consists of 211 female respondents distributed across three age groups as per the quota sampling design, i.e. 18–25 years (n = 70, 33%), 26–35 years (n = 85, 40%), and 36–45 years (n = 56, 27%).



**Fig 1.** Determinants of Green Brand Image

*Source-* Primary Data

Fig 1. depicts the agreement level among female respondents towards the determinants of green brand image. The data represents strongest level of agreement for sustainable product attributes where 43% and 28% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they prefer apparel brands using organic, recycled, or sustainably sourced materials. Eco-labels and green certifications emerged as the second strongest determinant where 40% and 25% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that information regarding certifications intensifies their trust in brand’s environmental commitment while 9% and 3% disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, green advertising and communication ranked third with 38% agreeing and 22% strongly agreeing that sustainability-focused brand communication positively shapes their perception while 23% of the respondents were neutral and 12% and 5% disagreed and strongly disagreed. Social media sustainability engagement was ranked the lowest where 35% and 20% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they perceive the brand to be credible when they engage with social media content on sustainability, while a relatively higher 15% and 7% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

**Interpretation**

The findings identifies the four determinants of green brand image among women apparel shoppers in Pune in descending order of influence like sustainable product attributes, eco-labels and green certification, green advertising and communication, and social media sustainability engagement. As sustainable product attributes recorded the highest rank, it reinforces that women apparel shoppers in Pune are more persuaded by product level tangible and verifiable evidence in comparison to communication or digital engagement based green signal. While urban women in Pune are increasingly exposed to sustainability content on social media, it is observed that digital green communication is not strong enough signal to form a definitive green brand perception.

**Hypothesis Testing**

**H1: A significant positive relationship exists between green brand image and women’s purchase decision toward apparel brands in Pune.**

The strength and significance of the relationship between independent variable, Green Brand Image (GBI) and dependent variable, Purchase decision was examined with the help of Pearson’s Coefficient of Correlation (two-tailed test) using SPSS 27.0.

**Pearson Coefficient Correlation:**

$$r = \frac{\sum(X-\bar{X})(Y-\bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum(X-\bar{X})^2}\sqrt{\sum(Y-\bar{Y})^2}} \tag{1}$$

Where, X, Y is Observed variables, and  $\bar{X}$ ,  $\bar{Y}$  is Mean, r is Coefficient of correlation.

**Table 2.** Relationship between Green Brand Image and Purchase Decision of Women Apparel Shoppers

Variable	Mean( $\bar{X}$ )	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value (two- tailed)	Significance
Green Brand Image (GBI)	3.72	0.58	< 0.001	Significant
Purchase Decision	3.67	-	-	-

Furthermore, t-test was performed to validate the significance of the correlation at 95% Confidence Interval

$$t = r \sqrt{\frac{n - 2}{1 - r^2}}$$

$$t = 0.58 \sqrt{\frac{209}{1 - 0.3364}} = 10.29$$

Here, n=211

degree of freedom (df) = n-2=209

p < 0.001

Confidence Interval = 95%; r: 0.48 to 0.67

### Interpretation

Table 2 indicates a moderately strong and significant positive correlation between Green Brand Image (GBI) and Purchase decision ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $t(209) = 10.29$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that a brand's environmental identity creates a favorable perception and subsequently strengthens women's purchase decision towards sustainable apparel brands in Pune. The stability and reliability of the relationship between the two is confirmed by confidence interval (0.48 to 0.67). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted establishing that a significant positive relationship exists between green brand image and women's purchase decision toward apparel brands in Pune.

### DISCUSSION

The study examined the different sustainable cues or determinants that shape green brand image among women shoppers towards apparel brands. The results from Fig. 1 address the first objective and identified sustainable product attributes as the strongest determinant of green brand image (43%), followed by eco-labelling and green certifications (40%), green advertising and communication (38%), and social media sustainability engagement (35%). The results show consistency with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model where, tangible product-level stimuli generate stronger perceptual responses than communication-based ones. It also implies that product benefits and functionality appeal to women apparel shoppers and influence the brand image<sup>4</sup>. It is also to be noted that social media engagement was ranked lowest and reinforces that it is not yet a dominant channel for green brand perception formation in this demographic.

The findings from the hypothesis testing addresses the second objective, as it establishes a moderately-strong and significant positive correlation between green brand image and purchase decision ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This supports the argument that a favorable green brand image reduces perceived risk and builds green trust, which in turn strengthens purchase decision. The findings also aligns with Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Ajzen<sup>25</sup> (1995) that when women's brand image toward sustainability align with the brand's green identity, it leads to favorable purchase decision. The confidence interval (0.48 to 0.67) confirms the stability of this relationship, suggesting that green brand image is a reliable predictor of purchase decision among women apparel shoppers in Pune.

### CONCLUSION

The study examined the determinants of green brand image and its relationship with women's purchase decisions toward apparel brands in Pune. Two key findings emerge based on the primary data collected from 211 female respondents and analyzed using Pearson's correlation, *Firstly*, in the descending order of influence, sustainable product attributes, eco-labelling and certifications, green advertising, and social media engagement were identified as the main determinants of green brand image. As the product attributes was ranked higher, it may be noted that tangible sustainability practices have a greater influence on perception than communication-based initiatives. *Secondly*, as the relationship between green brand image and purchase decision was analyzed to be moderately strong and significantly ( $r = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), it can be concluded that women apparel shoppers are more likely to purchase based on their environmental perception towards.

The study contributes to existing literature on green brand image with focus on region-specific regreen consumer behavior with the help of empirical evidence from Pune. The findings show that clothing companies must prove their sustainability through their real operations, particularly with regard to sourcing and materials. While social media is an important channel, it is recommended to be used for consistent and transparent communication instead of promotional content. The future scope of the study extends other metropolitan areas and examining other variables like environmental knowledge, awareness techniques, and other elements of the green marketing mix against the evolving consumer behavior.

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