



Linking Social Responsibility and Green Marketing to Green Brand Equity: Evidence of the Mediating Role of Green Brand Image– A Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the relationship between corporate social responsibility and green marketing to Green Brand Equity, with green brand image as a mediating variable. At a time of growing concern for the environment, all companies are confronted by the necessity to construct an authentic image on environmental issues through sustainable progress. The Somethinc brand is one case where the consumer harbours skepticism towards green claims and even though it may have indulged in green marketing or CSR practices. This study uses a theoretical approach grounded in Stakeholder Theory and Signaling Theory, demonstrating that green brand image plays a vital role in connecting green marketing and CSR to Green Brand Equity. The findings of these conceptual analyses indicate that both strategies, provided they are openly and consistently communicated about can form the basis for enhancing green brand equity by way of promoting an authentic sustainable offer. This research provides companies with insights for designing effective green marketing strategies and highlights the importance of integrating sustainability values across all aspects of business operations.

Keywords: Social Responsibility, Green Marketing, Green Brand Equity, Green Brand Image.

1 Introduction

In the midst of the trend toward a green lifestyle and greater ecological awareness, many brands are competing to build an environmentally friendly image through green marketing strategies and corporate social responsibility programs. However, a new challenge has arisen in the form of consumer doubts about the authenticity of the company's green claims, also known as greenwashing. This phenomenon is also felt by the Somethinc brand, which despite being known as a pioneer brand of local cruelty-free and vegan products produced with eco-friendly concepts, amid these green trends it is under suspicion from some consumers who think that our green practices are just for decoration or part of a marketing strategy only.

This condition raises essential questions about the extent to which Somethinc's implementation of social responsibility and green marketing strategy is really able to

form a strong green brand image and ultimately increase green brand equity. As consumers become more and more sceptical about the sustainability claims of a brand, Something's ability to boost green brand equity is largely dependent on the perceived credibility and consistency in communicating its green promise. As such, it is necessary to investigate the association between CSR and green marketing towards green brand equity and the mediating role of green brand image to get insight into how "Something" sustainability endeavors are eventually to result in sustainable brand superiority at the consumer level.

Today, consumers not only judge products by quality and price, but also by the extent to which companies demonstrate commitment to sustainability and environmental ethics [1]. As a result, Green Marketing and practice Social Responsibility become an essential element in building a green-oriented brand image and value.

In this context, companies are required to embed sustainability values into all business processes, from production and brand communication to consumer interaction [2]. This result indicates that Green Brand Image plays a crucial natural role as mediator between the firm and consumers with respect to green strategy and Green Brand Equity. A good brand can enhance trust and consumer loyalty, significantly affecting firm's long term success in the market. [3].

Although social responsibility and green marketing are increasingly implemented, their effects on Green Brand Equity [4] do not always have a positive impact. The results of the study [5], [6] found that the influence of green marketing on green brand equity is directly insignificant, while other factors, such as greenwashing and green confusion play an important role. These findings support the idea that only green claims without credibility/clarity can fail to increase green brand equity [4]. Meanwhile, [5] In a sample of skincare consumers, it is report that green marketing has a positive but insignificant effect on the purchase intention directly. However, when taking green brand image into account as a mediator, the influence of green marketing becomes indirectly significant through green brand image, meaning the effect of green marketing works through the formation of a green image, not a direct effect on outcomes.

While some companies report increased customer loyalty and competitive advantage, they are experiencing challenges in building a credible green brand image [6]. This indicates a gap in understanding how social responsibility and green marketing really affect consumers' perception of brand value. In addition, many companies fail to harness the potential of green brand image as a strategic link between sustainability initiatives and the formation of Green Brand Equity [7].

Recent empirical research shows that social responsibility can increase consumer trust in brands and brand loyalty, especially if communicated effectively [8]. On the other hand, green marketing, when applied with an authentic strategy, can strengthen consumers' perceptions of the added value of products and services [9]. Study by [6]. It also highlights that green brand image acts as a catalyst that connects sustainability initiatives with brand values. Thus, the solution offered is to integrate social responsibility and green marketing holistically, while maximizing the influence of green brand image as a mediating element in increasing Green Brand Equity.

Although studies have highlighted the importance of social responsibility and green marketing, there is a research gap regarding the specific mechanisms by which

the two variables interact with green brand image to influence Green Brand Equity. [4] However, the relationship between greenwashing and Green Brand Equity is not that straightforward. It is especially true for the current study, where green marketing did not demonstrate the anticipated positive effect; it is further worsened by the fact that brand credibility quickly was revealed as the most optimal moderating factor. Besides, there has not been much studying on the mediating impact produced by green brand image [10]. In addition, Signaling Theory is the foundation of the theory, which holds that social responsibility can be a positive signal that strengthens the brand image in consumers' eyes [11]. This study develops an empirical model to account the effects of social responsibility, green marketing, green brand image and Green Brand Equity based on the integrative view of Stakeholder and Signaling theories. It makes novel contributions by examining the mediating role of green brand image in the relationship between social responsibility and green marketing in shaping Green Brand Equity, a topic rarely explored in existing literature. Additionally, it offers practical guidance for companies to develop effective green marketing strategies by embedding sustainability values into all aspects of their operations. By addressing identified phenomena, issues, and research gaps, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature by investigating how social responsibility influences Green Brand Equity through green marketing and the mediating effect of green brand image.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, put forward by Freeman [12], reports the company has an obligation beyond shareholders to all stakeholders (stakeholders) involved or influenced by its operations. These are consumers, employees, communities where the company's offices or factories are located, suppliers, governments and the environment. In the context of this study, the application of *green marketing* and corporate social responsibility (*CSR*) is a form of commitment to meet stakeholders' expectations for business practices that are ethical, environmentally friendly, and provide social benefits. These efforts build a positive brand image, namely a green brand image, which in turn reinforces Green Brand Equity by increasing trust, loyalty, and appreciation among consumers, one of the main stakeholders.

2.2 Signaling Theory

Signaling Theory, introduced by [13], Firstly, companies need to signal their quality, commitment, and brand excellence where the companies and the consuming households face the information asymmetry conditions. Thus, the green marketing and social responsibility is the positive signal that the company is concerned with the environmental and social problems. Consumers receive the signal and forms a positive perception in the form of green brand image, which then strengthens Green Brand Equity. This process shows that the strategic steps companies take in communicating and implementing sustainability are not only a marketing strategy but also a means of building trust and brand differentiation in the market. In other words, Signaling Theory

describes the mechanism by which eco-friendly activities and social responsibility can transform perceptions into higher brand values.

2.3 Social Responsibility

Social Responsibility is a concept that holds that companies should necessarily pursue economic gains but also assume ethical responsibility to offer benefits through their operational processes to the environment, society & other parties with a stake in it, beyond self-benefit within the business [14]. CSR is not only about legal compliance but also includes voluntary actions that go beyond the law, such as environmentally sustainable development, fair treatment of employees, and support for social issues [15]. The definition is expanding as the realisation sinks in that business activities have far-reaching social and environmental impacts, requiring companies to do public good not only for the locality but beyond [12]. Social responsibility has been theoretically examined with several perspectives such as position of stakeholders (stakeholder theory) that argues that it is necessary to take into account interests of all subjects influenced in some way by functioning of the company Social responsibility is related to the concept of sustainability, which insists that businesses should operate in a manner that does not jeopardize the ability of future generations to satisfy their needs [16]. In this context, social responsibility is not only about fulfilling social responsibilities to improve the company's image and reputation, but also about creating long-term value for the company, its surrounding community, and the environment.

2.4 Green Marketing

Green marketing is a business approach to marketing used in corporate responsibility purpose that focuses on value-led products, like “green value created” and facilitate businesses making sustainable choice with environmental stakeholders while meeting the needs of the market. This goes beyond marketing a product’s environmentally friendly features—recycled materials and energy efficiency are examples—but calls for changes to the production, packaging, and distribution of products in order to minimize their environmental impact[17]. This process seeks to develop a product for the market that meets consumer wants and desires while limiting environmental impact, which results in increased value for the company and society. According to research [18], promote green marketing has become the necessary means to promote clean production and sustainable consumption, with a focus on green product development and effective marketing strategies. In the modern era, green marketing is also an integral part of building a company's reputation as a socially responsible entity. Green marketing is often integrated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and brand communication strategies to make an image of an environmentally conscious company. Consumer involvement in environmental activities, sustainability campaigns, and transparency of product information are key in expanding the positive impact of green marketing. Studies by [20] verify that consumers show preference for brands that they believe represent a positive contribution to resolving global environmental problem, encouraging green marketing from being a supplementary option to a competitive imperative in the current global

market.

2.5 Green Brand Image

Green brand image is the consumer's perception of a brand as an entity committed to environmentally friendly and sustainable practices [19]. This perception is formed from a series of ideas, beliefs, and impressions embedded in consumers' minds of the environmental activities carried out by the company, both functionally and psychologically, and the extent to which the brand truly cares and contributes to environmental conservation. Green brand image is grounded not only in marketing communication, but also in the consistent performance of the enterprises applying eco-efficiency principles to all company operations, from production and packaging to product distribution [20]. A powerful green brand image has a great effect on consumer behaviour and particularly so for consumers high in environmental concern. A study by [6] reveals that consumers' attitudes and behavior towards the company are directly influenced by a positive green brand image, this benefit potentially could lead to loyal support of the brand. Therefore, business firms successful in establishing a good green brand image can develop closer relationships with their consumers. Further, a green brand image can develop favorable feeling of affections towards the brand on part of the consumer. If consumers perceive a green image as authentic, it can evoke emotion (e.g., pride, satisfaction), and subsequently lead to more trust in the brand [21]. Accordingly, green brand image is not a mere perception but also a vital mechanism to influence the attitude, preferences and buying behavior of consumers in an era when sustainability and environmental responsibility play greater importance [21].

2.6 Green Brand Equity

Green Brand Equity is the added value provided by a brand to a product or service, which is formed from consumer perception based on experience, awareness, and trust in the brand [22]. This value reflects not only the perception of the quality of the product or service, but also the emotional associations and images inherent in the consumer's mind. Strong Green Brand Equity is able to provide a competitive advantage, increase customer loyalty, and allow companies to set premium prices for products or services offered [23].

Scientifically, Green Brand Equity is a multidimensional concept that includes several key elements, such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, quality perception, and other assets owned by the brand [23]. Consumer experience plays an important role in shaping Green Brand Equity, consumers who have consistently positive experiences with a brand tend to build trust and loyalty, so that brand value increases over time. Positive interactions with brands, whether through product use, customer service, or marketing communication, can increase consumers' positive perceptions of brands. Study by [24] Demonstrating that a pleasant brand experience can strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and brands, ultimately increasing brand loyalty.

Green Brand Equity is thus that value which the consumer gives to the brand based on the environmental-conscious commitment of the company. A consumer will

perceive a company more positively in terms of its competitors if they have information on the sustainability efforts carried out by the company [23]. Companies that will have developed Green Brand Equity in regards to sustainability will have developed the trustworthiness and support of the market that matters; the environmentally conscious consumers to their course, and have a stronger foothold to stand against in the competitive market [23]. This characterizes Green Brand Equity as a strategic advantage to companies. High levels of Green Brand Equity will help the brand to go beyond the value obtained from them from the direct competition. Moreover, it allows a company to charge premium prices and reduces the price sensitivity by the consumers.

3 Methodology

This study uses a conceptual approach to clarify theoretical constructs and develop new interpretations based on existing literature [25]. According to [26], a conceptual paper contribute to survey the literature and get research gaps that could help developing theoretical frameworks for empirical studies. Relevant literature is incorporated in such a way to correspond with the objectives of the research and ensure an all-rounded perspective on relationships between key ideas. Such an approach results in a construct that can be empirically tested in additional research. These are some of the questions that this framework intends to deal with: (1) Does Green Marketing have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Equity? (2) Does Social Responsibility have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Equity? (3) Does Social Responsibility have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Image? (4) Does Green Marketing have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Image? (5) Does Green Brand Image have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Equity? (6) Does Green Marketing have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Equity through Green Brand Image as a mediation variable? (7) Does Social Responsibility have a significant positive effect on Green Brand Equity through Green Brand Image as a mediation variable?

4. Results & Discussion

4.1 The Influence of Green Marketing on Green Brand Equity

Green marketing It has become an important strategy for companies in building and maintaining brand equity in an era of increasing environmental awareness. Through this approach, companies not only promote their products or services, but also emphasize their commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility. This can increase consumers' positive perception of the brand, which in turn strengthens brand equity. Study by [27], [28] Data suggest that green marketing tools, such as over-packaging to be viewed as innovative or premium, will help build green brand equity. Despite too much packaging not being consistent with sustainability ideals, if the brand is one that you trust, value and you believe to be innovative then concerns about the environment seem less important as you have confidence in a great product which has an associated high percentage of single use, dumped waste. However, firms must be motivated to make their green marketing genuine rather than deceiving. Greenwashing,

the practice of presenting unverified environmental claims, may diminish consumer confidence and damage brand reputation [29], [30], [31]. Therefore, transparency and honesty in environmental communication are vital for maintaining and enhancing brand equity. Authentic green marketing serves as a strong tool in strengthening brand value. Companies need to balance promoting sustainability with concrete business practices to ensure their messages match their actions, which helps foster consumer trust and loyalty.

4.2 The Influence of Social Responsibility on Green Brand Equity

Green Brand Equity is the extent to which consumers value brands, that can be affected by numerous variables among them Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) [32], [33]. Adoption of CSR practices can lead to enhanced Green Brand Equity as an outburst of consumer trust and loyalty due to the company's concern toward social and environmental consequences [34], [35]. Research by [36] Research; Report Research Findings Research reveals that CSR has a positive impact on Green Brand Equity. CSR positively impacts consumer perceptions toward brands and, as a result, increases Green Brand Equity. Nevertheless, the companies should make sure their CSR initiatives are real and substantial as consumers become more informed and critical on greenwashing or superficial programs. Transparency and accountability in CSR activities are key to developing strong Green Brand Equity. CSR can be a strong tool (if appropriately designed and executed) to create and maintain Green Brand Equity [37]. "(Businesses need to) walk the talk when it comes to sustainability and social responsibility to gain consumer trust and loyalty.

4.3 The Influence of Social Responsibility on Green Brand Image

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) encompasses a wide range of initiatives that demonstrate a company's commitment to social and environmental well-being [38], [39]. Effective CSR implementation can strengthen *green brand image* by demonstrating that the company cares not only about profits but also about the social and environmental impact of its operations [33], [40] Study by [36] Emphasizing the advantageous role of CSR on green brand image, studies found that effective CSR helps improving consumer perception by creating a favorable image especially when companies have a true commitment towards sustainability and social responsibility. But companies will need to be genuine in the among crops attempt and not just taking tokenistic steps, as consumers are becoming very wary of greenwashing or shallow marketing strategies. When it comes to CSR, transparency and accountability are important in order to preserve the sincerity. Well-planned and implemented CSR programs can enhance and fortify a green brand image. For brands to drive consumer loyalty and trust, they should make their intentions ring true when it comes to sustainability goals and social responsibility.

4.4 The Influence of Green Marketing on Green Brand Image

Green bright image is a consumer attitude towards the enterprise environmental commitment [41]. Green marketing is, therefore, used to create this image by

emphasising a company's commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly activities [42]. Through effective communication, companies will be able to establish a strong green brand in the mind of consumers [29]. Green marketing has a high level influence with perception of green brand image. In one of the study at Greensmart Sidoarjo, it was found that green marketing by companies creates positive values on consumer perception of an environmentally friendly product. However, the effectiveness of green marketing in forming a green brand image is based on whether messages communicated match what the firm actually does. Discrepancies between claims and practice may evoke scepticism and tarnish brand reputation [43]. Hence, trust in environmental communication must be honest and transparent. On the whole, consistent and credible in green marketing can eventually lead into substantial improvement of green brand image. To establish and maintain a robust green brand image, firms need to not only communicate (clearly) their sustainability efforts but they also need to reflect those in their business practices.

4.5 The Influence of Green Brand Image on Green Brand Equity

Green brand image reflects consumers' perception of a brand's environmental commitments, which can affect overall Green Brand Equity [44], [45]. An eco-friendly brand image can increase consumer trust and loyalty, which in turn strengthens Green Brand Equity. Study [46] The study found that a green brand image positively and significantly impacts Green Brand Equity. Specifically, in the context of Ades bottled water in Denpasar, consumer perceptions of a green image boost trust and loyalty, thereby enhancing Green Brand Equity. However, it is crucial that this green brand image is backed by tangible sustainable actions from the company. Any gap between the image and actual practices can erode consumer trust and harm Green Brand Equity. Thus, maintaining alignment between the brand image and company practices is vital. An authentic green brand image, supported by genuine sustainable efforts, can greatly enhance Green Brand Equity [47]. Consumers are increasingly aware of environmental issues and tend to give more trust to brands that demonstrate consistent and transparent ecological responsibility [48]. Therefore, companies must ensure that their environmental commitments are reflected in all aspects of operations, from the supply chain, production processes, to product packaging and marketing. This holistic approach not only strengthens the brand's position in the market, but also helps to build and maintain strong and sustainable Green Brand Equity in the long term.

4.6 Green Brand Image Mediates the Influence of Green Marketing on Green Brand Equity

In an era of increasing environmental awareness, the *green marketing* It has become an important approach for companies to attract consumers who care about sustainability. *Green marketing* includes a variety of initiatives, such as the use of eco-friendly materials, the reduction of carbon emissions, and educational campaigns on the importance of protecting the environment [49]. However, the effectiveness of green marketing in building Green Brand Equity does not only depend on the implementation of the strategy, but also on consumer perception of the resulting brand image [50].

Green brand image, which reflects consumers' positive perception of the company's environmental commitments, plays an important role as a mediator in the relationship between green marketing and Green Brand Equity. When consumers see that a company's green marketing efforts are consistent and authentic, they tend to form a positive brand image, which in turn strengthens Green Brand Equity. Research [51] It shows that green marketing strategies have a positive and significant effect on brand image, which then influences consumer purchasing decisions. Further, a study by [52] It was emphasized that green marketing positively impacts the green brand image and consumer purchase intention at Starbucks Coffee Malang. This indicates that the green brand image not only mediates the relationship between green marketing and Green Brand Equity but also directly affects consumer behavior. However, companies must ensure that their green marketing strategies are genuine and not just superficial or driven by market trends. Consumers are increasingly perceptive and can detect greenwashing, which involves making deceptive environmental claims. Therefore, a strong green brand image must be rooted in truly sustainable and transparent practices. Consequently, the green brand image plays a key mediating role in enhancing green marketing's effect on Green Brand Equity. Firms that develop an authentic green brand image through consistent and transparent marketing strategies will be better positioned to increase their brand value, especially as consumers become more environmentally conscious [53].

4.7 Green Brand Image Mediates the Influence of Social Responsibility on Green Brand Equity

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an integral element in modern business strategies, where companies focus not only on financial profits, but also on social and environmental contributions [54]. In this context, corporate social responsibility towards the environment is an important aspect that affects consumer perception of brands [55]. However, the influence of CSR on Green Brand Equity does not occur directly, but is mediated by the green brand image formed by the company. Green brand image, as a consumer's perception of the company's environmental commitment, is a bridge between CSR and Green Brand Equity [56]. When companies consistently implement CSR programs that focus on environmental sustainability, consumers tend to form a positive brand image, which ultimately increases Green Brand Equity. Study by [57] shows that green brand image has a positive effect on green green brand equity, with green trust as an additional mediator. Thus, green brand image plays a significant role as a mediator in the relationship between corporate social responsibility and Green Brand Equity. Companies that consistently implement CSR programs that focus on environmental sustainability and successfully build an authentic green brand image will be better able to increase their brand value in the eyes of consumers who are increasingly concerned about environmental issues.

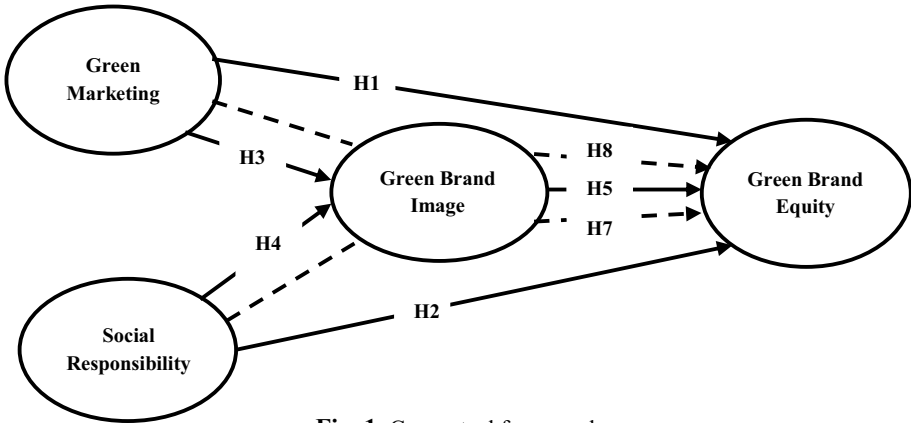


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

The diagram illustrates the relationship between Green Marketing, Social Responsibility, Green Brand Image, and Green Brand Equity. It shows that green marketing strategies and corporate social responsibility are crucial in shaping the green brand image, which in turn enhances green brand equity. Specifically, Green Marketing directly influences Green Brand Equity (H1) and also impacts it indirectly through Green Brand Image (H4 → H6). This indicates that marketing efforts emphasizing sustainability not only improve consumers' perception of the brand but also boost loyalty and trust. Similarly, Social Responsibility significantly contributes to building Green Brand Image (H3) and increasing Green Brand Equity (H2). Environmentally focused social responsibility activities help companies earn a positive reputation and increase brand value. Additionally, Green Brand Image acts as a mediating factor connecting Green Marketing and Social Responsibility with Green Brand Equity (H5, H6, H7). Consequently, the green brand image is vital for translating a company's green strategies into sustainable and competitive brand value. Overall, the model highlights that successful development of Green Brand Equity depends on the synergy between green marketing, social responsibility, and a brand image aligned with sustainability values.

5 Conclusion

This study finds that Green Brand Image acts as a vital mediator linking green marketing, social responsibility, and Green Brand Equity. Effective green marketing and CSR can enhance consumers' positive view of the brand by fostering an authentic image aligned with sustainability principles. Green brand image not only differentiates the brand but also boosts consumer loyalty and trust, thereby strengthening green brand equity. Companies should ensure their green marketing and CSR initiatives are genuine and impactful to avoid greenwashing and maintain credibility with consumers. Overall, combining green marketing, social responsibility, and a consistent green brand image is essential for creating a sustainable competitive advantage in a global market increasingly focused on sustainability.

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