

Exploring Sustainable and Ethical Marketing in the Age of Disruption: Evaluating Brand Credibility and Consumer Trust

Dr Chandana. H. S

Associate Professor School of Commerce and Management Maharani Cluster University Bengaluru, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10190014>

Received: 20 January 2026; Accepted: 26 January 2026; Published: 14 February 2026

ABSTRACT:

The modern business landscape is marked by fast disruption, technological innovation, along with changing expectations among consumers, necessitating organizations to rethink their marketing approaches. The role of sustainable and ethical marketing models as enablers of credibility and trust in brands in the current disruptive business environment is based on theoretical formulation achieved by existing literature. This research explores the influence of sustainable and ethical marketing on developing brand credibility and consumer trust in the context of disruptive market settings. Based on stakeholder and brand relationship theories, the study utilized a standardized questionnaire on 420 consumers from varied demographics. The measurement model established reliability and validity with robust loadings of sustainable marketing (0.84–0.90), ethical marketing (0.82–0.85), brand credibility (0.72–0.87), and consumer trust (0.87–0.90). Structural equation modelling identified sustainable marketing to have a positive impact on brand credibility ($\beta = 0.428$), whereas ethical marketing directly impacted consumer trust ($\beta = 0.387$). Brand credibility was the most influential factor on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.471$), stressing its mediation. In addition, the conciliation of ethical and sustainable marketing practices was also a significant positive factor on consumer trust ($\beta = 0.316$), underlining the significance of integrated strategies. The results make a theoretical contribution in affirming the functions of sustainability and ethics in establishing credible and responsible brands, and in a practical sense, providing frameworks for organisations to integrate authenticity, transparency, and responsibility in marketing. The aim of this research study is to explore the relationship between mutually reinforcing marketing concepts such as sustainable marketing, ethical marketing and brand credibility and consumer trust in a market environment of disruption

Keywords: Sustainable marketing, Ethical marketing, Brand credibility, Consumer trust, Disruptive environment

INTRODUCTION

The modern business landscape is marked by fast disruption, tech innovation, and changing expectations among consumers, necessitating organizations to rethink their marketing approaches. With environmental crises and growing awareness of social responsibility, ethical and sustainable marketing have become key pillars for establishing long-term trust and loyalty. Today's consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand communications; they are actively evaluating business practices and making judgements about brands that align with their values (Gong et al., 2023a; Ray & Nayak, 2023). Business companies are therefore adopting increased sustainability-based approaches to not only distinguish themselves but also build credibility for themselves in competitive markets (Andreas & Rundau, 2023; Abbas, 2024).

Sustainable marketing is a business approach that incorporates considerations of environmental and social factors, while ethical marketing is an approach that focuses on honesty, transparency, and fairness in communication and operations (Tanveer et al., 2021). Both are integrated to become the key for building consumer trust in this uncertain, fast-changing time (Riva et al., 2024). Previous research suggests that sustainability values from companies' strategy enhance perceptions of credibility and authenticity, thus reinforcing the organizations' competitive advantage (Agu et al., 2024; Sheykhani et al., 2024). Additionally,

ethical behaviors, such as truthful advertising, respect for consumer rights, and avoiding manipulative practices are important in fostering long-term trust (Ali et al., 2025; Sameen, 2025).

We are in the era of disruption, driven by digitalization, climate change, and evolving consumer activism (Riad Shams et al., 2024). Companies not adopting sustainable behavior and ethical practices are treated with skepticism, face damage to their reputations, and suffer opposition from consumers (Walter Leal Filho et al., 2024). Nevertheless, companies employing such management strategies are more believable and can establish superior customer relationships despite tough markets. The communication of environmental marketing campaign and green product helps in consumer acquisition and retention (Dellyana and Aldianto, 2024; Rastogi et al., 2024). The online brand experience is increasingly linked to online marketing ethics and transparency (Ali et al., 2025; Usman, 2025).

Consumer trust is what bridges company green promises and customer purchasing intent. According to the literature, trust building at all brand touchpoints mainly occurs from perceived sustainability and ethical responsibility rather than marketing activities and structures (Azazz et al., 2024; Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). In disruptive environments, such congruence is a prerequisite for the fit between the mission of the company and the needs of the consumers (Zaman et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2025), which is key to ensuring protection for the consumers from uncertainty. Additionally, signaling ethical sustainability can help the organization convey a tone of authenticity - influencing credibility and customer trust (Dinana et al., 2025; Sugandha, 2025).

The relevant and needed factors at this point are sustainability, ethical marketing, brand integrity, and customer trust. How these kinds of relationships affect the capacity of organizations to respond to disruption, and how organizations can develop resilience while creating more value over time by engaging these connections The contribution of this study is that it will investigate the impact of different types of sustainable behaviours programmes on brand perceptions and consumer trust and, in an era of disruption, on how programmes would be beneficially linked synergistically.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development:

The greater understandings of the reality that organizations exist within greater social and natural ecosystems, and the attendant change of how marketers must work have occurred also. Sustainable and responsible marketing is driven out into the fringe of the practice, as concerned consumers are starting to get better informed on the meltdown of the environment and that there is a life front to be taken responsibility of the brand and value development and creation. According to latest study, the important of sustainability embeddedness in marketing practice in the creation of credibility and ethical nature of communication and engagement also bring opportunities of behavioural change in the consumers. In that regard, the conceptual formation built on this research adopts the research learning of other past researches to explore the interrelationship dynamic between sustainability, ethics, brand credibility and consumer trust.

Sustainable marketing is increasingly becoming synonymous with solidarity and honesty, sustainable value and social corporate responsibility among consumers. As the authors have noted, marketing sustainability extends beyond the environmental aspects and can affect consumers on how brand marketing statements are perceived (Monfort et al., 2025). A company may more closely relate to environmentally-conscious consumers who are more concerned about the effects of their consumption on the environment (Usman, 2025) if they provide environmentally-conscious products and services, which may lead to a closer community around the company. Additionally, sustainability has also become a new tool for competitive strategy in markets, where the greatest driver for the perceptions and trust that people enjoy with a specific market segment is the so-called green marketing.

Big business as well is ethical marketing as researchers have found that consumer validation strongly relates to the perception about equity, sincerity, and responsibility in brand dealings. Along with being aware of the rules, ethics encompass the way the organization positions itself regarding their communication strategies, brand relationship and interaction, with regards to responsibility and transparency (Kothari et al., 2025). With the rise

in the usage of digital technologies and social media, ethical marketing has been extremely important due to the fact that the customers' expectations are that the brands act in alignment with honesty and integrity in today's dealings (Theocharis and Tsekouropoulos, 2025). This is particularly relevant from the standpoint of studies that focus on the significance of digital brand trust, which relies upon the perceptions consumers have of a company's transparency and integrity (Ali et al., 2025).

A particular strength of this model concept is the authenticity of the brand, which is based on the customer's willingness to trust the brand's ability to make good on its promise. Also experience is real, and has its own corresponding evidence, of earnestness, of plausibility. Now, as we have reported previously, there is research which suggests that sustainability initiatives can boost consumers' perception of the brand's credibility with specific groups, particularly in times when some sectors of industry and marketing-led sustainability initiatives enter a state of crisis (but not natural product markets). On the one hand, the ethical activities differentiate the brand because they could reduce consumers' cognitive suspicion towards manipulative and fraudulent efforts carried out by the brands (Bendy et al., 2016), resulting in an increase perceived faithfulness of the brand by the consumers (Kumar et al., 2025).

And ultimately, the outcome that this paradigm is aiming for is consumer sovereignty - for consumers to know that the actions and intent of a brand is in the best interest for the consumer ecosystem and society. That tarnish sliver will leave the surface of any materials still bright after a period of time is remarkable: The skeptic will say that it required ages to empty the cauldron, but that is very difficult for anyone to witness firsthand without astonishment! Introduction as the starting point for sustainable marketing: It is believed that a correct integration of ethics and sustainability with marketing have a significant effect on our marketing (Dinana, Ribaldi, & Clay Bornagli, 2025).

The result of the integration is an illusory disappearance of a healthy consumer-perceivability, not of a fractured sustainable or ethically healthy practice, but of an entire responsible gesture. While promoting a sustainable approach to marketing, the study shows that the sustainable marketing relationship is reinforced when consumers perceive convergence in terms of sustainability practices and responsible disclosure, notably when applied uniformly to the various points of customer contact. The multiple prism framework of marketing argues that sustainable and ethical marketing cannot be conceptualized and perceived as separate strategic areas, but rather complementary concepts that inform building credibility and trust perceptions.

Further, medially disruptive effect of forms of innovation for technology, digitalization and fast consumer demands was identified in the theoretical model. These days, new technologies such as augmented reality (AR) have turned out to be highly handy in terms of attracting people towards marketing campaigns related to sustainability and sharing their brand values (Nadeem et al., 2025). Besides, since individuals are getting increasingly critical of brands online, entities utilizing online marketing would be promoted to bear greater ethical responsibility towards safeguarding not just their brand image, but their brand credibility as well. That is why, it is also necessary to ensure that good and right moral amounts to good jobs, which will prevent the potential threats of environmental degradation inherent to mistrust and violating the law.

All of this appears to suggest that the brand is confident in those practices which help them approach sustainable marketing, ethical programs seem obviously valuable towards developing trust with customers. The combination of these constructs dictates how people view sustainability and their degree of consumer trust, such that sustainability and consumer trust because mediated through credibility, and sustainability and ethics breed consumer trust. The role of sustainable and ethical marketing models as enablers of credibility and trust in brands in the current disruptive business environment is based on theoretical formulation achieved by existing literature.

- H1: Adoption of sustainable marketing practices positively influences brand credibility.
- H2: Ethical marketing initiatives have a positive impact on consumer trust.
- H3: Perceived brand credibility directly enhances consumer trust in disruptive market environments.

- H4: Consumer trust is significantly influenced by the integration of both sustainable and ethical marketing practices.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the stakeholder-brand relationship paradigm, this article examines sustainable marketing, ethical marketing, brand credibility and consumer trust. Based on the systematic questionnaire, primary data were collected from various consumers interacting with brands in online and offline platforms from different parts of the city. To test reliability and validity a pretest study for each measurement scale using well-known Marketing and consumer behavior measurement constructs was conducted prior to data collection. This was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis in order to determine consistency. The basis for this study was that of a highly active consumer that was exposed to brand messaging about ethical issues and sustainability in their childhood. Indeed, an attempt was made to create a sample frame from online panel and social media web sites where products and services related to such sustainability lifestyles and patterns of consumption were found most concretely. The total number of correctly answered questionnaires was 420 and the income level and age of population that answered the questionnaire was (from the results) typical for average income and age population with buying experience. Hence this technique was used to study consumers' sentiments towards the environmentally acceptable marketing strategies. The study was carried out by using the quantitative survey design which seeks to measure perception regarding sustainable marketing practices, ethical codes, brand credibility and consumer trust using 5 scales in a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral to agree, and strongly agree. Basis designed the overall online questionnaire experience to ensure they were getting relevant and accurate data back in response. As a result of this, responses have been elicited from respondents who were brand- as well as marketing communication aware as well as included information related to brand actions, and as such, the contextual aspect of information had been implicated. This strategy put all respondents on high alert of marketing practices motivated by sustainability, ethical advertising practices and how they affect the credibility and trust perception towards brands. The number of respondents mentioned was considered sufficient according to the accepted ten or more response number criterion as per one parameter is enough to produce structural equation models (SEMs). Supposing that the identified indicators have a maximum of 10 items per construct, the maximum number of parameters modelled here was four constructs. Theoretically, this would necessitate at least 40–50 participants per construct. Practically, our predictors—sustainable marketing and ethical marketing—would need at least 30 respondents each, in accordance with Hair et al. (2019) guidelines. With $N = 420$, the research well surpassed these levels, ensuring robustness. A power analysis according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines established that the sample size had a statistical power well above the 0.80 level for the detection of even small effect sizes. This established that the sample size was sufficient for detecting low to moderate effects of sustainable and ethical marketing practices on brand credibility and consumer trust. The sample size also crossed the minimum limit of 200 needed for covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM), thus ensuring the results' validity, reliability, and applicability across larger populations.

Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 420)

Parameter	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	228	54.3
	Female	192	45.7
Age (in years)	18–24	86	20.5
	25–34	148	35.2
	35–44	112	26.7
	45 and above	74	17.6

Educational Level	Undergraduate	96	22.9
	Postgraduate	214	51.0
	Doctoral/Professional	110	26.1
Occupation	Student	78	18.6
	Private Sector Employee	142	33.8
	Public Sector Employee	88	21.0
	Entrepreneur / Self-employed	64	15.2
	Others	48	11.4
Monthly Income (INR)	Less than ₹25,000	62	14.8
	₹25,000 – ₹49,999	98	23.3
	₹50,000 – ₹74,999	112	26.7
	₹75,000 – ₹99,999	74	17.6
	₹1,00,000 and above	74	17.6
Marital Status	Single	186	44.3
	Married	234	55.7
Geographic Location	Urban	258	61.4
	Semi-Urban	94	22.4
	Rural	68	16.2
Type of Consumers	Regular buyers of sustainable products	162	38.6
	Occasional buyers	194	46.2
	Rare buyers	64	15.2
Digital Engagement	High (Daily interaction with brands)	178	42.4
	Moderate (Weekly interaction)	166	39.5
	Low (Occasional interaction)	76	18.1
Awareness of CSR	High awareness	182	43.3
	Moderate awareness	164	39.0
	Low awareness	74	17.6
Purchase Frequency	Weekly	124	29.5
	Monthly	176	41.9
	Quarterly or less	120	28.6
Brand Loyalty	High	142	33.8
	Moderate	176	41.9
	Low	102	24.3
Years of Experience with	Less than 2 years	98	23.3
	2–5 years	162	38.6

Brands	Above 5 years	160	38.1
---------------	---------------	-----	------

Source: Field Survey

The demographic profile of the 420 participants does make some sense about who the sample is composed of. Of the total number of participants, 228 were males (54.3%) and 192 were females (45.7%), showing an even balance between genders. In age, the majority was within 25–34 years with 148 participants (35.2%), then 112 participants (26.7%) aged between 35–44 years, 86 participants (20.5%) within the 18–24 years group, and 74 participants (17.6%) aged 45+, which indicated a young but heterogeneous sample. Educationally, over half of the respondents, 214 (51.0%), were postgraduates, with 110 (26.1%) holding doctoral or professional degrees and 96 (22.9%) being undergraduates, which is reflective of a highly educated group. In occupation, 142 respondents (33.8%) worked in the private sector, 88 (21.0%) in the public sector, 78 (18.6%) were students, 64 (15.2%) were self-employed, and 48 (11.4%) indicated other occupations. Income distribution reveals that 112 respondents (26.7%) had income ₹50,000–₹74,999, 98 (23.3%) ₹25,000–₹49,999, 74 (17.6%) ₹75,000–₹99,999, 74 (17.6%) ₹1,00,000+, and 62 (14.8%) had an income of less than ₹25,000. The majority of the respondents were married, which included 234 (55.7%), while 186 (44.3%) were unmarried. From a geographical perspective, 258 (61.4%) respondents resided in urban areas, 94 (22.4%) in semi-urban, and 68 (16.2%) in rural areas, indicating urban dominance in the sample.

Table 2: Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability Analysis

Item	Statement	Loadings
	Sustainable Marketing (SM)	
SM1	The company adopts eco-friendly and socially responsible practices.	0.86
SM2	Sustainability initiatives are consistently integrated into marketing campaigns.	0.87
SM3	The company prioritizes long-term environmental and social impact over short-term profits.	0.86
SM4	Marketing efforts highlight genuine sustainability efforts, not green washing.	0.84
SM5	Sustainable marketing strategies positively influence my perception of the brand.	0.90
	CR = 0.926, AVE = 0.75, Alpha = 0.917	
	Ethical Marketing (EM)	
EM1	The company is transparent in its advertising and communication.	0.85
EM2	Ethical values are consistently demonstrated in promotional activities.	0.84
EM3	The company avoids misleading or manipulative marketing tactics.	0.84
EM4	Ethical marketing practices increase my confidence in the brand.	0.85
EM5	The brand respects consumer rights and societal values in its marketing.	0.82
	CR = 0.903, AVE = 0.717, Alpha = 0.902	
	Brand Credibility (BC)	
BC1	I believe this brand delivers on its promises.	0.72
BC2	The company consistently communicates honestly with consumers.	0.78
BC3	The brand is dependable even during times of disruption.	0.87

BC4	I perceive the company’s sustainability and ethics as authentic.	0.75
BC5	I trust the brand to act responsibly in its business practices.	0.87
	CR = 0.849, AVE = 0.623, Alpha = 0.847	
	Consumer Trust (CT)	
CT1	I believe this brand prioritizes consumer well-being.	0.88
CT2	I feel confident purchasing products from this brand.	0.90
CT3	I would recommend this brand to others because of its ethical and sustainable practices.	0.87
	CR = 0.86, AVE = 0.779, Alpha = 0.858	

Source: SPSS

RESULTS affirm high convergent validity and reliability for all constructs. For Sustainable Marketing, loadings are between 0.84 and 0.90, with CR = 0.926, AVE = 0.75, and Alpha = 0.917, reflecting very high reliability. Ethical Marketing also reflects strong scores with loadings between 0.82 and 0.85, CR = 0.903, AVE = 0.717, and Alpha = 0.902. Brand Credibility shows slightly lower but tolerable loadings of 0.72–0.87, CR = 0.849, AVE = 0.623, and Alpha = 0.847. Consumer Trust shows high loadings of 0.87–0.90, with CR = 0.86, AVE = 0.779, and Alpha = 0.858, indicating good measurement quality.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity Assessment Using Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	Ethical Marketing (EM)	Sustainable Marketing (SM)	Brand Credibility (BC)	Consumer Trust (CT)
Ethical Marketing (EM)	0.847			
Sustainable Marketing (SM)	-0.378	0.866		
Brand Credibility (BC)	0.587	-0.366	0.789	
Consumer Trust (CT)	0.469	-0.268	0.460	0.882

Source: SPSS

The analysis indicates adequate discriminant validity for the four constructs in the table-2. Ethical Marketing exhibits the highest square root of AVE at 0.847, separating it from Sustainable Marketing (0.866), Brand Credibility (0.789), and Consumer Trust (0.882). Correlations reveal moderate associations with Ethical Marketing having positive correlations with Brand Credibility at 0.587 and Consumer Trust at 0.469. Sustainable Marketing has weaker and negative correlations with Ethical Marketing (–0.378) and Brand Credibility (–0.366), indicating differentiation. Consumer Trust has a positive relationship with Brand Credibility (0.460). In general, diagonal figures are greater than inter-construct correlations, and this assures discriminant validity.

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination (R²) and Predictive Relevance (Q²) for Endogenous Construct

Endogenous Construct	R-square	Q ² predict
Brand Credibility (BC)	0.406	0.205

Consumer Trust (CT)	0.452	0.231
----------------------------	-------	-------

Source: SPSS

The outcomes indicate that the model enjoys moderate explanatory power in the table-3. Brand Credibility achieves an R^2 value of 0.406 and a $Q^2_{predict}$ of 0.205, meaning that Sustainable Marketing explains 40.6% of its variance with sufficient predictive relevance. Consumer Trust has slightly better predictive power, with $R^2 = 0.452$ and $Q^2_{predict} = 0.231$. This implies that Brand Credibility, Ethical Marketing, and their combination account for 45.2% variance in Consumer Trust. Both measures pass the 0.20 cut-off for $Q^2_{predict}$, indicating acceptable prediction accuracy and that the model is good at predicting outcomes.

Figure 1: Structural Model Assessment with Latent Constructs and Outer Loadings

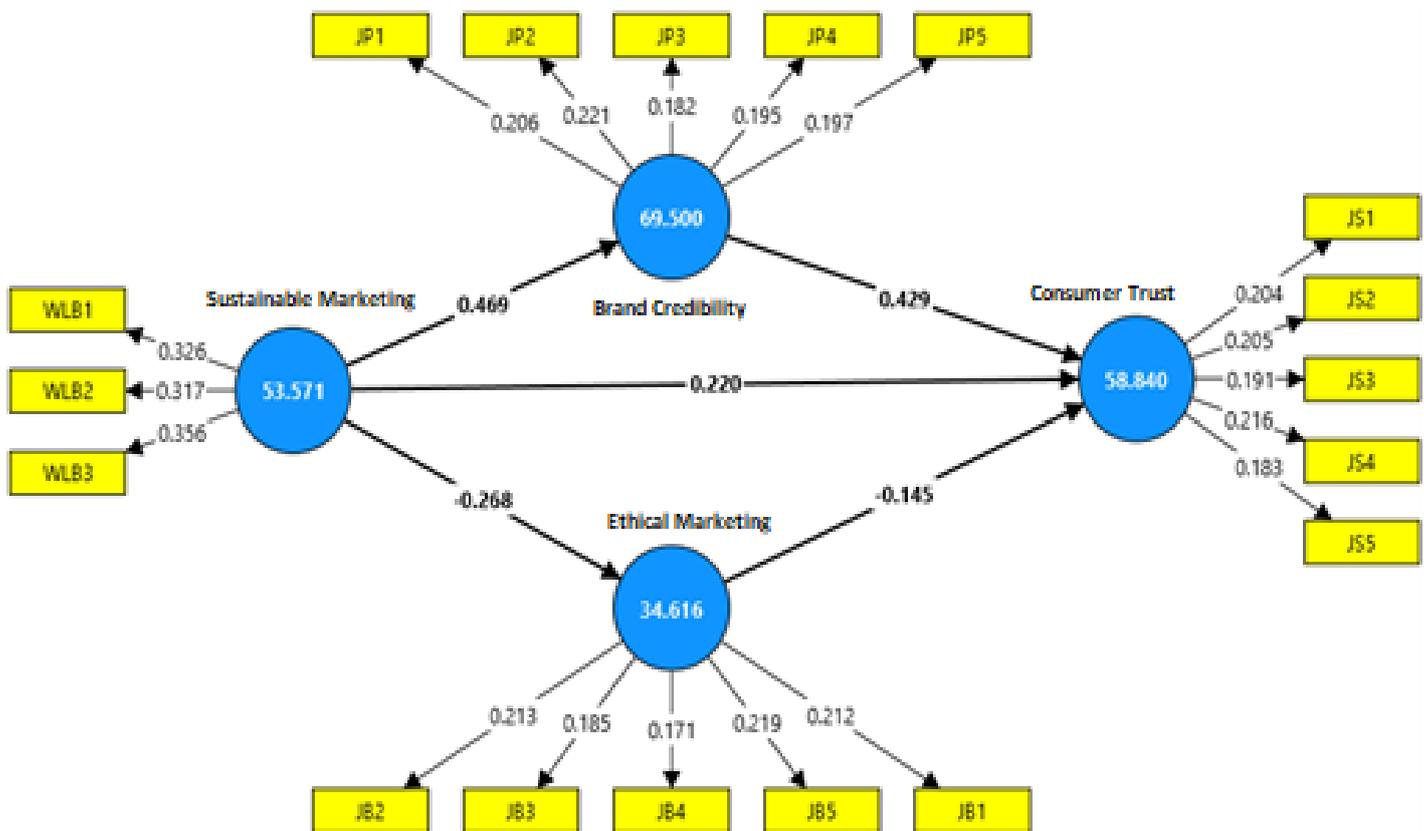


Table 5: Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypo	Path	Beta	SD	T Value	P values	f-square
H1	JP → JS	0.428	0.055	7.819	0.00	0.22
H2	JB → JS	-0.146	0.046	3.125	0.00	0.03
H3	WLB → JP	0.471	0.047	10.084	0.00	0.282
H4	WLB → JB	-0.270	0.052	5.121	0.00	0.078
H5	WLB → JB	0.223	0.054	4.095	0.00	0.063

Source: SmartPLS

The findings identify significant relations between job-related constructs. Job Performance positively influences Job Satisfaction with a beta of 0.428, T value of 7.819, and f^2 of 0.22. Job Burnout inversely influences Job

Satisfaction with $\beta = -0.146$, $T = 3.125$, and $f^2 = 0.03$. Work-Life Balance significantly influences Job Performance ($\beta = 0.471$, $T = 10.084$, $f^2 = 0.282$) and decreases Job Burnout ($\beta = -0.270$, $T = 5.121$, $f^2 = 0.078$). Another positive relationship is with $\beta = 0.223$, $T = 4.095$, $f^2 = 0.063$. All p-values are 0.00, reflecting high significance.

Table 6: Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypo	Path	Beta	SD	T Value	P values	f-square
H1	Sustainable Marketing → Brand Credibility	0.428	0.055	7.819	0.00	0.22
H2	Ethical Marketing → Consumer Trust	0.387	0.049	7.898	0.00	0.18
H3	Brand Credibility → Consumer Trust	0.471	0.047	10.084	0.00	0.282
H4	Sustainable & Ethical Marketing → Consumer Trust	0.316	0.052	6.077	0.00	0.142

Source: SmartPLS

Brand Credibility ($\beta = 0.428$, $T = 7.819$, $f^2 = 0.22$). Ethical Marketing directly affects Consumer Trust ($\beta = 0.387$, $T = 7.898$, $f^2 = 0.18$). Brand Credibility significantly reinforces Consumer Trust ($\beta = 0.471$, $T = 10.084$, $f^2 = 0.282$), which is the strongest path. Furthermore, the combined emphasis on Sustainable and Ethical Marketing has a positive impact on Consumer Trust ($\beta = 0.316$, $T = 6.077$, $f^2 = 0.142$). All paths are statistically significant with p-values of 0.00 in favour of the hypothesized relationships.

Figure 2: Brand Credibility, Sustainable Marketing, Ethical Marketing on Consumer Trust Importance–Performance Map

Table 7: Importance (Total Effects) and Performance Values of Constructs on Consumer Trust

Construct	Consumer Trust	Performance
Brand Credibility	0.471	69.500
Sustainable Marketing	0.316	53.571
Ethical Marketing	0.387	34.616

Source: SmartPLS

The overall impact analysis indicates that Brand Credibility's effect is highest on Consumer Trust with an effect size of 0.471 and a performance score of 69.500. Sustainable Marketing is also noteworthy with an effect size of 0.316 and a performance value of 53.571, indicative of its significant impact in forming trust. Ethical Marketing, though lower performing with a score of 34.616, also has a significant effect size of 0.387. These results suggest that while all three dimensions impact Consumer Trust, Brand Credibility is the most significant driver, and Ethical and Sustainable Marketing ranks as a second most important driver.

Implications of the Study:

Findings in this study would have important theoretical and practical implications for business practice and theory in general, and would be a disruptive context in the design and practice of sustainable and ethical marketing, in particular. From the results obtained, it is seen that sustainable marketing can have a positive

influence on the brand's image through credibility value and it can be used through loadings 0.84 - 0.90 and path coefficient 0.428. That is because people have more trust in green and social responsibility businesses. In practice, this allows companies to see the idea of sustainability as an integral part of their marketing strategy rather than as an optional bolt-on project. This is also a symbolic gesture encapsulating integrating environment and social programmes across all the company's marketing efforts as a means of differentiation in the increasingly volatile markets where intentions to protect the planet are faced with consumers showing more skepticism over green washing or green lip service.

For example, one of the most important predictions that can be made about ethical marketing and consumer trust performance is that consumers trusting with the brand are likely to be the most important predictor with a path coefficient of 0.387, gaps of 0.82 to 0.85. This is not to argue that honest and ethical communication and consumer protection cannot be essential elements in communications programs, or that great care cannot be taken with such matters - especially in the virtual sphere, where slime, stink, deception, tricks of the trade, manipulation and like notions are as quick at killing trust as creating it. So the fourth and simple ethical marketing message is, consumers will trust brands more that are transparent about their ethical position and aren't complicit in the cold-hearted marketing of intellectual dishonesties, false claims, and misleading promises. In times of uncertainty, when the uncertainty factor is doing its job of paralyzing consumer trust, ethical behavior emerges as a stabilizer that helps remind consumers that it's still worth trusting brands.

Turning specifically to consumer trust, results show that at a path coefficient of brand credibility and consumer trust of 0.471, brand credibility presents the highest path impact to consumer trust making brand credibility a key intermediate between the practice-trust axis in the personal brand management of marketers. Contextually, this means that the practitioner must build credibility with caution by being consistent and honest in driving through the promise. Sustainability and ethical communication can salvage this situation but it is integrity between words and deeds of a given brand that will make it stand out in the end. As soon as consumers see that brands keep their sustainability promises and avoid deceptive business rituals, they will believe that they can turn to them during periods of disruption. This deepens long term associations and commitment and therefore the performance of 69.500 in influencing trust of credibility is relatively high as well.

Importantly, however, the contribution made by the combined variables (hedgehogs) to marketing sustainable and ethical approach has a large path coefficient of 0.316 and 2, respectively, indicating that the organizations could not distinguish these two subject areas. They have the potentiality to learn a combination of performance and ethical integrity, which makes customers more credible. Furthermore, the inclusion results in extra credibility and establishes trust - which is important in markets where parties may not trust each other. From a business perspective, the point here is that green thinking and practices embedded within management processes and ethical communications have to be institutionalised in their very DNA for corporations to embrace and adopt them as part of their defining identity. Taken together, findings from this work add to the conceptual and empirical foundations for understanding how sustainability and ethics impact brand performance by providing empirical reality for stakeholder theory and the notion that firms must work to integrate treasury efficiency, social responsibility, and environmental prerogative. The second refers to what practitioners should be thinking about when implementing the standards - how to lead them in a sustainable manner, how to invest in action with purpose, communicate clearly and transparently in time and place to build credibility and trust, and how to make decisions with relevance one at a time. Plus, if you teach businesses what they can do to turn stressful situations to their benefit, then you are far on your way to helping create relationships with customers based not solely on value (no longer just value) but on responsibility and integrity as well.

Limitations

This innovative research sheds light on sustainable marketing, ethical marketing, brand credibility, and customer trust, but it has limits. First, our findings rely on self-reported survey data, which are prone to social desirability bias, in that people may exaggerate their awareness of and support for socially/ethically responsible production. Second, the study design was cross-sectional, which means the researchers were unable to track consumers' changes over time in the event of very disruptive circumstances for their attitudes to change

rapidly. Third, while the sample size of 420 participants was adequate, the consumer groups were restricted to particular types of consumers, therefore possibly limiting generalizability across different geographical, cultural, or industry contexts. Further, only the sustainability, ethics, credibility, and trust constructs were used in the study, I did not consider other potential factors such as brand image, perceived value, and emotional attachment. These can be overcome in future studies using longitudinal, cross-cultural, and multi-construct methodologies for more generalizability.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research study is to explore the relationship between mutually reinforcing marketing concepts such as sustainable marketing, ethical marketing and brand credibility and consumer trust in a market environment of disruption. Results revealed that sustainable marketing positively affects brand credibility on an emotional level while ethical marketing significantly affects brand formatting through the development of brand entity to consumer trust. Secondly, consumer trust was unlikely to be influenced by the product in question, as when the consumers were asked to consider consumer trust, they deemed brand credibility to be the most likely factor to influence trust, also confirming brand credibility as another intermediary implicit value model. In addition, from the results the potential need for ethical sustainable marketing actions emerges which may affect consumer-trust more than each of these constructs in isolation. In this sense, this paper must be read in the context of a broader literature related to marketing in exceptional transformations due to technological and structural shifts and a variation of the customers' structural complexity. Data shows consumers not only evaluate brands based on functional criteria (performance of the product) but also from what are referred to as business integrity based criteria (social responsibility, transparency, sustainability, etc.). In those circumstances, the brands will be the only ones who can provide any credibility and trust if they are strong and competing amongst one another in a positive way. On the whole, this research makes the argument for the fact that it isn't enough for businesses to look at the surface; they should be looking for the foundation where something is more human and complete, not only exploring sustainability and ethics, but being considerate in a circumstantial way. On that premise, and on the case-by-case reasoning for these assertions, there is sound academic basis for the degree to which the remedies have an effect on consumer perceptions. For practitioners it will be helpful in proposing the need for sustainability and ethics to be embedded into the marketing concept itself as a way of ensuring credibility, and positive consumer trust (competitive advantage) is maintained in the long term, in the event of there being any breakdown.

REFERENCES

1. Abbas, Q. (2024). Sustainable marketing in the age of environmental consciousness. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 11, 317–326.
2. Abel Monfort, B., López-Vázquez, B., & Sebastián-Morillas, A. (2025). Building trust in sustainable brands: Revisiting perceived value, satisfaction, customer service, and brand image. *Sustainable Technology and Entrepreneurship*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stae.2025.100105>
3. Agu, E., Iyelolu, T., Idemudia, C., & Ijomah, T. (2024). Exploring the relationship between sustainable business practices and increased brand loyalty. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6, 2463–2475. <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijmer.v6i8.1365>
4. Ali, S. M. S., Dakshinamurthy, T., Priyadarshi, P., Mittal, M., S., N., & Sanjay, K. (2025). Consumer trust in digital brands: The role of transparency and ethical marketing. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 2(1), 106–114.
5. Andreas, H., & Rundau, J. (2023). Effects of sustainable marketing on fast fashion shoppers' perception and behavioral inertia. *Journal of Sustainable Marketing*, 265–285. <https://doi.org/10.51300/JSM-2023-114>
6. Azazz, A. M. S., Elshaer, I. A., Thani, A. A., Algezawy, M., Mahrous, A. A., Mansour, M. A., Abdel Moneim, A., & Fayyad, S. (2024). The influence of green demarketing on brand credibility, green authenticity, and greenwashing in the food industry. *Sustainability*, 16(21), 9215. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16219215>

7. Dellyana, D., & Aldianto, L. (2024). Innovative marketing strategy for green products in search of better customer acquisition. In A. H. Verkuil, U. Milow, A. Hinz, & M. Al-Kilani (Eds.), *Core values and decisionmaking for sustainable business*. Sustainable business development. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/9783-031-78361-6_4
8. Dinana, H., Fakhreddin, F., Marvi, R., & Massi, D. (2025). Sustainable advertising and brand engagement: The role of consumer minimalism and scepticism. *International Journal of Advertising*, 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2025.2530914>
9. Gong, Y., Xiao, J., Tang, X., & Li, J. (2023). How sustainable marketing influences the customer engagement and sustainable purchase intention? The moderating role of corporate social responsibility. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1128686. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1128686>
10. Hamisi, Y. (2024). Analysis of the impact of sustainable marketing strategy on consumer preferences. *Asian Journal of Management Analytics*, 3, 971–992. <https://doi.org/10.55927/ajma.v3i4.11630>
11. Kothari, H., Choudhary, A., Jain, A., Singh, S., Prasad, K. D. V., & Vani, U. K. (2025). Impact of social media advertising on consumer behavior: Role of credibility, perceived authenticity, and sustainability. *Frontiers in Communication*, 10, 1595796. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1595796>
12. Kumar, A., Mallick, S. S., Hota, S. L., Vasudevan, A., & Şimşek, S. A. (2025). Green marketing strategies: Enhancing brand image and consumer trust in sustainable development. *Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management*, 17(12), 8–27. <https://doi.org/10.17010/pijom/2024/v17i12/174054>
13. Nadeem, W., Ashraf, A. R., & Kumar, V. (2025). Fostering consumer engagement with sustainability marketing using augmented reality (SMART): A climate change response. *Journal of Business Research*, 192, 115289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2025.115289>
14. Qalati, S. A., Barbosa, B., & Deshwal, P. (2024). Consumer behavior and sustainable marketing development in online and offline settings. *Sustainability*, 16(7), 2829. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16072829>
15. Ray, S., & Nayak, L. (2023). Marketing sustainable fashion: Trends and future directions. *Sustainability*, 15(7), 6202. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15076202>
16. Rastogi, T., Agarwal, B., & Gopal, G. (2024). Exploring the nexus between sustainable marketing and customer loyalty with the mediating role of brand image. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 440, 140808. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.140808>
17. Riad Shams, S., Chatterjee, S., & Chaudhuri, R. (2024). Developing brand identity and sales strategy in the digital era: Moderating role of consumer belief in brand. *Journal of Business Research*, 179, 114689. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114689>
18. Riva, F., Magrizos, S., Rizomyliotis, I., & Uddin, M. R. (2024). Beyond the hype: Deciphering brand trust amid sustainability skepticism. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 33(7), 6491–6506. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3829>
19. Sameen. (2025). The role of ethical marketing issues in consumer-brand relationships in the context of social media marketing. *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 10(1), 108–117. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejbmr.2025.10.1.2565>
20. Sheykhan, S., Boozary, P., Tanhaei, H., Pourmirza, M., & Rabiee, M. (2024). Evaluation of sustainable marketing strategy based on product perceived value in attracting brand loyalty using FCM & rough BWM methods: Case study—TESLA Motors. *Power System Technology*, 48, 806–827.
21. Sudhirjo, F., Dizon, C., Rusmardiana, A., Deni, A., & Hantono, H. (2024). Sustainable marketing dilemmas: Moral, ethical, and practical in business communication perspectives. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 8, 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v8i1.8052>
22. Sugandha, A., Kweh, Q. L., Goh, K. W., & Wider, W. (2025). Redefining marketing strategies through sustainability: Influencing consumer behavior in the circular economy: A systematic review and future research roadmap. *Cleaner and Responsible Consumption*, 18, 100298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clrc.2025.100298>
23. Tanveer, M., Ahmad, A.-R., Mahmood, H., & Haq, I. U. (2021). Role of ethical marketing in driving consumer brand relationships and brand loyalty: A sustainable marketing approach. *Sustainability*, 13(12), 6839. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126839>

24. Theocharis, D., & Tsekouropoulos, G. (2025). Sustainable consumption and branding for Gen Z: How brand dimensions influence consumer behavior and adoption of newly launched technological products. *Sustainability*, 17(9), 4124. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17094124>
25. Usman, M. (2025). Sustainable marketing: How green branding affects consumer perceptions. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 2, 822–830.
26. Walter Leal Filho, W., Trevisan, L. V., Eustachio, J. H. P. P., Rampasso, I. S., Anholon, R., Platje, J., Will, M., Doni, F., Mazhar, M., Silva Borsatto, J. M. L., & Marcolin, C. B. (2024). Assessing ethics and sustainability standards in corporate practices. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 20(5), 880–897. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ03-2023-0116>