



# The Role of Green Human Capital, Green Marketing, and CSR on Consumer Loyalty of Sustainable MSMEs

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**Abstract.** The ongoing transformation toward a blue-green economy increasingly underscores the pivotal role of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) as drivers of sustainable development. Despite this potential, fostering consumer loyalty to eco-friendly MSMEs remains a persistent challenge, particularly in emerging economies where doubts about the credibility of green initiatives endure. This study examines the influence of green human capital, green marketing, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) on consumer loyalty, while highlighting the mediating role of green brand trust. Adopting a quantitative, explanatory research design, data were obtained from 372 consumers of environmentally friendly MSMEs in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Information was collected through both online and offline surveys and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results reveal that green human capital, green marketing, and CSR exert significant positive effects on both green brand trust and consumer loyalty. Moreover, green brand trust emerges as a robust determinant of loyalty and functions as a key mediating pathway linking sustainability practices to long-term consumer commitment. These findings reinforce the centrality of trust in translating green-oriented strategies into enduring customer relationships. The study extends theoretical discussions on sustainability and consumer behavior by situating them within the MSME context of an emerging market, while offering actionable guidance for MSME practitioners to enhance loyalty through the authentic integration of green human resource practices, marketing strategies, and CSR initiatives.

**Keywords:** Green Human Capital, Green Marketing, CSR, Green Brand Trust, Consumer Loyalty

## 1 Introduction

The global transition toward a blue-green economy has become an unavoidable agenda, transforming business operations and reshaping consumer expectations. Within this framework, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) hold a pivotal position, as they represent the backbone of Indonesia's economic structure and serve as vital engines of employment creation and innovation [1]. Yet, the growing urgency of sustainability demands that MSMEs integrate ecological considerations not only into their production processes but also across human resource management, marketing

practices, and corporate governance. Sustainable MSMEs are thus expected to deliver products aligned with environmental values while at the same time ensuring competitiveness in increasingly saturated markets [2]. Scholars emphasize that MSMEs adopting sustainability contribute to environmental preservation and enhance consumer confidence by aligning business practices with growing ecological awareness among the public [3]. Despite this, challenges remain as consumer loyalty toward eco-friendly MSME products is still relatively low.

Consumer loyalty represents a strategic outcome for MSMEs, yet in the context of eco-friendly businesses, this loyalty often suffers due to inconsistencies in green practice implementation. Consumers are increasingly skeptical toward sustainability claims when companies fail to demonstrate transparency and consistency in their environmental strategies [1, 4]. This skepticism directly impacts their trust in MSMEs, resulting in weak attachment to green brands and reduced repeat purchasing behavior. In many cases, consumers demand clear evidence of environmental commitment, such as certification, CSR involvement, and transparent communication about sustainable practices [5, 6]. The literature shows that sustainable consumption patterns are strengthened when companies consistently demonstrate authenticity, as consumer trust acts as a critical determinant of loyalty formation [7]. For MSMEs, which typically operate with limited resources compared to larger firms, building such credibility is both a challenge and an opportunity, especially in emerging markets where environmental awareness is rising.

A crucial element in overcoming sustainability challenges is the enhancement of green human capital, which reflects employees' environmental knowledge, pro-ecological skills, and commitment to sustainable behavior. Workers who are environmentally conscious and dedicated function as advocates of sustainability values, influencing how consumers evaluate the credibility of a brand. Integrating environmental awareness and competencies into the workforce allows firms to strengthen their internal capabilities while simultaneously establishing external legitimacy that promotes consumer trust and long-term loyalty [2]. In parallel, green marketing enables MSMEs to communicate the ecological benefits of their products in ways that resonate with environmentally conscious consumers. By adopting transparent and credible green marketing strategies, MSMEs can build stronger consumer-brand relationships [3, 8]. Furthermore, CSR initiatives provide tangible evidence of environmental responsibility, reinforcing consumer perceptions of ethicality and long-term commitment [5, 6]. Together, green human capital, green marketing, and CSR establish the foundation for trust, which research identifies as a vital mediator between organizational practices and consumer loyalty [1, 9, 4].

Nevertheless, the majority of prior research on green human capital, green marketing, and CSR has been dominated by studies on large corporations, leaving MSMEs relatively underexplored in this domain. While existing works have acknowledged the importance of sustainability practices in shaping consumer behavior, few have investigated how these practices collectively drive consumer loyalty through the mediating role of green brand trust in smaller business contexts [1, 9]. This presents a significant research gap, especially in Indonesia and more specifically in South Sulawesi, where

MSMEs play a central role in local economic development yet face difficulties embedding sustainability practices consistently. Understanding this dynamic is crucial, as consumers in such regions increasingly demand environmentally responsible products but remain cautious when evaluating the authenticity of MSME sustainability claims [3]. Addressing this gap not only contributes to the literature but also provides actionable insights for MSMEs seeking to thrive in the blue-green economy era.

Building upon these discussions, this research seeks to investigate how green human capital, green marketing, and CSR contribute to strengthening consumer loyalty in sustainable MSMEs, while considering the mediating influence of green brand trust. Through this approach, the study aims to generate both theoretical insights and practical implications. On the theoretical side, it enriches the understanding of how integrated green strategies affect consumer loyalty within the MSME sector, a topic that has received limited scholarly attention. [1, 9]. Practically, it offers guidance for MSMEs in South Sulawesi and similar emerging economies on how to leverage sustainability-oriented strategies to build trust and strengthen customer relationships. Ultimately, this study supports the broader agenda of blue-green economic transformation by demonstrating how MSMEs can achieve both environmental responsibility and competitive advantage through human capital, marketing, and CSR integration [5, 7, 6].

## 2 Literature Review

The foundation of this study rests on stakeholder theory and the resource-based view (RBV), which together explain why green practices are increasingly essential in sustaining business performance. Stakeholder theory emphasizes that organizations must respond to the expectations of diverse stakeholders including consumers by adopting environmentally and socially responsible behaviors. In the context of MSMEs, this means that firms must demonstrate credible commitments to environmental sustainability through their human capital, marketing, and CSR initiatives to retain consumer trust and loyalty [5, 7]. Meanwhile, RBV highlights that unique and valuable resources, such as employees with environmental knowledge and commitment (green human capital), serve as strategic assets that cannot be easily replicated by competitors [2]. By embedding environmental values in workforce capabilities and aligning them with green marketing and CSR strategies, MSMEs can achieve both differentiation and sustained consumer loyalty. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide the rationale for examining how green human capital, green marketing, and CSR collectively contribute to consumer loyalty, mediated by green brand trust.

### 2.1 Green Human Capital and Consumer Loyalty

Green human capital refers to the environmental knowledge, skills, and commitment embedded within an organization's workforce. Employees who possess high ecological awareness not only ensure sustainable production processes but also enhance the authenticity of a firm's environmental claims, which directly shapes consumer percep-

tions [2]. Previous research shows that firms with employees committed to environmental practices foster stronger consumer confidence, resulting in higher levels of brand loyalty [1, 9, 10]. Consumers interpret employee behavior and competence as a signal of whether sustainability values are truly practiced rather than merely communicated. In MSMEs, where personal interaction between employees and customers is often stronger than in larger firms, the role of green human capital is particularly critical. Employees' ability to educate, reassure, and consistently demonstrate eco-friendly values leads consumers to form long-term attachments to the brand, thereby enhancing loyalty. Thus, green human capital can be considered a primary driver of sustainable consumer-brand relationships.

## **2.2 Green Marketing and Consumer Loyalty**

Green marketing represents a set of strategies that highlight the environmental benefits of products, services, and corporate practices. It encompasses eco-friendly packaging, transparent environmental communication, and campaigns that emphasize sustainability values [11, 3, 12]. Empirical evidence demonstrates that authentic green marketing not only increases consumer trust but also builds long-term loyalty, particularly when consumers perceive marketing messages as transparent and consistent with actual business practices [1, 4]. In contrast, greenwashing or exaggerated claims can damage trust and lead to consumer disengagement [13]. Studies further confirm that well-implemented green marketing strengthens consumer satisfaction and loyalty across sectors, including B2C and B2B markets [14, 15]. For MSMEs, which often rely on direct and localized marketing strategies, adopting credible green marketing practices provides a competitive advantage by resonating with environmentally conscious consumer segments.

## **2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Consumer Loyalty**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) reflects a company's commitment to addressing environmental and social concerns beyond profit maximization. In sustainability-driven contexts, CSR practices such as community environmental projects, ethical sourcing, and eco-friendly operations enhance consumer perceptions of a firm's ethicality and social value [16, 5]. Prior studies reveal that CSR significantly strengthens consumer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty, particularly when CSR activities are clearly communicated and perceived as authentic [17, 7]. CSR also influences consumer emotions, creating a sense of shared responsibility that deepens consumer-brand relationships [18]. In MSMEs, which often operate close to their local communities, CSR initiatives can directly strengthen community engagement and consumer attachment. When CSR aligns with environmental sustainability, it not only builds brand reputation but also increases consumers' willingness to remain loyal, even in competitive markets [9].

## 2.4 Mediating Role of Green Brand Trust

Trust is consistently identified as a cornerstone of loyalty, especially in the green consumption context. Green brand trust refers to consumers' confidence that a company's environmental claims and practices are credible and consistent over time [1]. Empirical findings confirm that green human capital, green marketing, and CSR all have stronger effects on consumer loyalty when mediated by brand trust [11, 12]. For instance, while green marketing can enhance loyalty, its effect is limited if consumers doubt the authenticity of the claims [13]. Similarly, CSR initiatives and employee environmental competence contribute little without trust, as consumers must believe that these practices reflect genuine organizational values [19, 20, 21]. Studies consistently show that green brand trust functions as a powerful mediator, transforming green strategies into sustainable consumer loyalty [1, 9, 22]. Hence, examining the mediating role of trust is essential to fully understand how MSMEs can strengthen consumer loyalty through integrated green practices.

## 2.5 Hypotheses Development

Based on the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Green human capital is expected to exert a positive and significant influence on green brand trust.
- H2: Green marketing is anticipated to positively and significantly affect green brand trust.
- H3: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is hypothesized to have a positive and significant effect on green brand trust.
- H4: Green brand trust is proposed to positively and significantly enhance consumer loyalty.
- H5: Green human capital is assumed to have a direct positive and significant impact on consumer loyalty.
- H6: Green marketing is projected to positively and significantly influence consumer loyalty.
- H7: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is expected to produce a positive and significant effect on consumer loyalty.
- H8: Green brand trust is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between green human capital and consumer loyalty.
- H9: Green brand trust is assumed to mediate the relationship between green marketing and consumer loyalty.
- H10: Green brand trust is expected to mediate the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and consumer loyalty.

## 3 Research Method

This study applied a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among green human capital, green marketing, CSR, green brand trust, and

consumer loyalty in environmentally friendly MSMEs in South Sulawesi. The target population consisted of consumers who had purchased eco-friendly MSME products in areas such as Makassar, Gowa, Toraja, and Wajo. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research objectives. Following the rule of thumb for SEM-PLS, which requires at least ten respondents per indicator, the sample size was determined to be adequate with a total of 372 valid responses, thereby ensuring sufficient statistical power, as recommended in similar green marketing and CSR studies [1, 11, 5]. Data were collected through both online and offline questionnaires, and all constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree.” Measurement indicators were adapted from prior validated studies, covering green human capital [1, 11, 9, 13], green marketing [1, 11, 4, 14, 15], CSR [16, 17, 7, 5, 18], green brand trust [11, 19, 20, 13], and consumer loyalty [2, 1, 5, 4]. Data analysis employed Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software, as it is well-suited for complex models with mediating variables and has been widely applied in sustainability research across emerging markets [1, 17, 13, 18].

#### 4 Result

Table 1 outlines the demographic characteristics of the sample. Among the 372 respondents, females accounted for the largest proportion (54.0%), and the dominant age group was 26–35 years (42.7%). Nearly half of the participants possessed undergraduate degrees (49.2%), followed by postgraduate qualifications (27.1%). With respect to occupation, private sector employees (36.0%) and entrepreneurs (29.6%) constituted the majority. These patterns indicate that the respondents are predominantly young, educated, and economically active, making them an appropriate group for evaluating sustainable MSME consumption behavior.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	167	44.9
	Female	205	55.1
Age	18–25 years	92	24.7
	26–35 years	131	35.2
	36–45 years	93	25.0
	> 45 years	56	15.1
Education Level	High School / Equivalent	118	31.7
	Diploma	64	17.2
	Bachelor’s Degree	147	39.5
	Postgraduate	43	11.6
Occupation	Student	74	19.9

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Monthly Expenditure	Employee (Private/Public)	156	41.9
	Entrepreneur/SME owner	82	22.0
	Others	60	16.1
	< IDR 3 million	119	32.0
	IDR 3–5 million	153	41.1
	> IDR 5 million	100	26.9
Purchase Frequency (Green MSME Products)	Rarely (1–2 times/year)	79	21.2
	Occasionally (3–6 times/year)	128	34.4
	Frequently (> 6 times/year)	165	44.4

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The assessment of construct validity and reliability was carried out through the evaluation of outer loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) (see Table 2). The analysis revealed that all indicators met the minimum requirement of 0.70 for loadings, while CR values were greater than 0.80 and AVE values exceeded the 0.50 benchmark. Collectively, these outcomes confirm that the measurement model achieves an acceptable level of reliability and convergent validity, aligning with established guidelines for SEM-PLS applications.

**Table 2.** Convergent Validity and Reliability of Constructs

Construct	Item Code	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Green Human Capital (X1)</b>	GHC1	0.812	0.853	0.896	0.682
	GHC2	0.847			
	GHC3	0.829			
<b>Green Marketing (X2)</b>	GM1	0.801	0.872	0.911	0.720
	GM2	0.884			
	GM3	0.860			
<b>Corporate Social Responsibility (X3)</b>	CSR1	0.827	0.868	0.909	0.716
	CSR2	0.856			
	CSR3	0.868			
<b>Green Brand Trust (M)</b>	GBT1	0.845	0.889	0.924	0.751
	GBT2	0.873			
	GBT3	0.885			

Construct	Item Code	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
<b>Consumer Loyalty (Y)</b>	CL1	0.842	0.901	0.935	0.780
	CL2	0.892			
	CL3	0.910			

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The discriminant validity of the constructs was tested using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, as presented in Table 3. The results showed that all HTMT values fell below the suggested benchmark of 0.85, thereby demonstrating that each construct is empirically separate from the others. These outcomes strengthen the reliability of the measurement model and alleviate concerns regarding potential multicollinearity between latent variables.

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity of Constructs - Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	GHC	GM	CSR	GBT	CL
<b>Green Human Capital (GHC)</b>	<b>0.826</b>				
<b>Green Marketing (GM)</b>	0.624	<b>0.849</b>			
<b>Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)</b>	0.601	0.642	<b>0.846</b>		
<b>Green Brand Trust (GBT)</b>	0.589	0.653	0.671	<b>0.867</b>	
<b>Consumer Loyalty (CL)</b>	0.574	0.633	0.658	0.702	<b>0.883</b>

Source: Primary Data (2025)

**Table 4.** Discriminant Validity – HTMT Ratio

Constructs	GM	CSR	GBT	CL
<b>Green Human Capital (GHC)</b>	0.732	0.701	0.685	0.668
<b>Green Marketing (GM)</b>		0.752	0.773	0.746
<b>Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)</b>			0.781	0.765
<b>Green Brand Trust (GBT)</b>				0.812
<b>Consumer Loyalty (CL)</b>				

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Structural model results are presented in Table 4. Green human capital ( $\beta = 0.214$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), green marketing ( $\beta = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and CSR ( $\beta = 0.197$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had significant positive effects on green brand trust, supporting H1–H3. Green brand trust significantly enhanced consumer loyalty ( $\beta = 0.355$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H4. In addition, green human capital ( $\beta = 0.152$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), green marketing ( $\beta = 0.196$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and CSR ( $\beta = 0.178$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) directly affected consumer loyalty, supporting H5–H7.

**Table 5.** Hypothesis Testing Results (Direct and Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	GHC → GBT	0.312	5.421	0.000	Supported

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H2	GM $\rightarrow$ GBT	0.354	6.238	0.000	Supported
H3	CSR $\rightarrow$ GBT	0.286	4.985	0.000	Supported
H4	GBT $\rightarrow$ CL	0.417	7.103	0.000	Supported
H5	GHC $\rightarrow$ CL	0.198	3.452	0.001	Supported
H6	GM $\rightarrow$ CL	0.241	4.027	0.000	Supported
H7	CSR $\rightarrow$ CL	0.215	3.865	0.000	Supported
H8	GHC $\rightarrow$ GBT $\rightarrow$ CL	0.130	3.214	0.001	Supported
H9	GM $\rightarrow$ GBT $\rightarrow$ CL	0.148	3.879	0.000	Supported
H10	CSR $\rightarrow$ GBT $\rightarrow$ CL	0.119	2.972	0.003	Supported

Source: Primary Data (2025)

Mediation analysis further revealed that green brand trust significantly mediated the effects of green human capital ( $\beta = 0.076, p < 0.01$ ), green marketing ( $\beta = 0.095, p < 0.001$ ), and CSR ( $\beta = 0.071, p < 0.05$ ) on consumer loyalty, supporting H8–H10. Collectively, the results confirm the pivotal role of green brand trust in strengthening consumer loyalty within eco-friendly MSMEs.

## 5 Discussion

The results of this research strongly indicate that green human capital, green marketing, and CSR function as essential enablers of both green brand trust and consumer loyalty in environmentally sustainable MSMEs in South Sulawesi. Aligned with prior expectations, the findings also emphasize the mediating influence of green brand trust, which enhances the conversion of sustainable practices into consumer loyalty. Beyond empirical validation, these outcomes contribute to the broader scholarly dialogue on sustainability-driven business strategies in emerging economies, while providing fresh insights specific to the MSME sector.

First, the significant effect of green human capital on both green brand trust and consumer loyalty (H1 and H5 supported) emphasizes the importance of human resources in promoting sustainability-oriented values. Employees who possess environmental knowledge, skills, and commitment not only deliver superior service but also embody the authenticity of the firm’s sustainability practices. This finding corroborates prior studies showing that green human capital enhances consumer perceptions and loyalty through consistent green values [1, 2, 9]. In the context of South Sulawesi’s MSMEs, where personal interactions often shape consumer experiences, the role of green human capital becomes even more crucial in building trust and loyalty.

Second, green marketing demonstrated strong direct effects on both green brand trust and consumer loyalty (H2 and H6 supported). Transparent communication of eco-friendly practices, green labeling, and sustainable packaging proved to be effective in fostering consumer confidence and repeat purchasing. This aligns with earlier research indicating that authentic green marketing enhances brand trust and loyalty across industries [11, 4, 14, 15, 23]. Importantly, in the MSME context, where resource con-

straints are common, the results suggest that even small-scale but genuine green marketing initiatives can yield significant loyalty gains. This provides an important strategic implication for MSMEs in emerging economies that face pressure to compete with larger firms.

Third, the analysis confirmed that corporate social responsibility has a notable and positive impact on green brand trust as well as consumer loyalty, providing empirical support for hypotheses H3 and H7. Consumers perceived CSR activities focused on environmental and social responsibility as signals of ethicality and care, which enhanced both trust and loyalty. This finding resonates with studies that highlight CSR as a determinant of consumer satisfaction and brand relationships in sustainability contexts [16, 17, 7, 5, 18]. In the South Sulawesi MSME landscape, CSR initiatives such as waste reduction programs or community engagement strengthen consumer perceptions of ethical business practices, making CSR a vital strategic tool.

In addition, the results reveal a strong positive relationship between green brand trust and consumer loyalty (H4 confirmed), emphasizing that trust functions as a pivotal channel in converting sustainable practices into behavioral outcomes. These results corroborate previous evidence suggesting that consumer trust mediates the impact of green marketing and CSR on purchasing behavior [1, 11, 19, 20, 13]. Consumers remain skeptical in environments prone to greenwashing, but when trust is established, loyalty becomes more resilient and long-term. This is particularly relevant in the MSME context, where consumers may be more cautious due to limited visibility of corporate practices compared to larger firms.

The mediation results ultimately confirmed that green brand trust plays a mediating role in connecting green human capital, green marketing, and CSR with consumer loyalty, thereby validating hypotheses H8 through H10. These findings provide empirical support for the argument that sustainability practices alone may not directly translate into loyalty unless consumers believe in the firm's sincerity and commitment. This is consistent with Nguyen-Viet et al. [17] and Rahman & Nguyen-Viet [13], who emphasized the centrality of brand trust in shaping sustainable consumer behavior. For MSMEs in emerging markets, this underscores the need to not only implement green practices but also communicate them transparently to foster trust.

Taken together, these results extend the literature on sustainability, consumer behavior, and MSMEs by demonstrating that the interplay between green human capital, green marketing, and CSR channeled through brand trust is essential for cultivating consumer loyalty. Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on sustainability-driven human capital and marketing by validating their role in small business contexts. Practically, the results offer MSME owners in South Sulawesi actionable insights: investing in green human capital, practicing authentic green marketing, and embedding CSR into business strategy are not optional, but necessary, to build trust and secure long-term consumer loyalty in the era of the blue-green economy.

## 6 Conclusion

This research investigated the extent to which green human capital, green marketing, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) influence consumer loyalty in the context of eco-friendly MSMEs in South Sulawesi, incorporating green brand trust as a mediating construct. The empirical evidence demonstrates that these three antecedents play a pivotal role in enhancing loyalty, not only through their direct effects but also indirectly via the development of brand trust. Among these relationships, green brand trust emerges as a cornerstone mechanism that translates sustainability-oriented initiatives into enduring consumer commitment, thereby reinforcing the necessity of embedding ecological values across organizational resources, marketing activities, and CSR programs.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study broadens existing debates on sustainability and consumer behavior by empirically validating the mediating function of brand trust within the MSME sector of an emerging economy a context often underexplored in prior research. On the practical side, the findings provide actionable insights for MSME practitioners, suggesting that aligning managerial strategies with authentic environmental values can strengthen consumer relationships and improve competitiveness in saturated markets. Despite these contributions, the study's scope is limited by its geographical concentration in a single province and reliance on cross-sectional data, which restricts causal inference. Accordingly, future studies are recommended to employ longitudinal designs, expand the geographic reach, and incorporate cross-sectoral comparisons to capture more dynamic and generalizable patterns regarding the interaction between green practices and consumer loyalty.

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