

Greenwashing and green brand equity: The moderating role of brand credibility

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ABSTRACT

Purpose-Changes in consumer interest patterns from conventional products to environmentally friendly products concern companies. Environmental issues are a concern for consumers and companies as evidence of increasing awareness of the environmental impact of a product. With the presence of environmentally friendly products, it is hoped that it can be one of the factors that preserve the environment while winning market competition. Based on this, this study seeks to analyze the effect of greenwashing on green brand equity while moderating brand credibility.

Design/Methodology/Approach-This study analyzes the green brand equity of motorized vehicles in Indonesia. Sampling in this study used a purposive sampling technique, where respondents in certain areas were selected based on specific criteria, and 150 respondents were obtained. The data collection method uses a questionnaire distributed online. Then, the analytical tool used is Smart PLS with a bootstrapping process.

Findings-The results prove that greenwashing has no positive effect on green brand equity, while brand credibility is proven to have a positive impact on green brand equity. Brand credibility has been proven to moderate (weaken) the relationship between greenwashing and green brand equity.

Research limitations/implications-The limitation of this research is that the number of respondents still needs to be increased. In addition, respondents do not represent every motorcycle user in other regions of Indonesia. Therefore, the results of this study cannot yet describe the picture of motorized vehicle users in Indonesia when making purchasing decisions. The object of research is also still classified as specific, namely consumers of motorized vehicles, not using motor vehicles in general.

Originality/value-This research is still very minimal conducted by previous researchers who used the object of motorized vehicle users in Indonesia. Generally, previous studies used different objects in certain regions.

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1. The Introduction

Along with increasing consumer awareness of environmental issues, consumer consumption patterns have also changed in the presence of environmentally friendly products (Kumaresan & Chandramohan, 2023). The importance of preserving the environment has resulted in organisations and individuals becoming more concerned about the environment (Wandosell et al., 2021). Consumers are beginning to realise the importance of environmental performance as more information becomes available (Khandelwal et al. 2019). Consumers have also begun to show great interest in companies that care about the environment (Hameed et al., 2020; Hameed et al., 2021). When consumers become aware of environmental issues and seek environmentally friendly products, companies must adjust their brand equity management strategies by implementing green brand equity (GBE) (Khandelwal et al., 2019).

Qayyum et al. (2023) argue that the GBE is a collection of brand-related assets related to green commitments and environmental issues. Brand equity is of commercial value to companies because it provides financial and non-financial benefits, such as increased competitiveness and brand extension. Customer-oriented brand equity is the invisible value of a brand that originates from a company's activities. In this case, consumers judge a brand based on its products and how much they care about environmental issues. If a brand has a strong environmentally friendly image, it can increase GBE; therefore, GBE can provide more value than similar products from brands that do not have a green image (Bekk et al., 2016). GBE has various positive impacts on consumers, such as encouraging them to talk positively about a product to others, forming a better attitude towards a product, and increasing their desire to buy the product. In other words, consumers prefer products that care for the environment (Khandelwal et al., 2019; Górka-Warsewicz et al., 2021). Previous studies have recognised the importance of GBE, as green trust, green satisfaction, green attitude, green loyalty, green brand image, and green brand perceived value are green practices that strengthen GBE (Bekk et al., 2016; Gorska-Warsewicz et al., 2021). However, green marketing practices that may negatively impact GBE are often overlooked in existing research (Qayyum et al., 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analysing green marketing practices that have a negative impact on GBEs, such as greenwashing. Greenwashing has become one of the most discussed topics because of increasing consumer interest in greenwashing activities (Gatti et al., 2021). Greenwashing is a deliberate and planned marketing activity performed by companies. This action has a misleading element, with the primary purpose of deceiving or giving the wrong impression to other parties (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). Greenwashing focuses on various forms of dishonest information presentation to influence others towards a company's environmental performance (Ghitti et al., 2024). Greenwashing can occur because of various unethical actions such as disclosing false information, making irrelevant claims, supporting policies or activities that damage the environment, or working with companies that negatively impact the environment (Nemes et al., 2022).

Brand credibility refers to the capacity and ability of a brand to fulfil the promise formed through a combination of reliability and company experience (Haq et al., 2025). Brand credibility has two dimensions, expertise and trust. Expertise refers to the ability to fulfil promises, while trust refers to the willingness to fulfil promises (Akturan, 2018). Building brand credibility associated with green practices is difficult because consumers are generally sceptical of green marketing. Brand credibility positively affects GBE (Akturan, 2018; Adnan et al., 2019). Therefore, consumers feel less sceptical when brands are declared credible in marketing green products. Thus, researchers used brand credibility as a moderating variable. Moderating variables can strengthen or weaken the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Qayyum et al. (2023) proved that brand credibility, as a moderating variable, can analyse the effect of greenwashing on GBE.

However, creating environmentally friendly technologies and promotions does not necessarily show a company's transparency towards environmentally friendly products. According to Vančurová and Chocholáč (2022), this happens along with increasing public interest in environmentally friendly products that minimise negative impacts on the environment. Some companies begin to hide certain information to make their products look "green", so these efforts

can be said to be greenwashing. This is due to the ambivalent nature of the automotive sector. On the one hand, the automotive industry provides many positive benefits to stakeholders, such as improving mobility, national economic competitiveness, and economic growth. However, on the other hand, it also generates significant environmental and social impacts, such as land use, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise pollution (Vančurová & Chocholáč, 2020). Therefore, this study examines green marketing on motorcycles by considering greenwashing, GBE, and brand credibility as moderators.

The automotive industry, especially motor vehicles, is considered suitable for green marketing communications but is also vulnerable to greenwashing practices. This is because of the ambivalent nature of the automotive industry. On the one hand, the automotive industry provides many positive benefits, such as increasing mobility, national economic competitiveness, and economic growth. However, on the other hand, it also causes significant environmental and social impacts, such as land use, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise pollution (Vančurová & Chocholáč, 2020). Some automotive companies have created automobile products with environmentally friendly technologies and have spread environmentally friendly campaigns. However, this does not demonstrate the transparency of the company in creating environmentally friendly products. According to Vančurová and Chocholáč (2020), this is because of the increasing public interest in environmentally friendly products to minimise their impact on the environment. Therefore, this study examines green marketing for motorised vehicle users in Indonesia using the greenwashing framework, GBE, and brand credibility as moderators.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Greenwashing practices hinder the green marketing strategy process by discouraging environmental efforts and making consumers sceptical of businesses that pay attention to sustainable environmental impacts (Nyilasy et al. 2014). Greenwashing also prevents consumers from making purchase decisions by considering the environmental impact of a product (Qayyum et al., 2023). When companies falsify the environmental functions of their products, they lose their trust. Greenwashing has a negative impact on GBE because greenwashing practices can damage consumer confidence in brands that claim to be environmentally friendly. Several previous studies have identified green trust, satisfaction, attitude, loyalty, brand image, and brand perceived value as factors that strengthen the GBE (Bekk et al., 2016; Gorska-Warsewicz et al., 2021). Conversely, greenwashing triggers green scepticism and negative word-of-mouth, which has a negative impact on green brand credibility, green trust, and purchasing behaviour (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017; Hameed et al., 2021). Although greenwashing does not significantly impact consumer purchasing intentions, consumer perceptions become negative, especially when consumers feel that a product's environmental claims are false. This causes a loss of trust, a decrease in purchasing intentions, and negative word-of-mouth, and ultimately damages the credibility of the product and worsens the company's reputation (Akturan, 2018). The higher the level of greenwashing practices carried out by companies, the greater the risk of a decrease in the GBE (Avcilar & Demirgünes, 2017). Greenwashing can significantly reduce the GBE (Chen et al., 2016). Therefore, if a company does not want its reputation to be destroyed, green claims must be supported by clear concrete actions because greenwashing has been proven to have a negative impact on GBE (Ha, 2022). **H₁: Greenwashing Has a Negative Effect on Green Brand Equity**

Brand credibility is a company's ability and willingness to improve its performance, measured through expertise and trustworthiness ratings (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Expertise refers to a company's ability to fulfil its promises, while trust indicates its willingness to keep them (Akturan, 2018). Building brand credibility in the context of green practices tends to be difficult because of consumers' scepticism towards green marketing claims (Yoon & Chen, 2017). However, brand credibility is important for companies to build a strong green image. Brand credibility is important in building a green image as it can increase product quality perceptions, lower information costs, and reduce risk perceptions. In addition, brand credibility positively impacts building substantial brand equity. Brand credibility benefits consumers through product quality assurance and increases customer loyalty. Trusted brands tend to be chosen more often

than competitors who do not evoke a sense of consumer trust (Su et al., 2019). Brand power and information influence consumer preferences; therefore, consumers are willing to pay higher prices for brands with high credibility. Brand credibility is also a means for companies to develop favourable word of mouth and strengthen customer relationships, thereby minimising the possibility of customers switching to other brands. **H₂: Green Credibility Has a Positive Effect on Green Brand Equity**

Brand credibility measures an organisation's ability to consistently maintain performance by increasing its expertise and trust (AlFarraj et al., 2021). Expertise refers to the ability to fulfil promises, while trust refers to the willingness to fulfil promises (Akturan, 2018). Building brand credibility related to green practices is difficult because of consumers' scepticism towards green marketing claims (Yoon & Chen, 2017). However, brand credibility is essential for companies to develop GBEs. Moreover, brand credibility has been shown to positively affects GBE (Akturan 2018; Adnan et al. 2019). Therefore, brand credibility is crucial when consumers are sceptical and unsure of green marketing issues. Brand credibility helps consumers to determine the truth of green brand equity (Adnan et al., 2019). However, green product manufacturers face three main challenges: uncertainty, scepticism towards environmental issues, and low trust. High brand credibility is a good step toward anticipating bad news (Khan et al., 2022). Therefore, when a brand has a high credibility in marketing environmentally friendly products, consumers tend to reduce their scepticism and do not feel doubtful about the claims of environmentally friendly products. Thus, brand credibility can help overcome the negative impact of greenwashing on GBE. **H₃: Brand Credibility Moderates the Negative Effect of Greenwashing on Green Brand Equity**

Figure 1 illustrates the research model framework, which shows the factors that influence green brand equity. Greenwashing negatively influenced green brand equity and brand credibility as moderators.

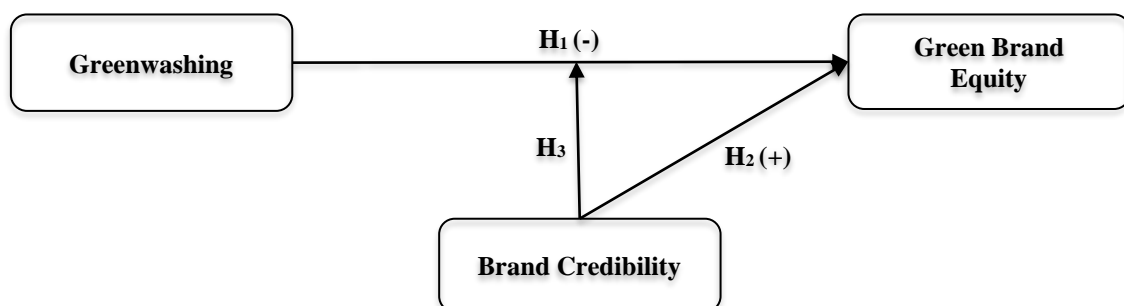


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Research Methodology

The study population included motorcycle users in Indonesia. Purposive sampling was used to determine respondents with specific considerations. These considerations include motorcycle users in several regions of Indonesia and users aged at least 17 years. A Google form was used to distribute the questionnaires online to collect the data. Each variable was represented by indicator items in the questionnaire, which were rated on a Likert scale. Five indicator items are used to measure greenwashing (GWS) adapted from Chen and Chang (2013), brand credibility (BCD) with five indicator items adopted from Newell and Goldsmith (2001), and green brand equity (GBR) with four indicator items adopted from Chen (2010).

The Smart PLS program evaluated the research data for validity, reliability, and regression testing. The factor loading value for each variable's indicator item was examined to perform a validity test. The indicator item may be deemed valid if its factor-loading value exceeds 0.6, and vice versa. A re-validation test must be conducted and invalid indicator items must be removed from the data analysis. A reliability test was conducted, following the validity test. The reliability

of the research variables was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability as a standard. The variables can be considered reliable if the composite reliability is more significant than 0.7, and Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.6. Regression testing is the next step in determining whether a hypothesis's impact is accepted or rejected. The p-value of each hypothesis serves as the foundation for regression testing. The hypothesis can be deemed acceptable if the p-value is less than 0.05, and vice versa. Each decision was determined by three data tests, using the analytical assumptions provided by Hair et al. (2020).

4. Result and Discussion

Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows respondents' characteristics. The majority of respondents were female (59.3%), and the rest were male (40.7%). The age of respondents was dominated by the age range of 22-26 years, with as many as 58 respondents (38.67%), and the least are respondents with ages of more than 47-51 years, with as many as four respondents (2.67%). In addition to gender and age categories, the characteristics of the respondents can be seen based on their income levels. The majority of respondents earned between IDR 1,000,0001 - 2,000,000 per month.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Classification	Description	Frequency	
		Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	61	40.7
	Female	89	59.3
Age	17-21 years old	46	30.67
	22-26 years old	58	38.67
	27-31 years old	8	5.33
	32-36 years old	10	6.67
	37-41 years old	5	3.33
	42-46 years old	5	3.33
	47-51 years old	4	2.67
	52-66 years old	9	6
Salary	More than 24 years old	5	3.33
	IDR 500,000 – 1,000,000	24	16
	IDR 1,000,001 – 2,000,000	62	41.3
	IDR 2,000,001 – 3,000,000	44	29.3
	IDR 3,000,001 – 4,000,000	9	6
	IDR 4,000,001 – 5,000,000	7	4.7
	More than IDR 5,000,000	4	2.7

Validity Test

Figure 2 shows the final model after the bootstrapping analysis. This model shows the factor-loading values for each indicator item. Each indicator item representing the greenwashing (GWS), brand credibility (BCD), and green brand equity (GBE) variables is proven valid because it has a factor loading value of more than 0.6.

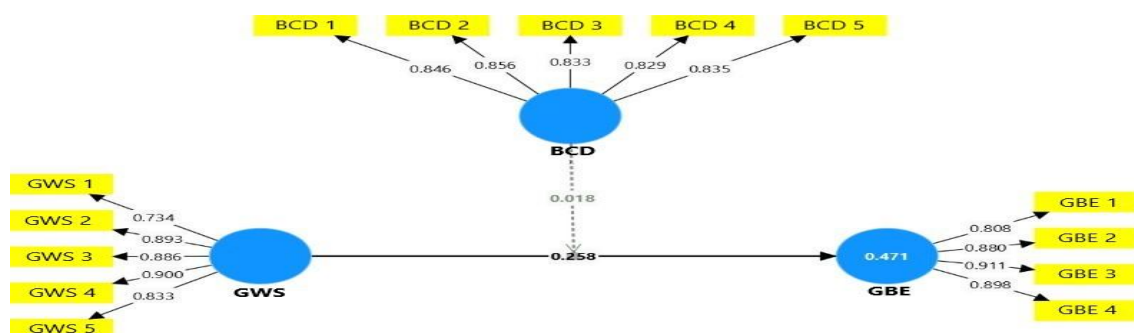


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Table 2 lists the factor-loading values obtained from the validity test. Each indicator item representing the greenwashing (GWS), brand credibility (BCD), and green brand equity (GBE) variables is proven valid because it has a factor loading value of more than 0.6.

Table 2. Validity Test Result

Indicator	Greenwashing	Brand Credibility	Green Brand Equity
GWS 1	0.734		
GWS 2	0.893		
GWS 3	0.886		
GWS 4	0.900		
GWS 5	0.833		
BCD 1		0.846	
BCD 2		0.856	
BCD 3		0.833	
BCD 4		0.829	
BCD 5		0.835	
GBE 1			0.808
GBE 2			0.880
GBE 3			0.911
GBE 4			0.898

Reliability Test

Based on Table 3, all variables in this study are reliable. This is because Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values of the greenwashing, brand credibility, and green brand equity variables are more than 0.6 and 0.7, respectively. Therefore, this data analysis can be continued for the next test stage: the regression test.

Table 3. Reliability Test Result

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Greenwashing	0.904	0.911
Brand Credibility	0.896	0.898
Green Brand Equity	0.898	0.903

Hypothesis Test

Table 4 presents the results of the hypotheses' regression tests. Based on these results, the first and third hypotheses were either rejected or not supported. The original value can prove this in the first hypothesis, showing a positive direction, and the p-value of the third hypothesis is greater than 0.05. Greenwashing and brand credibility positively affect green brand equity positively. The third hypothesis shows that the moderating effect of brand credibility weakens the relationship between greenwashing and green brand equity.

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistic	P Value
Greenwashing → Green Brand Equity	0.258	0.261	0.085	3.023	0.003
Brand Credibility → Green Brand Equity	0.578	0.578	0.072	8.027	0.000
Greenwashing*Brand Credibility → Green Brand Equity	0.018	0.014	0.054	0.331	0.740

Discussion

The Effect of Greenwashing on Green Brand Equity

This study shows that greenwashing has a positive effect on GBE. The results of this study align with those of Ha (2022), who states that a high level of greenwashing will positively affect GBE as perceived by consumers. Ha (2022) states that greenwashing does not always have a negative impact on GBE. This can be reinforced by the explanation of the halo effect, which is a cognitive bias between a generally positive perception of a brand that can mask negative

perceptions, and greenwashing practices (Ha, 2022). If consumers have a favourable view of a brand, they tend to ignore negative information; therefore, greenwashing practices do not always have a negative impact on brand equity. Based on this explanation, it can be understood that greenwashing can have a positive impact on GBE because of low consumer awareness of the environment. Most consumers still care little about the impact on the environment in a sustainable manner, so "green" claims alone are enough to influence consumer perceptions (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). In this study, greenwashing is a factor that increases GBE, because consumers do not delve into the extent of environmental efforts made by companies.

The Effect of Brand Credibility on Green Brand Equity

This study proves that brand credibility has a positive effect on the GBE. This means that the higher a brand's credibility, the higher the value of green brand equity. This finding underlines the importance of consumer trust in a brand to build its image and eco-friendly value. These results align with those of Akturan (2018) and Adnan et al. (2019), who showed that brand credibility has a positive effect on GBE. Brand credibility can strengthen a product's green image in consumers' eyes regardless of how much they are involved with green products. Brand credibility is an important antecedent of GBE (del Barrio-Garcia & Prados-Peña, 2019). According to the signalling theory, brand credibility can contribute to GBE by increasing perceived quality and brand equity. Brand equity is negatively affected if a brand fails to fulfil its promises. Rifi and Mostafa (2022) stated that satisfaction with service recovery increases brand credibility and, ultimately, customer-based GBE. Algammash (2020) argues that brand credibility influences brand commitment, which in turn influences the GBE. Chinomona (2016) argues that brand credibility assures customers when they feel vulnerable. A brand that is trustworthy and maintains its promises generates loyalty.

Brand Credibility Moderates the Effect of Greenwashing on Green Brand Equity

The results show that when brand credibility moderates the relationship between greenwashing and GBE, it weakens. This means that brand credibility is not fully capable of moderating or preventing the negative impact of greenwashing practices on the GBE. Even if a brand has high credibility, it cannot always change the negative perceptions of greenwashing practices. Consumers with low environmental awareness tend not to view brand credibility as an important factor in assessing the environmental impact of the products they buy.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, only one of the three hypotheses is acceptable or supported. Thus, brand credibility has a positive effect on green brand equity. With maximum brand credibility, it can maintain green brand equity. However, this study proves that greenwashing positively affects green brand equity, contradicting the hypothesis development. Greenwashing does not always affect brand equity, because consumers follow their perceptions of the environmental factors of the products they buy. Brand credibility in this study weakens the relationship between greenwashing and green brand equity; therefore, it does not encourage greenwashing to reduce green brand equity. This study had several limitations. The first limitation is the small number of samples, and the distribution of samples by region is still uneven because it is still dominated by one region compared with other regions. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be used as a reference for green brand equity in product brands. This study analysed only three factors as moderators: greenwashing and brand credibility. Future research should use other factors that have not been examined in this study or use a different model, such as the concept of mediation.

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