Greenwash and green purchase intentions among Vietnamese consumers: The mediating roles of green skepticism, environmental concern and knowledge

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ABSTRACT

As green marketing has gained momentum in recent years, corporations have begun using greenwash to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals. This study investigates a theoretical framework that establishes a connection between greenwash, skepticism towards environmental claims, and the ambition to make environmentally friendly purchases. The study also examines how environmental concern and environmental knowledge influence the relationship between greenwash, green skepticism, and green purchasing intentions. Information was collected from a sample of 287 Vietnamese consumers, and then hypothesis testing was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The study of multivariate data revealed a negative correlation between greenwash and green purchasing intentions, while a positive correlation was found between greenwash and green skepticism. Furthermore, green skepticism has both immediate and indirect impacts on the intentions to purchase green products. The study's outcome also illustrates that environmental concern and environmental knowledge play the role of mediators in the relationship between green skepticism and green purchase intentions. These findings contribute to the existing understanding of the connection between greenwash, green skepticism, and green purchase intentions. The findings indicate that it is imperative to increase customers' awareness of environmental protection through promoting green consumption in Vietnam, a country grappling with environmental protection challenges and sustainable development. The outcomes also have significant ramifications for companies that strive to prevent greenwashing, diminish buyers' distrust, and enhance buyers' inclination to buy environmentally friendly products. Companies can implement effective strategies related to green activities and minimize greenwashing to enhance consumer purchase intention.

1. Introduction

Recently, green products have been preferred due to their minimal negative impacts on health and the environment (Choi & Johnson, 2019; Palevich, 2012). The increasing consumers' awareness regarding sustainability has resulted in discernible shifts in their purchasing

behaviours and actions (Nguyen et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020). Organizations are increasingly motivated to develop environmentally sustainable strategies and integrate these practices into their offerings due to shifting consumer interests (Chang et al., 2021). By adopting these environmentally friendly practices, businesses can improve their brand image and establish themselves as socially responsible entities (Nguyen et al., 2021; Situmorang et al., 2021).

Previous research has thoroughly investigated the causes, classification, and effects of greenwashing activities across different sectors. the gasoline sector (Kim & Lyon, 2015; Nelson & Robertson, 2008), the automobile sector (Siano et al., 2017), finance sector (Relaño, 2011; Wang & Sarkis, 2017), the education sector (Jones, 2012), electronics sector (Chen & Chang, 2012; Chen & Chang, 2013a; Chen et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2016), and the food sector (Nguyen et al., 2019a). Prior studies have mostly taken place in Western countries (Chen & Chang, 2012; Chen & Chang 2013a; Chen et al., 2014; Guo et al., 2017; Kim & Lyon, 2015). Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies on greenwash activities in the fashion sector, specifically in developing nations. There is limited research that has explored the connection between greenwash and green purchasing intentions, considering the influence of green skepticism, environmental concern, and knowledge as mediating factors (Nguyen et al., 2019a). Therefore, this study will carefully examine this issue in Vietnam which is a developing nation located in Southeast Asian.

Vietnam's textile and clothing sector has a crucial position and has substantially impacted the country's economy and sustainable growth in the long run (Nguyen et al., 2019a). Vietnam is no exception to the worldwide trend of adopting environmentally friendly clothing (Nguyen et al., 2019a). Green fashion is commonly linked to sustainable resources and manufacturing and distribution processes (Uyen Huong, 2015). The Vietnamese fashion sector is seen as a vast prospective market owing to its youthful demographics, increasing earnings, and population of approximately 96.9 million (Hung Le, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Vietnamese fashion firms compete for their goods and the high standard of their services throughout the selling procedure (Le et al., 2022). Vietnam's fashion industry is experiencing robust growth, requiring businesses to understand and cater to the unique needs of their customers, ensuring a comprehensive and effective business strategy (Le et al., 2022). Hence, future research is needed to understand consumer intentions in the early stages of Vietnam's economic growth (Le et al., 2022).

Besides that, the retail sector plays a significantly more pivotal role in promoting sustainability than other businesses (Yang et al., 2017). The essential role of innovation for garment businesses is readily apparent due to the features of the quick fashion process and the rapidly evolving consumer need within the textile and garment sector (Wang & Memon, 2020). Textiles and fast fashion companies face pollution issues during manufacturing, including high emissions and garbage accumulation. To address these challenges, companies must adopt environmentally friendly approaches and sustainable practices to reduce waste and protect the environment (Wagaye et al., 2020). Customers perceived that protecting the environment is not just the responsibility of governmental organizations but also individual citizens (Fraj & Martinez, 2007). Consumers prefer eco-friendly products manufactured from natural fibres to minimize environmental harm and support health (Finisterra do Paço & Raposa, 2008). Hence, understanding customer behaviour and purchasing habits is crucial for marketers, particularly for firms focused on environmental sustainability (Saeed et al., 2013). There is also a need for more studies assessing consumer perspectives and actions, especially in fashion sectors like textiles and apparel, which are often overlooked in green innovation research (Chen et al., 2021). Most scholars have studied "green purchase intentions" in developed nations (Bleda & Valente, 2009).

However, the findings consistently contradict each other because customers' green purchasing behaviour might vary across different cultures, social contexts, and demographic factors (Nayak et al., 2019). Thus, this study examines the green purchase intentions in the context of Vietnam - a developing nation - and raises awareness of polluted environments.

Besides that, greenwashing has emerged as a prominent aspect of firms' marketing strategies, reflecting the public's apprehension over this practice and its effects (Sun & Zhang, 2019). Vietnam faces challenges balancing environmental preservation and sustainable development, especially in addressing its residents' purchasing habits (Nguyen et al., 2020). Several studies have focused on sustainable development in wealthy nations (Allwood et al., 2008; De Brito et al., 2008). The previous studies reveal a limited number of studies that specifically investigate corporate greenwashing in developing Asian nations (Yang et al., 2020) despite the extensive research on this topic. Therefore, this study aims to examine the sustainability employed within the fashion sector in Vietnam.

Moreover, many studies have examined the origins, methodologies, and impacts of greenwashing within business contexts (Du, 2015; Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2021; Parguel et al., 2011). Nevertheless, there needs to be more emphasis on the impacts of greenwashing on the surroundings, particularly its effects on Vietnam (Mainardes et al., 2020). When customers perceive that corporations engage in ecologically friendly activities, their willingness to purchase the items they offer may increase (Chen et al., 2018). Nonetheless, if a firm engages in greenwashing practices, consumers may boycott its products rather than purchase them (Obermiller et al., 2005). Vietnamese customers are increasingly adopting greenwashing practices in the fashion sector, highlighting the importance of promoting eco-friendly purchasing intentions to maintain a competitive edge in the industry. Hence, this study aims to investigate the effect of greenwashing on green purchase intentions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Explaining key concepts

2.1.1. Greenwash

Greenwash signifies that an organization's deceitful and incorrect claim is considered secure and environmentally friendly, although it is not (Parguel et al., 2011). It is also defined as the concealment of environmentally destructive content behind an appearance of concern for the environment (Du, 2015). The term "greenwash" pertains to deceiving consumers regarding a company's environmental performance or the positive impacts of its products or services on the ecosystem (Avcilar & Demirgünes, 2017).

Fashion companies often adopt a more sustainable approach to enhance their reputation among customers and generate profits (Blesserholt, 2021). This implies that organizations do not inherently produce more sustainably than their competitors; instead, the distinction is in their ability to create a perception among customers that they do (Strähle & Hauk, 2017). Greenwash is a form of deceit within the fashion industry, prompting shoppers to question the extent to which firms prioritize sustainability (Mehar, 2021). Despite significant resources allocated to this promotion, fashion firms are engaging in greenwash, using terms like "eco-friendly" to promote environmental friendliness without actively addressing their environmental impact (Blesserholt, 2021).

2.1.2. Green skepticism

Skepticism often occurs when there is a noticeable difference between an organization's stated achievements and its actual outcomes' being skeptical often emerges whenever there appears a discrepancy between an organization's claimed accomplishments and its actual results (Zarei & Maleki, 2018). Clients can express skepticism toward firms when they observe a lack of consistency between the company's advertised practices and implementation (Nguyen et al., 2019a). Skepticism is a subject of scholarly investigation within several academic fields (Kim & Lee, 2009; Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017; Skarmeas et al., 2014).

The growing demand for environmentally friendly products has led some corporations to adopt this trend without addressing environmental concerns (Haag, 2022). The fast fashion industry's unethical practices, corporate misconduct, and unsustainable characteristics have sparked growing consumer skepticism about environmental sustainability (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017; Neumann et al., 2020). Environmentally conscious consumers often scrutinize products' ecological benefits due to greenwashing, lack of legal protection, and universally accepted definitions of "environmentally friendly" or "eco-friendly" (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017).

2.1.3. Environmental concern

Environmental concern refers to an assertive attitude regarding preserving and protecting the natural environment (Lakra et al., 2014). It also can be defined as a person's heightened concern for the environment (Schmuck et al., 2018). The concept of "environmentally friendly" has emerged as a novel aspect of the fashion standards of the product (Kianpour et al., 2014; Pagiaslis & Krontalis, 2014). Historically, luxury goods, clothing, and sustainability were distinct concepts, but with advancements in sustainable practices and customer concerns, the distinction between these concepts has diminished (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). The recognition of social concerns and sustainability problems in fashion items has seen a notable rise in recent years (Kapferer & Michaut, 2015). In contemporary society, consumers increasingly consider the impact of their shopping choices on both personal well-being and the natural environment (Yadar & Pathak, 2016). The recognition of social concerns has led to a notable surge in product excellence, making environmental preservation a crucial aspect of preserving the environment and fostering a more sustainable future (Amatulli et al., 2016; Kianpour et al., 2014).

2.1.4. Environmental knowledge

Environmental knowledge encompasses the extent of consumers' knowledge of the environment, their recognition of sustainability issues, their feelings about and involvement in environmental matters, and their comprehension of the effects of human actions on the surroundings (Finisterra do Paço et al., 2009; Zhao et al., 2014). Furthermore, it encompasses the comprehensive perspectives of customers about the ecological system and their recognition of the obligations associated with sustainable environmental growth (D'Souza et al., 2007). In the fashion sector, numerous studies have postulated that acquiring knowledge about environmentally conscious matters will foster favourable beliefs regarding sustainability or ethical purchasing (Bly et al., 2015). The research aims to examine the efficacy of various sources and types of information in promoting sustainable consumption within the fashion sector (Kong et al., 2016). Several research studies have indicated that customers are frequently willing to purchase ethical fashion goods from an attitudinal perspective (Jin Gam, 2011).

2.1.5. Green purchase intentions

Intentions refer to a behavioural tendency that subsequently leads to the performance of actions (Eles & Sihombing, 2017). It includes the motivating elements that drive an individual to engage in specific actions and signifies their desire and effort in carrying them out (Wong et al., 2012). Green purchase intentions refer to a buyer's first consideration of acquiring a green product (Ayoun & Ghallab, 2015; Goh & Balaji, 2016; Shen et al., 2012). Consumers can be motivated to purchase environmentally friendly items by fostering an awareness of responsibility reflected in their behaviour (Zarei & Maleki, 2018).

2.2. Hypothesis development

2.2.1. The relation between greenwash and green skepticism

Consumers engage in the process of evaluating the words and behaviours of companies, which may ultimately lead to the development of skepticism (Friestad & Wright, 1994). Consumers' skepticism reduces when they realize that the firm's green talk and green walk are unselfish actions (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017). Consumers, characterized by a high degree of skepticism, exhibit prejudice towards information claims, resulting in a lack of faith towards the arguments presented in advertisements (Akturan & Tezcan, 2019). Consumers express a higher degree of skepticism towards advertising than other forms of communication (Obermiller et al., 2005). Consumers' lack of knowledge and ability to verify environmental concerns and consumer values associated with green products leads to misunderstandings and skepticism (Ottman et al., 2006). Advertising may cause skepticism as a cognitive reaction (Pomering & Johnson, 2009). Consumers with high skepticism are likelier to respond negatively to advertisements (Anuar et al., 2013). Over the past few years, as consumer demand for environmentally friendly products has grown, the occurrence of greenwash has significantly increased (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Consumers are aware of greenwash, which causes them to be skeptical of companies' environmentally friendly activities (Chen & Chang, 2013a; Horiuchi et al., 2009), Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H1: Greenwash positively impacts on green skepticism

2.2.2. The relation between environmental concern and green purchase intentions

Customers with more environmental concerns are more willing to pay significant amounts for renewable energy than those with lower environmental concerns (Bang et al., 2000). There is a significant correlation between environmental concern and consumer intentions to purchase environmentally friendly items (Kim & Choi, 2005). Customers who are optimistic about the organization are more inclined to adhere to the ethical values associated with green products, positively impacting their green purchasing behaviour (Lu et al., 2015). Recently, buyers have been driven by environmental concerns to acquire knowledge of the consequences of their environmental purchases (Newton et al., 2015). Customers with heightened environmental consciousness tend to cultivate an enthusiastic attitude and preference towards eco-friendly products, potentially impacting their choices and intentions to make purchases (Newton et al., 2015).

Examining customers' environmentally friendly outlook and purchasing green items may be effectively initiated by considering environmental concerns (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Environmental concern is a vital component of environmental research, significantly influencing consumers' decision-making processes in favour of sustainable products (Lakra, 2014; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Individuals who have a vital concern for the environment are more likely to have a greater tendency to purchase green products (Albayrak et al., 2011). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H2: Environmental concern positively impacts on green purchase intentions

2.2.3. The relation between environmental knowledge and green purchase intentions

There is a positive relationship between environmental knowledge and the intention to purchase green products (Zarei & Maleki, 2018). There are different interpretations of environmental knowledge, notably subjective and objective knowledge of the environment (Goh & Balaji, 2016; Zarei & Maleki, 2018). Subjective knowledge refers to individuals' self-perceived understanding, whereas objective knowledge belongs to proper and particular information on a particular item (Zarei & Maleki, 2018). While consumers utilize both types of knowledge, it has been observed that subjective environmental knowledge holds greater significance in influencing environmental purchase intentions (Goh & Balaji, 2016). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H3: Environmental knowledge positively impacts on green purchase intentions

2.2.4. The relation between green skepticism and green purchase intentions

Customer skepticism results in unfavourable product evaluation and reduced purchase intentions (Morel & Pruyn, 2003). In the same way, Hughner et al. (2007) demonstrated that skepticism is a disincentive to the intention to purchase green items. In addition, the study by Yiridoe et al. (2005) discovered a negative correlation between green skepticism and purchasing intentions. Therefore, despite consumers' desire to purchase environmentally friendly products, their skepticism about their sustainability may prevent them from adopting (Yiridoe et al., 2005). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H4: Green skepticism negatively impacts on green purchase intentions

2.2.5. The mediating role of environmental concern on the relationship between green skepticism and green purchase intentions

Green skepticism among customers may result from environmental concerns, leading to a decrease in green purchase intentions (de Sio et al., 2022). This phenomenon is expected to decrease the demand for eco-friendly products in the near future (de Sio et al., 2022). When assessing sustainable goods, customers tend to see environmental information as an additional attribute of these products (Nguyen & Feng, 2020). Many studies have demonstrated that customers are mainly driven to purchase environmentally friendly products due to their significant environmental concerns (Nguyen & Feng, 2020). Skepticism could affect customers' environmental concerns (Roberts & Bacon, 1997). Doubtful and skeptical customers about green promises or performance may affect their willingness to purchase green items (Goh & Balaji, 2016). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H5: Environmental concern mediates the relationship between green skepticism and green purchase intentions

2.2.6. The mediating roles of environmental knowledge on the relationship between green skepticism and green purchase intentions

Consumers with a greater knowledge of the environment are concerned about environmental issues and are strongly inclined to purchase green items (Tilikidou, 2007). Moreover, research has uncovered that knowledgeable customers face more pressure to avoid being deceived by advertisements and unclear communication (Cheng & Wu, 2015). Hence, acquiring knowledge might make customers more likely to seek further information (Silva et al.,

2020). Given customers' increased knowledge of environmental issues, they tend to harbour skepticism about the existence of items with green labels (de Sio et al., 2022). Manipulating the green product knowledge component might alter skepticism's impact on the ultimate intention to purchase (Finisterra do Paço et al., 2009; Spangenberg et al., 2010). Individuals actively pursue information on environmentally friendly items (Akhondzadeh & Monfared, 2021). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H6: Environmental knowledge mediates the relationship between green skepticism and green purchase intentions

2.2.7. The impact of greenwash on green purchase intentions

Businesses that advocate for eco-friendly items without clearly explaining how these products contribute to the enhancement of our environment are likely to be regarded with suspicion (Nguyen et al., 2019a). The negative result is skepticism concerning these brands (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017; Yiridoe et al., 2005). Customers, therefore, question the green promises because they are concerned about the discrepancy between appearance and actuality (Horiuchi et al., 2009; Self et al., 2010). Greenwashing devalues good green items by introducing false environmental claims into the market (Polonsky et al., 2010). As a result, the campaign to go green would not have the backing of businesses, consumers, stakeholders, society, or organizations that would see a decline in the market share for environmentally friendly products (Du, 2015). Corporate greenwashing affects consumers' perceptions negatively and raises ethical concerns (Nyilasy et al., 2014). Customers' perceptions of the brand and intentions to make green purchases are significantly impacted by this, even if there are times when it is impossible to discern reality from deceptive conduct (Nyilasy et al., 2014).

Consumers can refrain from or modify their purchase choices regarding immoral corporations or countries (Chen et al., 2017). Companies leverage customers' preference for green goods to recruit them and demonstrate their commitment to environmental sustainability (Chen & Chang, 2013a; Horiuchi et al., 2009). If a business has used significant efforts to persuade customers of its "green claim," it will diminish the credibility of genuine remarks and lead to more negative evaluations (Chang, 2011). By presenting a deceptive green picture, there is an increase in misinformation and a decrease in customer trust (Pancer & McShane, 2013). As a result, customers lose interest and become reluctant to make future purchases (Pancer & McShane, 2013). The act of greenwashing has a negative effect on consumers' intentions to make purchases (Nyilasy et al., 2014). Companies allocate significant financial resources to green marketing to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental responsibility, expecting this to positively influence consumer perceptions of their brand and increase the likelihood of purchase (Nyilasy et al., 2014). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

H7: Greenwash negatively impacts green purchase intentions

2.2.8. The mediating roles of green skepticism on the relationship between greenwash and green purchase intentions

Previous research demonstrates that greenwashing causes people to be skeptical of green promises (Chen & Chang, 2013a; Self et al., 2010). Customers who doubt a company that arbitrarily capitalizes on environmental issues negatively perceive its brand and are less likely to buy their products (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017; Pomering & Johnson, 2009). Greenwashing shows a negative impact on the level of confidence consumers have in environmentally friendly practices (Hameed et al., 2021). This leads to ambiguity among consumers regarding the

credibility of green claims and an increased perception of risk associated with green products. Furthermore, it indirectly influences the negative correlation between greenwash and sustainability-related purchasing behaviour. Greenwashing leads to customer skepticism and detrimental impacts on their inclination to purchase environmentally friendly products (Zhang et al., 2018). Thus, this study suggests the hypothesis as below:

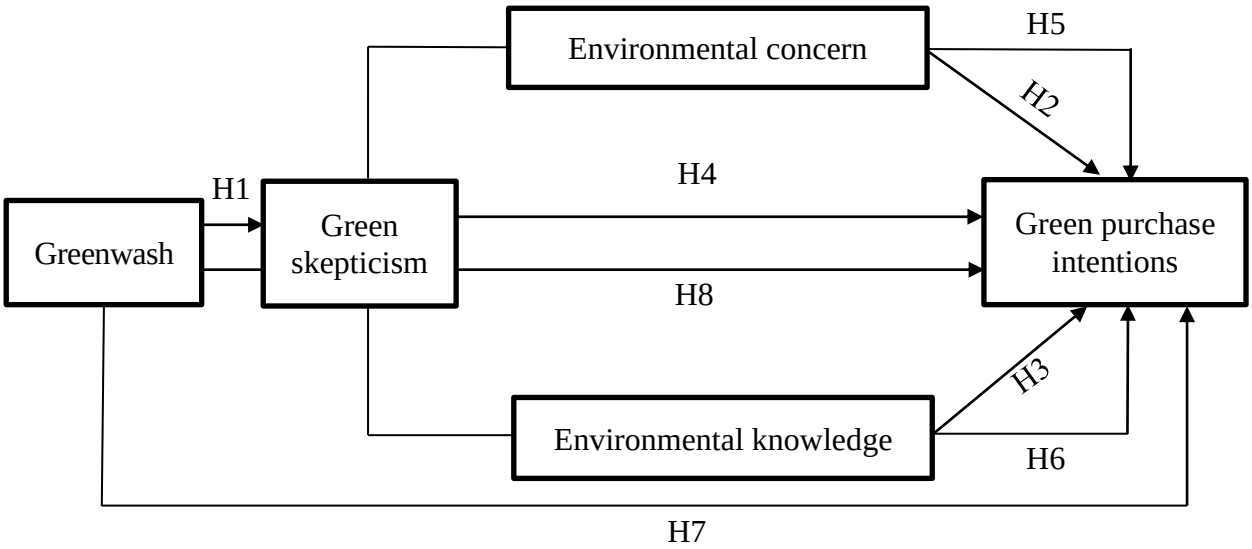
H8: Green skepticism mediates the relationship between greenwash and green purchase intentions

2.3. Conceptual framework

From the literature above, the authors propose the framework as below:

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework



Source. The researcher's data analysis

3. Methodology

Prior to the release of the final questionnaire, it was necessary to conduct a pre-test and revise the questions (Burns & Bush, 2000). The questionnaire was given to 30 customers and professionals who could ensure its correctness and dependability by offering feedback and recommendations on the questionnaire's structure, logical coherence, pertinent scenarios, and comprehension capacity. The review procedure of this investigation enhanced the clarity of the final question sheet from the respondent's point of view. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first encompassed factors such as gender, age, income, education level, and purchase frequency. The second section focused on assessing the construction and evaluation of all crucial variables. The sample size, ranging from approximately 200 to 300, demonstrates the approximate and consistent quality of the results (Comrey & Lee, 2013). The study aimed to collect data from 300 participants who will be selected from various retail fashion stores located at Aeon Mall Binh Duong in Vietnam. The author interacts with customers at fashion stores and explains the study's objectives. The respondents can answer the questions promptly upon receiving the survey link via emails and social accounts. Consequently, a total of 287 individuals provided accurate results that are suitable for data analysis. The valid responses would be collected, while the invalid ones would be eliminated. The sampling quota was a convenience-

based method for filtering suitable candidates for the sample. All the items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The data was inputted and examined using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the demographic data and to conduct the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Then, AMOS was used to conduct the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the model fit of the study. The research utilized PLS-SEM to examine the proposed framework. PLS-SEM is a collection of statistical techniques used to examine the connections among a group of both continuous and discrete distinct variables and dependent variables (Ullman & Bentler, 2013). SEM enables the simultaneous estimation of all elements in a model. It allows for estimating the causal relationship between latent concepts using indicators that combine measurement and the theoretical model's structure (Bowen & Guo, 2011). The research utilized PLS-SEM to examine the proposed framework (Hair et al., 2010). Typically, the ratio of the number of observations to the number of free parameters in a model should be at least five to one (Baumgartner & Homburg, 1996; Peter, 1979). The study includes 22 sample variables and 278 effective observations, surpassing the recommended minimum sample size for SEM. We utilized the bootstrap confidence intervals method to examine the mediating effects of green skepticism, environmental concern, and environmental knowledge.

The measurement of the greenwash construct was based on five factors obtained from the research conducted by Parguel et al. (2011), Chen and Chang (2012), and Laufer (2003). Three variables were obtained from Matthes and Wonneberger (2014) to evaluate the green skepticism construct. The measurement of the environmental concern construct included six factors derived from the works of Matthes and Wonneberger (2014), Lee (2009), Pagiaslis and Krontalis (2014), Maichum et al. (2016), Yadav and Pathak (2016), Mostafa (2009), Straughan and Roberts (1999) and Maichum et al. (2017). Mostafa's (2006) study yielded five variables to evaluate the environmental knowledge construct. The concept of green purchase intentions was assessed by employing four variables that were adopted from the studies conducted by Chan and Lau (2000), Chan (2001), and Mostafa (2006).

Table 1

The Measurement Scale

Variables	Coded	Description of statement
Greenwash	GW1	This product misleads with words in its environmental features.
	GW2	This product misleads with visuals or graphics in its environmental features.
	GW3	This product possesses a green claim that is vague or seemingly un-provable.
	GW4	This product falsely represents or embellishes its level of environmental sustainability.
	GW5	This product lacks or ignores crucial reality, creating a misleading impression of its environmental benefits.
Green skepticism	GS1	The majority of environmental assertions in advertising are designed to confuse rather than educate clients.
	GS2	I am skeptical of the majority of environmental statements stated in advertisements.

Variables	Coded	Description of statement
	GS3	Given the excessive exaggeration of green claims, it would be more advantageous for consumers if these claims were completely eradicated from advertising.
Environment concern	EC1	I am concerned about the environment.
	EC2	My life's quality is impacted by the condition of the environment.
	EC3	I am willing to make sacrifices to protect the environment.
	EC4	I am emotionally involved in the environmental protection issues.
	EC5	When humans interfere with nature, it will cause serious consequences.
	EC6	The balance of nature can be damaged easily because it is very sensitive.
Environmental Knowledge	EK1	I possess a profound understanding of environmental concerns.
	EK2	I possess a greater knowledge of recycling than a typical individual.
	EK3	I possess the knowledge and skills to choose items and packages that effectively minimize the quantity of garbage sent to landfills.
	EK4	I comprehend the environmental terminology and symbols displayed on the packaging.
	EK5	I consciously buy items and packages that are environmentally friendly.
Green purchase intentions	GPB1	When I want to purchase a product, I check the ingredients list to determine if anything harmful to the environment is included.
	GPB2	When the features of the two products are comparable, I favour green products over non-green ones.
	GPB3	It is my preference to purchase eco-friendly stuff.
	GPB4	Even if eco-friendly products are more expensive than non-green ones, I still buy them.

Source. The researcher's data analysis

4. Data analysis and findings

4.1. Demographic analysis

The sample demographics appropriately represented gender and education. Of the 287 respondents, 48.4% were women, 46% were men, and 5.6% were others. The respondents are mainly from 26 to 50 years old, and their education level is popularly from high school or technical secondary school to postgraduates. The respondent's age was accurate enough to perceive environmental concerns, and their education level was adequate to obtain knowledge about the environment and sustainability. About 28.2% of respondents have income under 10 million. 27.5% earned 11 - 15 million. 15.3% earned 16 - 20 million. 11.1% made 21 - 25 million. 8.4% earned 26 - 30 million. 9.4% earned above $30 million. On average, 28.6% of respondents buy once or twice a month. 8.4% shop twice a week or more. 23.3% shop once or twice a year. 32.1% shop once or twice a half-year. 7.7% shop when needed. The respondents' income was satisfactory to purchase fashion items more frequently, which could reflect the purchase habit and were also accurate enough to represent the study population.

4.2. Measurement model

The current CFA fit index was nearly adequate and was within the allowed thresholds, indicating that the model fit was acceptable. Specifically, the CMIN/DF value is 1.742, less than 3. The GFI value is 0.903, which is greater than 0.8. The CFI value is 0.966, which is greater than 0.09. The TLI value is 0.960, which is greater than 0.9. The RMSEA value is 0.051, which is less than 0.06. The model fit results are consistent with the predefined threshold levels established by Hair et al. (2006), which suggests that the measurement items accurately reflect the true nature of the underlying latent construct which they represent. Afterwards, the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales were evaluated using the measurement model.

Table 2

Constructs' Properties and Items' Loadings

Constructs	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Variables	Outer loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE
Greenwash (GW)	0.891	0.924	GW1	0.915	0.890	0.754
			GW2	0.884		
			GW3	0.823		
			GW4	0.848		
Green Skepticism (GS)	0.873	0.922	GS1	0.910	0.872	0.797
			GS2	0.892		
			GS3	0.875		
Environmental Concern (EC)	0.925	0.940	EC1	0.787	0.924	0.725
			EC2	0.869		
			EC3	0.807		
			EC4	0.840		
			EC5	0.893		
			EC6	0.907		
Enviromental Knowledge (EK)	0.894	0.922	EK1	0.816	0.894	0.702
			EK2	0.856		
			EK3	0.850		
			EK4	0,825		
			EK5	0.842		
Green Purchase Intentions (GPI)	0.881	0.917	GPI1	0.867	0.880	0.735
			GPI2	0.814		
			GPI3	0.890		
			GPI4	0.857		

Source. Data analysis result of the research

According to Hair et al. (2014), convergent validity refers to how related concepts reflect and measure a variable. Factor loading was essentially a factor correlation coefficient, and variable and factor loading levels of 0.4 to 0.7 were shown by Hulland (1999) to be appropriate for exploratory or casual research. Factor loadings larger than 0.7 were found for every factor in Table Factor loadings for these constructs ranged between 0.787 and 0.915, within Hulland's (1999) acceptable range. Thus, for factors explaining factors, the factors showed acceptable variance. The item's measurement was considered trustworthy overall. In addition, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was often used to measure indicator collinearity. Hair et al. (2011) stated that VIF values must be fewer than 5 to avoid collinearity problems. The VIF of the study met the threshold.

The internal consistency and reliability of the constructs were then investigated in this study using the Composite Reliability (CR) developed by Jöreskog (1971). The indicator values represented different levels of acceptability. According to Drolet and Morrison (2001), optimal dependability levels ranged between 0.7 and 0.9, whereas acceptable reliability values ranged between 0.6 and 0.7. Given that the model fit statistics have met the predefined threshold levels established by Hair et al. (2010), we can infer that the measurement items effectively represent their underlying latent construct. Afterward, the measurement model was used to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales. The study revealed that all constructs had CR greater than 0.7. It indicated that every construct reflects the study model's excellent dependability and internal consistency (Netemeyer et al., 2003). This study also established that an appropriate Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.7. Hair et al. (2011) suggested that each latent construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should exceed the highest squared correlation between that construct and any other latent construct. In order to assess the convergent validity of a construct, the average extracted variation, or AVE, must be more than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2011). The AVE value in this investigation ranged from 0.702 to 0.797, indicating convergent validity. It also suggested that at least half of the variation in its constituents might be explained by a construct. Convergent validity was supported by the fact that all constructs were, on average, more than 0.5.

Table 3

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	EC	**EK**	**GPI**	**GS**	**GW**
EC	0.852				
EK	0.615	0.838			
GPI	0.563	0.563	0.858		
GS	-0.352	-0.360	-0.460	0.893	
GW	-0.513	-0.499	-0.574	0.478	0.868

Source. Data analysis result of the research

We used two approaches to assess discriminant validity: the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT). The Fornell-Larcker criterion asserts that the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) are more statistically significant than the cross-construct correlations (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). The result in Table 3 ranged from 0.838 to 0.893 of the discriminant validity that determined that the square roots of AVE for each construct were greater than the correlations between constructs. The evidence suggests that almost all of the constructs exhibit sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 4

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	EC	EK	GPI	GS	GW
EC					
EK	0.676				
GPI	0.624	0.634			
GS	0.391	0.408	0.524		
GW	0.564	0.559	0.647	0.542	

Source. Data analysis result of the research

Given that this research focuses on evaluating theory rather than evaluating a measurement scale, it was determined that the findings were not compromised. Similarly, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT), as presented in Table 1 by Henseler et al. (2015), indicates that all the values are below the predetermined threshold of 0.9. Thus, the assessment model exhibits enough accuracy to proceed with the following phase of the research, which involves analyzing the structural model.

4.3. Structural model

Table 5

The Path Coefficients and Specific Indirect Effects

Relationships	H	O	M	STDEV	T	P	Decisions
GW→ GS	H1	0.478	0.473	0.080	5.979	0.000	Accepted
EC → GPI	H2	0.227	0.228	0.053	4.260	0.000	Accepted
EK → GPI	H3	0.232	0.233	0.073	3.163	0.002	Accepted
GS → GPI	H4	-0.173	-0.169	0.065	2.650	0.008	Accepted
GS → EC → GPI	H5	-0.080	-0.079	0.029	2.707	0.007	Accepted
GS → EK → GPI	H6	-0.083	-0.082	0.035	2.389	0.017	Accepted
GW →GPI	H7	-0.259	-0.255	0.064	4.072	0.000	Accepted
GW → GS → GPI	H8	-0.083	-0.081	0.036	2.274	0.023	Accepted
H: Hypothesis; O: Original sample; M: Sample mean; STDEV: Standard deviation; T: T statistics (|O/STDEV|); P: P values							

Source. Data analysis result of the research

These hypotheses were tested. The outcomes are in Table 5 The results show that greenwash positively impacts green skepticism ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), and H1 was accepted. Environmental concern positively impacts green purchase intentions ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), and H2 was accepted. Environmental knowledge positively impacts green purchase intentions ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$), H3 was accepted. Green skepticism negatively impacts green purchase intentions ($p = 0.008 < 0.05$), H4 was accepted. Environmental concern mediated green skepticism and green purchase intentions ($p = 0.007 < 0.05$), and H5 was accepted. Environmental knowledge mediates the relationship between green skepticism and green

purchase intentions ($p = 0.017 < 0.05$), and H6 was accepted. Greenwash negatively impacts green purchase intentions ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$), and H7 was accepted. Green skepticism mediates the relationship between greenwash and green purchase intentions ($p = 0.023 < 0.05$), and H8 was accepted.

5. Discussions and recommendations

5.1. Discussions

The outcome found by H1 illustrates that greenwash positively impacts green skepticism. Greenwashing has significantly increased when the market for environmentally friendly products has proliferated (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; TerraChoice, 2009). While there is progress in establishing environmental safety laws, the enforcement of environmental legislation needs to be improved. Consumers are aware of greenwashing, which causes them to be skeptical of companies. This finding aligns with previous studies by Pomering and Johnson (2009), Anuar et al. (2013), Chen and Chang (2013b), Nguyen et al. (2019a), Horiuchi et al. (2009).

The finding found by H2 shows that environmental concern positively impacts green purchase intentions. Consumers are motivated to evaluate their environmental purchases due to environmental concern. Buyers with greater environmental consciousness tend to be more cautious when evaluating environmental claims. They actively analyzed and considered the additional information supplied to help them make an informed decision about their green purchasing (Newton et al., 2015). This finding aligns with previous studies by Bang et al. (2000), Kim and Choi (2005), Lu et al. (2015), Newton et al. (2015), Yadav and Pathak (2016), Albayrak et al. (2011).

The finding found by H3 also indicates that environmental knowledge positively impacts green purchase intentions. A comprehensive understanding affects clients when purchasing green products. Regarding sustainable products, clients show their readiness to get them. Otherwise, they will be careful or hesitate in the purchase transaction. This finding strengthened the results of previous studies (Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Goh & Balaji, 2016; Mostafa, 2006; Smith & Paladino, 2010; Zarei & Maleki, 2018).

The result found by H4 shows that green skepticism has a negative impact on the intentions of purchasing green products. The finding is in line with the study of Matthes and Wonneberger (2014), Morel and Pruyn (2003), Syadzwina and Astuti (2021), and Goh and Balaji (2016). Consumer hesitating to purchase a product due to concerns about the environment, known as green skepticism, has been demonstrated to have a negative impact on future purchase intentions. As a result, individuals have a higher level of skepticism about organizations' intentions, which leads to poor evaluations of their products and a decreased likelihood of purchasing from companies engaged in greenwashing. The present study provides empirical evidence of the impact of green skepticism on consumers' willingness to buy environmentally friendly products in a developing economy. This is supported by the increasing global trend of such skepticism, as reported by Neff (2012), Matthes and Wonneberger (2014), Arboogust (2015), and Leonidou and Skarmeas (2017).

As a result, found by H5 and H6, environmental concern and environmental knowledge mediate the relationship between green skepticism and green purchase intentions. Customers with skepticism impact their level of concern about the environment, leading to a decreased intention to buy green products. The finding is in line with the studies of Nguyen and Feng (2020), Akhondzadeh and Monfared (2021), Syadzwina and Astuti (2021), and de Sio et al.

(2022). Customers with a great understanding of the environment tend to consider skepticism before making green purchase decisions. Skepticism makes erudite customers take serious consideration before purchasing sustainable items. The finding is in line with the studies of de Sio et al. (2022), Finisterra do Paço et al. (2009), Spangenberg et al. (2010).

The outcome found by H7 presents the negative impact of greenwash on the intentions to purchase green products. It reveals customers may quit purchasing green items if they perceive a disconnect between green marketing and company actions. However, notable green initiatives can elevate the positive perception of green items in their minds, promoting the widespread use of environmentally friendly products. Untrustworthy statements and inappropriate advertising about the environment significantly impact the customers' intention toward green products. Customers who perceive these greenwashing firms could seriously consider purchasing products from these organizations even if they could boycott this business with greenwashing actions. The study finding is aligned with the findings of previous scholars Chen et al. (2017), Pancer and McShane (2013), Nyilasy et al. (2014), Newton et al. (2015), Carlson et al. (2009), Aertsens et al. (2011), Vicente-Molina et al. (2013).

The result found by H8 shows that greenwash results in doubt or skepticism towards environmental promises. When consumers are doubtful about a company that exploits environmental trends for their benefit, they develop negative perceptions about its brand and are less likely to buy its products. These findings are along with the studies of Leonidou and Skarmeas (2017), Chen and Chang (2013b), Self et al. (2010), Zhang et al. (2018), Nguyen et al. (2019b), Pomering and Johnson (2009).

5.2. Managerial implications

Firstly, marketers should strengthen the consumers' understanding of the environment. According to this research, there is a considerable positive relationship between environmental knowledge and sustainable purchasing intentions. Thus, marketers of fashion products must enhance their environmental understanding to boost green purchase intentions. To tackle this issue, marketing managers can effectively engage consumers by explaining and educating them about environmental issues. Moreover, they must also provide instructions and convey the procedure for reducing the negative environmental consequences.

Secondly, marketers should raise sustainability awareness among consumers. To tackle this problem, managers can utilise communication tactics for marketing to showcase the current environmental concerns and their consequences effectively. Moreover, they must acknowledge the pressing need to mitigate environmental consequences by increasing their consumption of sustainable products. Moreover, marketers must demonstrate a significant level of attentiveness and involvement in enhancing the quality of the environment. Marketers can utilise social media platforms to communicate these matters effectively.

Finally, marketers should reduce consumers' doubts and skepticism about environmental issues. Research has discovered that green skepticism, directly and indirectly, impacts customers' desire to acquire products with green labels. This effect is mediated by their level of environmental concern and knowledge. To address this problem, managers might enhance transparency and precision when presenting environmental statements in advertisements or packages. In order to establish reliability with buyers, marketers must openly communicate all statements regarding the environment and advantages through various channels such as web pages, social networking sites, advertisements, and labelling.

5.3. Theoretical implications

This study significantly contributes to the field of sustainability research. A rapid rise in the adoption of green practices has sparked a discussion about its possible impact on the quality of the environment and customers' skepticism towards corporations that exploit green practices for their benefit. Hence, this study confirmed that the more greenwash activities, the more increased skepticism among customers.

Customers' concerns and knowledge about sustainability play a significant role in their ability to make environmentally conscious purchasing intentions. Knowledgeable customers are becoming more discerning when assessing fashion companies' commitment to sustainability due to their heightened understanding and familiarity with green items. Besides that, environmental concerns and knowledge mediate in sharpening customers' green purchase intentions. People concerned about the environment should carefully consider green purchases when making green purchases. Knowledgeable and concerned customers exhibit a higher level of engagement in environmentally friendly purchases. Consequently, people will likely have extremely high standards for sustainable goods. If consumers become aware of a mismatch between the claims made in green marketing and the actual outcomes of the company, they will encounter more significant challenges in embracing their purchase and develop a sense of skepticism. On the other hand, consumers would enhance the favourable perception of sustainable goods based on their cognitive abilities due to impressive green efforts.

Moreover, our research on customer intentions to business greenwashing behaviour enhances the present knowledge regarding how buyers view the sustainability policies of fashion firms. This research confirmed the negative relationship between greenwash and the intention to purchase environmentally friendly apparel in Vietnam's growing market. Greenwash practices prevent even stopping customers from purchasing the firms' products, which may threaten the firm's survival.

Furthermore, this research also elucidates the direct and indirect roles of green skepticism affecting customers' propensity to purchase green items by mediating environmental knowledge and concern. These characteristics are crucial in shaping consumers' inclination to purchase environmentally sustainable items. The study's results demonstrate that green skepticism has a robust detrimental impact on green purchase intentions. As a result, people have a higher level of skepticism toward businesses' promises, which leads to poor evaluations of their products and less willingness to buy from firms engaged in greenwashing. This is because these buyers can differentiate between sustainable and traditional fashion and between actual sustainable goods and goods falsely claiming to be sustainable. Therefore, individuals may discontinue purchasing environmentally friendly things if they detect deceptive environmental marketing practices.

Previous research has focused less on the factors influencing individuals' intentions to make environmentally friendly purchases. Prior research has indicated that due to the dynamic nature of skepticism, which varies based on the circumstances and setting, it is imperative to research consumer behaviour to understand the implications of green skepticism (Kwon & Ahn, 2021). As far as the author is aware, only a few scholars have investigated the impact of green skepticism on consumer behaviour in the green sector, particularly regarding vital products in Vietnam.

5.4. Limitations and future research direction

The fashion industry is experiencing a surge in consumer interest, particularly in environmentally friendly apparel. However, the deceptive practices of greenwashing, which

involve misleading claims about the authenticity of green products, have raised concerns. This study explores the impact of greenwash and skepticism on green purchase intentions, particularly in developing nations. It also explores the role of environmental concern and environmental knowledge in mediating this relationship. The findings highlight the need for further research on green skepticism in the fashion industry.

Consumers' willingness to make environmentally friendly purchases is influenced by their skepticism and understanding of the environment. Greenwash impacts these intentions, with the intensity varying based on customers' environmental concerns. To increase consumer willingness to buy green items, enterprises should expand their range of environmentally friendly operations and cultivate a favourable ecological reputation.

First, the study focuses on customers at Aeon Mall in Binh Duong. Future research should consider a range of demographic groups and additional factors like corporate brands, ownership type, cultural setting, and product category. Second, future research should be conducted in various sectors. Third, the research utilized convenience sampling, limiting its generalizability. In order to ensure the generalizability of the findings, future research should employ probability sampling. Furthermore, this study used a cross-sectional approach to gather data from a particular moment. Future research should include a longitudinal approach, enabling researchers to observe the study aspects' evolution over time. Furthermore, in light of the different measures of consumer information and knowledge regarding environmentally friendly products, future studies could employ multi-criteria evaluation methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of information and knowledge. By utilizing these assessment procedures, we will effectively and thoroughly analyze the many aspects of the evaluated construct.

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