Determinants of Customer Loyalty: A Green Marketing Perspective

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Abstract. Environment-friendly attitude contributes greatly to green marketing. Accordingly, this research endeavours to comprehensively understand the factors affecting green customer loyalty. Specifically, a research model was developed linking green product quality, green corporate image, green trust, green customer satisfaction and green customer loyalty. Data pertaining to Bonaqua, a bottled water brand in Hong Kong, were collected using an online survey questionnaire, with customers returning 188 valid responses. Data analysis showed that there is a significant positive relationship in the consumers' satisfaction-loyalty link. Green product quality, green corporate image and green trust are significantly and directly correlated with green customer satisfaction, but they non-significantly affect green customer loyalty. The findings of this research contribute to the practical and theoretical understanding of the impact of environment-friendly attitudes on green customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Green marketing perspective · Environment-friendly attitude · Green issues · Green customer loyalty

1 Introduction

In the past 20 years, rising global population and the excessive production of goods have jointly contributed to environmental degradation, causing the public to become widely concerned with the preservation of the natural environment. At the individual level, people have started to become environmentally conscious, even altering their behaviours to protect the environment. At the enterprise level, besides environmental preservation, green marketing has also been implemented to ensure the long-term advantage of firms. Undeniably, green marketing as a concept has gained popularity as the environmentally friendly attitude of consumers and the sales of firms of their products or services with environmental benefits have also become a common practice (Vos, 2019).

Recently, the government and citizens of Hong Kong have realised the seriousness of having to deal with environmental threats (Information Service Department, 2021a) and Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 (Information Service Department, 2021b) have outlined the goals, strategies and measures to address a variety of environmental problems. Moreover, the 14th Five-year Plan of China has defined the standards required

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to produce green products, guarantee green certifications and implement eco-labelling systems (Capital, 2021). These advancements have opened Hong Kong to numerous opportunities to develop its green market.

Despite the importance of green marketing to businesses, empirical investigations are scarce, and the factors influencing green customer loyalty in Hong Kong still have to be comprehensively described in the literature. Aiming to solve these research gaps, the current work intends to address the effect of environment-friendly attitudes on consumers' satisfaction and loyalty, together with the relationship in the consumers' satisfaction-loyalty link.

The green product investigated in this research is Bonaqua, a bottled water brand in Hong Kong. In response to the changing behaviours of Bonaqua's consumers, the firm has set an example by launching a comprehensive green marketing campaign that includes a mode of repackaging that involves the reduction of plastic bottle waste and the rolling out of environmental advertisements to reinforce the firm's green efforts and positioning in the market. As shared by Neil Waters, Director of Bonaqua, their company's actions have successfully gained a positive response from the public (Sun, 2018).

2 Background

2.1 Environmental Marketing

Environmental marketing is a broad concept that includes several operations, including product modification, production process innovation and package redesign to remodelling/stylising, advertising and campaign modification (Kilbourne & Beckmann, 2010). 'Recyclable', 'ozone friendly', 'zero carbon', 'refillable' and 'eco-friendly' are some of the terms commonly associated by consumers with green products. According to a survey by Unilever, about one-third of global consumers differentiate companies based on their environmental and social impacts (Shrivastava & Banerjee, 2022). Currently, a multibillion-dollar market opportunity exists for brands whose companies have devoted their operations to sustainable development.

2.2 Research Model and Hypotheses

Despite the abundance of studies on how environmentally friendly attitude affects customer behaviours, few studies have attempted to investigate the issue from a green perspective. Therefore, the objective of this research is to develop a research model to examine the effects of green product quality, green corporate image and green trust on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Figure 1 shows the research model of this research. In this research, green customer loyalty is described as the consumers' intent to keep up a commitment to a firm with an environmental or green agenda, with the customers committing to consistently buy or use and select green products in the future.

Green customer satisfaction is described in this research as the consumers' belief that their purchase of a product/service would positively address a need, goal or desire related to environmental or green issues. Satisfaction is a good predictor of future purchases of

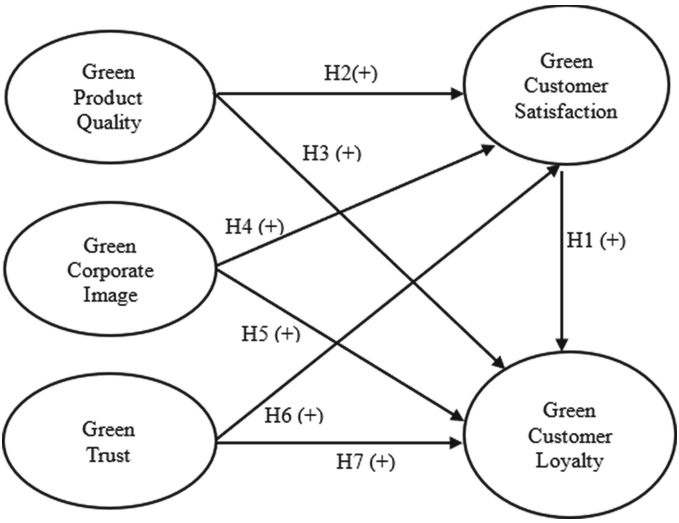

Fig. 1. Research Model

customers (Oliver, 1999). When customers are happy, they tend to repurchase (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Numerous studies have established the positive correlation in the customer satisfaction-loyalty link (e.g., Wong & Mula, 2009). In line with the findings of previous research, the first hypothesis is given by

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The higher the level of green customer satisfaction, the higher the level of green customer loyalty.

Green product quality is described in this research as the attributes, design and packaging of products that support energy efficiency, pollution prevention, waste recycling and environmental friendliness. A product is regarded as a high-quality product if it can meet customers' needs and requirements and is free of defects (Johnson & Ettlie, 2001). Customer satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intention are directly related to product quality, which directly affects business performance (Eskildsen et al., 2004). Numerous studies have offered substantial empirical support for the claim that high-quality product standards increase consumer satisfaction and repurchase intention (Razak et al., 2016; Restiana, 2021). Muhammad Khan and Ahmed (2016) describes product quality as a major factor affecting consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Razak et al. (2016) have statistically demonstrated how superior product quality can raise client acceptability and satisfaction. Kotler and Armstrong (2015) recommend the continuance of producing high-quality products to satisfy consumers and increase customer loyalty. On the basis of the aforementioned studies, the second and third hypotheses are given by

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The higher the level of green product quality, the higher the level of green customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The higher the level of green product quality, the higher the level of green customer loyalty.

Green corporate image is described in this research as perceptions related to environmental commitments and concerns resulting from interactions of the organisation with its employees, customers and the larger community. Corporate image is important to companies. Stakeholders are more likely to accept organisations with strong positive images (Shekari & Ghatari, 2013). Green image has become increasingly relevant for enterprises. Past research demonstrated a positive correlation between green practice and enhanced corporate image (Chen, 2007; Miles & Russell, 1997). Firms nowadays implement green marketing to differentiate their products from competitors. Chang and Fong (2010) found that the satisfaction of customers, particularly those who bought green or environmental products in the past, positively affects their brand loyalty. On the basis of the aforementioned studies, the fourth and fifth hypotheses are given by:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The higher the level of green corporate image, the higher the level of green customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The higher the level of green corporate image, the higher the level of green customer loyalty.

Green trust is described in this research as the intention of customers to purchase a product based on their belief of how its reliability, goodness and competence will eventually positively impact the environment. According to past research, trust is a necessary condition for developing and maintaining long-term firm–customer relationships (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2005). Spekman (1988) describes trust as the cornerstone of longstanding relationships. When companies focus on enhancing their customer satisfaction ratings, they can positively influence how customers behave towards them (Chiou & Pan, 2009). Gefen and Straub (2004) demonstrated that trust significantly affects how consumers make repurchasing decisions, which is a good indicator of customer loyalty. Past research on green marketing also proved that green trust significantly influences green customer satisfaction (Lam et al., 2016) and green customer loyalty (Guerreiro & Pacheco, 2021). Thus, the sixth and seventh hypotheses are given by

Hypothesis 6 (H6): The higher the level of green trust, the higher the level of green customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): The higher the level of green trust, the higher the level of green customer loyalty.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

Bonaqua customers based in Hong Kong were instructed to answer an online questionnaire. The data-gathering period was 21 days, from April 19, 2022 to May 10, 2022. Only respondents aged 18 years or older were recruited in the survey. Convenience and snowball sampling were adopted in the research, and the respondents were invited and contacted directly through Facebook, WeChat, WhatsApp or Signal. In particular, participant recruitment primarily relied on the researchers' list of contacts, and the participants were invited to forward the online questionnaire link to their friends, colleagues and relatives as a means of increasing the survey participants.

3.2 Measurement

All items of the five constructs were adapted from past related research and measured using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors "1 = strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree" (see Appendix 1).

3.3 Pilot Test

Prior to the formal questionnaire survey, a process of pilot testing the questionnaire was undertaken to refine and validate the suitability of the items, wordings and structure in the questionnaire and determine whether revisions were required. The time needed to complete the questionnaire was also determined from the pilot test. The responses of 30 Hong Kong-based Bonaqua customers aged 18 years or older were collected. Then, the reliability coefficients were calculated for all item constructs. As the results show that the coefficient alpha of all five scales was higher than the required value of 0.700, all five scales were considered to reflect good internal consistency and reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

3.4 Initial Analysis of Data Structure

In the initial analysis of data structure, we conducted Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test to investigate the sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test to measure an observed correlation matrix to the identity matrix (Hair et al., 2009). The KMO test returned a value of 0.918 ($P < 0.001$), implying the adequacy of the dataset for factor analysis. Meanwhile, Bartlett's test returned a value below 0.05, implying substantial correlation amongst the data variables.

To test the degree of deviation from normality, the skewness and kurtosis of all five constructs were assessed. The data is considered normal if the value of skewness is within acceptable limits of ±2 and the value of kurtosis is within acceptable limits of ±7 (Bryne, 2010). The results show that all values of skewness and kurtosis satisfied the acceptable limits, indicating the absence of deviation from normality.

4 Results

SmartPLS 3 was employed to address the issue of convergent validity, discriminant validity and reliability in this research. SmartPLS is preferred over other popular structural equation modelling (SEM) methods because it can effectively process complicated models with multi-item variables (Chin, 1998). PLS can obtain various main statistical outputs for ascertaining a structural model's validity and reliability (Fornell & Cha, 1994).

4.1 Sample Characteristics

For the 181 valid online responses collected, the gender distribution of the respondents is nearly equal, with 44.2% males 55.8% females. This finding is consistent with the demographics of the Hong Kong population (Census and Statistics Department, 2021). About 82% of respondents were aged between 21 and 50. These three age groups account for most of the responses. About 13.8% of the respondents had a postgraduate qualification or higher, 44.2% had a bachelor's qualification, 26.5% possessed a diploma qualification, 14.9% completed high school and 0.6% only had elementary schooling.

4.2 Examination of Outer Measurement Model

To validate the measurement model, convergent and discriminant validity were examined (Hair et al., 2014). Table 1 shows that only one item (GCL3 [0.674]) has a value lower than the acceptable level (>0.70). The factor loading of the other 19 items was higher than the acceptable level of 0.70. The average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct was also higher than the acceptable level of 0.50. Therefore, the convergent validity was met (Hair et al., 2011). Additionally, we computed Cronbach's alpha and composite reliabilities (CR). Table 1 illustrates that the reliability measures of each construct meet the suggested criterion (>0.70; Nunnally, 1978), implying that the measurement model has good internal consistency and reliability. The remainder of the findings is summarised in Table 1.

Fornell–Larcker criterion was used to exaine the discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Specifically, we checked the cross-loadings of the indicators. Table 2 shows that all of the cross-loadings of an item on its construct are higher than all of its cross-loadings on the other constructs, implying the satisfaction of discriminant validity. Table 3 shows that the square root of each construct's AVE is larger than each interconstruct correlation, thereby demonstrating that the measurement model has good discriminant validity.

Table 1. Validation of Measurement Model

Latent Variables	Item	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Outer Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Green Product Quality (GPQ)	GPQ1	3.60	0.841	0.828	0.691	0.900	0.851
	GPQ2	3.23	0.844	0.828			
	GPQ3	3.81	0.849	0.805			
	GPQ4	3.34	0.896	0.865			
Green Corporate Image (GCI)	GCI1	3.71	0.801	0.860	0.714	0.909	0.866
	GCI2	3.60	0.828	0.823			
	GCI3	3.75	0.804	0.873			
	GCI4	3.52	0.800	0.821			
Green Trust (GT)	GT1	3.29	0.828	0.712	0.571	0.869	0.823
	GT2	3.31	0.874	0.769			
	GT3	3.43	0.811	0.730			
	GT4	3.64	0.959	0.803			
	GT5	3.71	0.800	0.763			
Green Customer Satisfaction (GCS)	GCS1	3.64	0.836	0.880	0.779	0.934	0.905
	GCS2	3.62	0.819	0.887			
	GCS3	3.64	0.966	0.917			
	GCS4	3.61	0.940	0.845			
Green Customer Loyalty (GCL)	GCL1	3.65	0.904	0.952	0.754	0.900	0.833
	GCL2	3.56	0.962	0.948			
	GCL3	3.48	1.003	0.674			

Note: Std. Dev. = standard deviation, Std. Outer Loading = standardised outer loading, CR = composite reliability

Table 2. Cross and Factor Loadings

	GCI	GCL	GPQ	GCS	GT
GCI1	**0.860**	0.500	0.661	0.532	0.607
GCI2	**0.823**	0.428	0.680	0.582	0.639
GCI3	**0.873**	0.586	0.708	0.639	0.673
GCI4	**0.821**	0.440	0.666	0.507	0.601
GCL1	0.598	**0.952**	0.595	0.822	0.550
GCL2	0.584	**0.948**	0.599	0.837	0.594

(*continued*)

Table 2. (*continued*)

	GCI	GCL	GPQ	GCS	GT
GCL3	0.260	**0.674**	0.347	0.445	0.346
GCS1	0.631	0.713	0.673	**0.880**	0.656
GCS2	0.585	0.753	0.572	**0.887**	0.544
GCS3	0.587	0.798	0.602	**0.917**	0.585
GCS4	0.572	0.695	0.613	**0.845**	0.595
GPQ1	0.631	0.457	**0.828**	0.556	0.603
GPQ2	0.633	0.494	**0.828**	0.542	0.460
GPQ3	0.623	0.483	**0.805**	0.579	0.613
GPQ4	0.772	0.585	**0.865**	0.635	0.637
GT1	0.570	0.347	0.490	0.311	**0.712**
GT2	0.548	0.321	0.463	0.383	**0.769**
GT3	0.465	0.354	0.484	0.411	**0.730**
GT4	0.621	0.570	0.638	0.702	**0.803**
GT5	0.597	0.512	0.511	0.573	**0.763**

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	GCI	GCL	GPQ	GCS	GT
GCI	***0.845***				
GCL	0.582	***0.868***			
GPQ	0.674	0.836	***0.883***		
GCS	0.804	0.610	0.700	***0.832***	
GT	0.748	0.587	0.677	0.698	***0.756***

Note: The bold and italicised numbers arranged diagonally are the square root of the AVE, and the shared variance between the constructs is presented in the lower left triangle.

5 Examination of Inner Structural Model

The structural model was systematically validated in three steps (Hair et al., 2014). The first step involved a collinearity assessment of the model by using the variance inflation factor (VIF), which measures the correlation amongst predictors. The VIFs of GPQ, GCI, GT and GCS as predictors of GCL were 3.299, 3.550, 2.631 and 2.282, respectively. As all VIF values are lower than the required threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2011). Hence, there were no collinearity issues between the predictors.

Table 4. Results of Hypothesis Testing

	Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Value	*p* value	Results
H1	GCS → GCL	0.796	0.051	15.589	**	Supported
H2	GPQ → GCS	0.357	0.080	4.488	**	Supported
H3	GPQ → GCL	0.040	0.061	0.649	n.s.	Not Supported
H4	GCI → GCS	0.154	0.088	1.745	*	Supported
H5	GCI → GCL	−0.001	0.049	0.027	n.s.	Not Supported
H6	GT → GCS	0.310	0.077	4.045	**	Supported
H7	GT → GCL	0.024	0.060	0.407	n.s.	Not Supported

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$; n.s. = not supported

The second step involved examining the relationships of the structural model constructs with the adoption of the bootstrapping method. As shown in Table 4 and Fig. 2, the findings indicate that four of the seven structural relationships are positive and significant ($p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.001$). The impact of green customer satisfaction on green customer loyalty was positively significant ($\beta = 0.796$; $p < 0.001$). For the impact of green product quality on green customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, the results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between green product quality and green customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.357$; $p < 0.001$). However, no significant positive relationship was observed between green product quality and green customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.040$; $p > 0.05$). The aforementioned results support H1 and H2 but not H3. In terms of the impact of green corporate image on green customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, the results reveal a significant positive relationship between green corporate image and green customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.154$; $p < 0.005$). However, no significant positive relationship was observed between green corporate image and green customer loyalty ($\beta = -0.001$; $p > 0.05$). These results support H4 but not H5. With regard to the impact of green trust on green customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, the results indicate a significant positive relationship between green trust and green customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.310$; $p < 0.001$), but no significant positive relationship was observed between green trust and green customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.024$; $p > 0.05$). These results support H6 but not H7.

The final step involved evaluating the explanatory power of the structural model by using the R^2 value of the dependent variables (Hair et al., 2014). The R^2 values of the two dependent variables, namely, GCS and GCL, were 0.562 and 0.705, respectively. These values demonstrate the strong explanatory power of the model used in this research (Henseler et al., 2009).

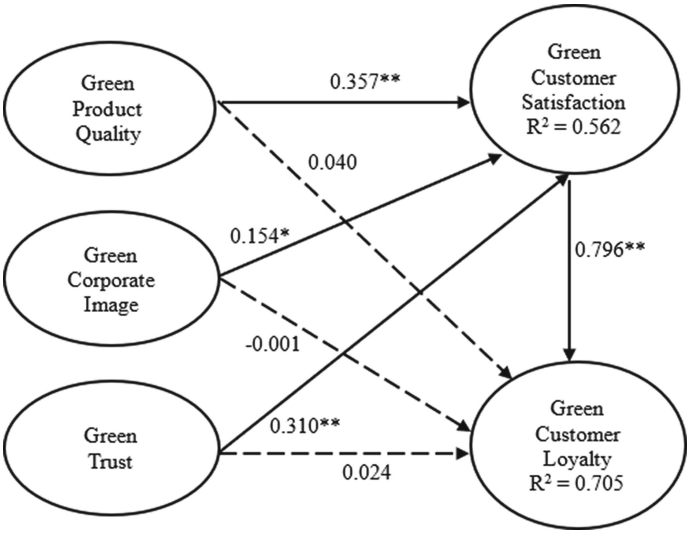

Fig. 2. Results of Research Model. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.001

6 Conclusions

Green marketing is gaining traction globally because of the huge impacts of climate change. Amongst firms, understanding the green perceptions of consumers can help to develop effective green marketing strategies. This research focused on the bottled water brand Bonaqua, which can be considered a pioneer in the green marketing of fast-moving consumer goods in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, consumers are clearly becoming highly environmentally conscious.

6.1 Practical Implications

This research has determined the significant positive correlation in the green customer satisfaction-loyalty link. This finding is consistent with the findings of other studies (e.g., Chang & Fong, 2010; Suki, 2016). This result implies Bonaqua must implement measures to improve green customer satisfaction as a means of enhancing green customer loyalty.

This research has determined a significant positive correlation in the green product quality-satisfaction link, which is consistent with those reported in other B2C studies (e.g., Chang & Fong, 2010). By continuously incorporating green concepts into their goods, Bonaqua can boost green consumer satisfaction whilst meeting the environmental requirements of customers.

The findings indicated that no significant positive relationship exists in the green product quality-loyalty link. For Bonaqua, this finding implies that customers who highly value green product quality may not necessarily decide to repurchase the brand's products in the future. Other researchers have reported a similar non-significant effect of product quality on brand loyalty (Chadwick & Piartrini, 2019; Erwin et al., 2020). The results

imply that customers do not limit their loyalty to a few firms offering green product quality but rather tend to be loyal to those businesses that also provide enticing offers, including competitive pricing, positive brand image, convenience and so on (Zineldin, 2014). The prevailing substitution of green products with those offering a similar product quality in the market is another factor affecting shifting customer loyalty.

Numerous studies have found the significant correlation between in the corporate image-satisfaction link (e.g., Chang & Fong, 2010; Gelderman et al., 2021; Martenson, 2007; Park et al., 2004). The findings suggest that Bonaqua's image must be enhanced and aligned with the green context from the aspects of social responsibility, environmental concerns, innovative development, legislation and rules, ethical concerns and sustainable development to increase consumer satisfaction.

In this research, H5 predicted a significant positive correlation in the green corporate image-loyalty link, but the data did not support this hypothesis. This outcome is consistent with previous studies regarding the mobile phone market (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Yusof et al., 2012). This research suggests that Bonaqua's green corporate image is insufficient ensuring repeat brand patronage.

Previous studies has examined on the effect of green satisfaction-trust (e.g. Chen & Chang, 2013; Gil & Jacob, 2018; Imaningsih, 2019), but only a few studies have attempted to investigate their relationship, that is, how green trust affects green satisfaction. Rahmawati et al. (2019) also found the relationship to be significant positive between brand trust and consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2009) demonstrated the trust–satisfaction association in e-commerce. The findings imply that Bonaqua's green customer satisfaction can be boosted via green trust.

This research did not support a predicted and significant positive relationship in the green trust-loyalty link. Implying that customers who value green trust may not necessarily repurchase Bonaqua products. Other researchers also reported that trust may not lead directly to brand loyalty (Afifi & Amini, 2021; Chadwick & Piartrini, 2019; Ibe-Enwo et al., 2019). The potential lack of customer loyalty toward Bonaqua may be attributed to perceptions of greenwashing (Go Green Hong Kong, 2014). Kalafatis et al. (1999) also had the same finding. This result demonstrated customers do not trust companies who overstate the value of their green products whilst claiming to be environmentally friendly.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

Firstly, this research was conducted only on Hong Kong residents, which may indicate selection bias. Although the sensitivity of the findings to the geographic location was not obvious, future research can address the cross-cultural issues by repeating this research in other regions, such as countries with a relatively long history of green practice, such as other Chinese communities in Malaysia, Taiwan or China. Secondly, the use of a structured questionnaire may have drawbacks. Specifically, the participants' responses may not have accurately reflected their ideas and feelings, as they may have been in a hurry to complete the survey. In view of supplementing the quantitative data and providing a complete picture of the research scope, future research may collect qualitative data via in-depth interviews or focus groups. Finally, the selection of Bonaqua as the focus of this research seems to be another drawback. This research was conducted in

the Hong Kong FMCG market, with a specific focus on bottled water of a particular brand. Although the subject is an international product that is promoted worldwide, the survey results may have been limited by the brand and may be applicable only to the local context. Future research may replicate this research by using other similar green products to further validate the research model.

Appendix 1. Construct Measures

Construct	Item		Source
Green customer loyalty	GCL1	I will continue to buy Bonaqua products.	Chang and Fong (2010)
	GCL2	I would recommend Bonaqua products to my family and friends.	
	GCL3	I am willing to pay a higher price for eco-friendly products regardless of whether other general products are cheaper than eco-friendly products.	
Green customer satisfaction	GCS1	I am satisfied with my decision to purchase Bonaqua's eco-packaged products.	Chang and Fong (2010)
	GCS2	I am glad to purchase Bonaqua's eco-packaged products.	
	GCS3	I believe that I am doing the right thing by purchasing Bonaqua's eco-packaged products.	
	GCS4	I feel that I contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development.	
Green product quality	GPQ1	Bonaqua's products and eco-friendly packaging meet or exceed popular environmental regulations.	Chen (2007)
	GPQ2	Bonaqua's products and eco-friendly packaging consume the least amount of resources and energy.	
	GPQ3	Bonaqua's products and eco-friendly packaging are easy to recycle, disassemble or reuse.	
	GPQ4	Bonaqua's products and eco-friendly packaging result in minimal environmental damage.	
Green corporate image	GCI1	Bonaqua's products and eco-friendly packaging are credible and stable.	Chang and Fong (2010)

(*continued*)

(*continued*)

Construct	Item		Source
	GCI2	Bonaqua has adequate capacity to meet customers' environmental protection needs.	
	GCI3	Bonaqua has an excellent environmental reputation.	
	GCI4	Bonaqua demonstrates excellent performance with respect to environmental management and green innovation.	
Green trust	GT1	Bonaqua's environmental commitment is generally reliable.	Chen (2010)
	GT2	Bonaqua's environmental performance is generally dependable.	
	GT3	Bonaqua's environmental argument is generally trustworthy.	
	GT4	Bonaqua keeps its promises and commitment to environment protection.	
	GT5	Bonaqua's environmental concerns meet my expectations.	

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