



The Role of Green Marketing in Reducing the Green Attitude-Behavior Gap Among Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The persistent disparity between consumers' environmental consciousness and their actual purchasing patterns—commonly conceptualized as the "green attitude-behavior gap" or "green gap"—presents a formidable structural challenge for both corporate sustainability managers and climate policy objectives. While approximately 70% of global consumers express favorable attitudes toward environmental preservation, typically only 30% to 40% systematically translate these intentions into verified green purchases (Permadi, n.d.). Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and extending into contemporary cognitive value frameworks, this paper explores how strategic implementations of green marketing can systematically dismantle the barriers maintaining this gap. By examining the structural components of green marketing—specifically eco-labeling authenticity, transparent carbon accounting, value-driven pricing structures, and green choice architecture—this study delineates how a holistic green marketing orientation can mitigate consumer interferences such as perceived information asymmetry, greenwashing skepticism, and functional trade-offs. The paper concludes with an integrated strategic framework for corporate execution and outlines clear horizons for future consumer behavior research.

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1. Introduction

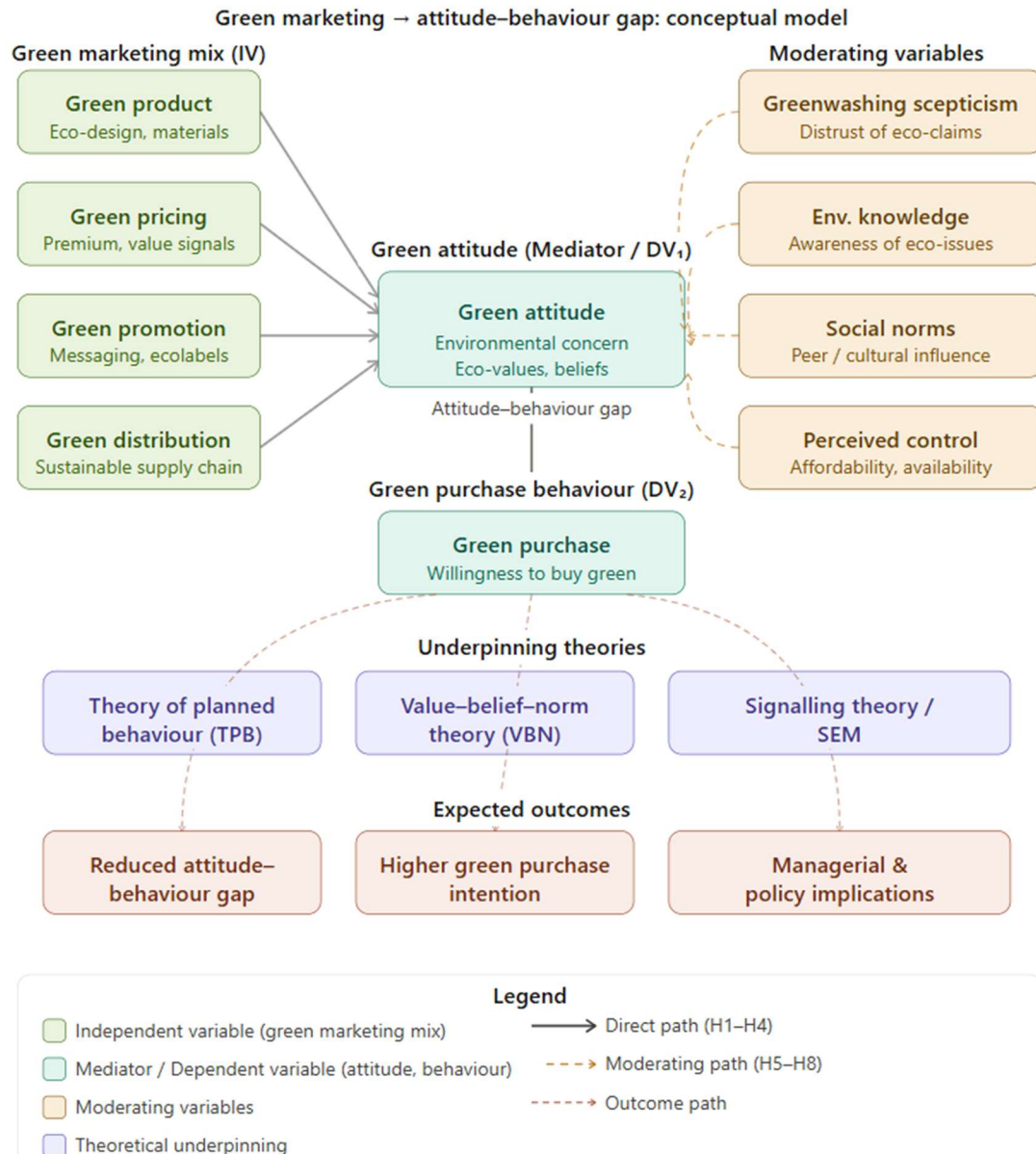
Modern global enterprise is increasingly forced to navigate structural shifts driven by escalating environmental degradation and institutional climate mandates (Ray & Nayak, 2023). Within consumer markets, this macro-level shift has manifested as a widespread rise in ecological awareness and personal moral norms regarding sustainable consumption (Mabaso, n.d.). Despite these self-reported transformations, sustainable market segments regularly fail to mirror this psychological shift in actual transactional volume. This profound structural friction, known as the green attitude-behavior gap, reveals that high levels of ecological concern frequently fail to yield concrete pro-environmental buying actions (Megha, 2024; Permadi, n.d.).

For corporations investing in sustainable supply chains, circular product development, and zero-carbon infrastructure, this behavioral inconsistency presents a highly volatile risk vector. Sustainable production structures require significant capital expenditure, yet the market demand intended to justify these investments often remains unrealized (Permadi, n.d.). Historically, early consumer behavior models attributed this gap to basic market deficits, assuming that resolving a simple lack of awareness would naturally correct the behavior (Fabio, n.d.). However, contemporary empirical literature demonstrates that the gap is deeply rooted in complex psychological trade-offs, financial sacrifices, systematic informational mistrust, and immediate contextual frictions (Bocti et al., 2021; Permadi, n.d.).

Consequently, the strategic imperative of green marketing must evolve beyond superficial promotional messaging. Green marketing must be re-conceptualized as a holistic operational and communicative strategy engineered to reduce the cognitive and structural barriers separating consumer intent from action (Norstedt, n.d.). This paper examines how strategic green marketing configurations can systematically mitigate the green attitude-behavior gap. By addressing structural vulnerabilities in consumer trust and choice architecture, this study establishes an integrated framework designed to transform psychological alignment into verifiable sustainable consumption.

2. Theoretical Foundations of the Attitude-Behavior Gap

To systematically decompose the mechanism of the green gap, researchers heavily rely on validated cognitive and behavioral models, most notably the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Megha, 2024).



2.1 The Theory of Planned Behavior and Its Structural Limitations

Under standard TPB assumptions, an individual's actual behavior is directly determined by their behavioral intention, which is shaped by three key antecedents:

- **Attitude:** The cognitive and affective evaluation of a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Megha, 2024).
- **Subjective Norms:** The perceived social pressures and normative expectations from an individual's peer environment (Ajzen, 1991; Megha, 2024).
- **Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC):** The subjective assessment of the ease, affordability, or accessibility of executing that behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Megha, 2024).

When applied to conventional consumer products, TPB provides strong predictive power. However, in pro-environmental market contexts, empirical testing reveals a systematic breakdown in its core predictive link (Permadi, n.d.). While pro-environmental attitudes and subjective norms strongly drive high *green purchase intentions*, the path from intention to *actual green purchase behavior* is routinely interrupted by external variables (Mabaso, n.d.; Permadi, n.d.). Meta-analytic data indicates that conventional TPB structures account for less than 40% of variance in actual pro-environmental actions (Permadi, n.d.). This highlights a clear need to introduce moderating variables to account for the real-world contextual frictions encountered by consumers (Fabio, n.d.).

2.2 Contemporary Framework Extensions

To address the predictive shortfalls of traditional linear models, contemporary literature integrates additional psychological dimensions into the decision-making process:

[Environmental Concern & Personal Norms] ---> [Green Purchase Intention] --(Perceived Effectiveness/Trust)--> [Actual Green Purchase]

|

(Green Marketing Interventions)

- **Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Pathways:** Structural extensions demonstrate that abstract environmental concern must be internalized into concrete personal norms—a deeply felt moral obligation to act—before it can influence behavioral intent (Mabaso, n.d.). When a consumer views sustainable consumption through a moral lens, a failure to act generates significant internal cognitive dissonance and self-directed guilt (Mabaso, n.d.).
- **Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE):** Beyond basic behavioral control, recent studies highlight the critical role of *perceived effectiveness* (Fabio, n.d.). If a consumer holds positive attitudes but believes that their individual purchasing choice is too insignificant to impact global climate outcomes, their behavioral intention will fail to mature into an actual transaction (Fabio, n.d.).
- **The Cognitive-Evaluative Value Pathway:** Consumers constantly execute calculated cognitive trade-offs between long-term macro-environmental values and immediate, selfish, pragmatic benefits like low price, optimal quality, convenient availability, and entrenched consumption habits (Bocti et al., 2021; Permadi, n.d.).



3. Key Interferences Maintaining the Green Gap

Empirical consumer research indicates that the breakdown between intention and action is sustained by five primary structural interferences (Bocti et al., 2021; Welinder, n.d.):

Interference Category	Structural Marketplace Manifestation	Psychological Impact on Consumer
Information Asymmetry & Overload	Ambiguous terminology (e.g., "eco-friendly", "natural") without standardized verification (Ray & Nayak, 2023; Welinder, n.d.).	Cognitive fatigue, choice paralysis, and deep skepticism toward brand claims (Welinder, n.d.).
Perceived Premium Barriers	Substantial upfront financial premiums for certified sustainable goods (Bocti et al., 2021; Welinder, n.d.).	Disproportionately discourages younger, lower-income segments who resort to cheaper alternatives (Bocti et al., 2021).
Entrenched Autopilot Habits	Retail environments optimized for high-speed, low-involvement, habitual selection patterns (Welinder, n.d.).	Bypasses reflective, values-driven thought processes in favor of rapid, status-quo choices (Welinder, n.d.).
Skepticism & Greenwashing	Highly publicized instances of corporate misdirection, unverified "green" claims, or "bluewashing" (Ray & Nayak, 2023).	Total erosion of institutional green trust; consumer strategic withdrawal from eco-segmented lines (Ray & Nayak, 2023; Permadi, n.d.).
Systemic Inaccessibility	Inconsistent regional distribution, poor shelf placement, and localized supply chain constraints (Bocti et al., 2021).	Amplifies the structural friction of purchasing, making the green choice feel highly inconvenient (Bocti et al., 2021).



4. Strategic Interventions of Green Marketing

To successfully bridge the green gap, corporate entities must transition away from isolated tactical promotions. Instead, they must deploy an integrated, holistic green marketing orientation that coordinates strategic corporate philosophy with clear tactical execution (Norstedt, n.d.).

4.1 Deconstructing Skepticism via Authentic Eco-Labeling and Transparency

Corporate communication can counter systemic marketplace skepticism by anchoring product claims in clear, standardized verification structures. Broad, unverified buzzwords must be replaced with rigorous, third-party audited eco-certifications (e.g., FSC Certified, Cradle-to-Cradle, EU Ecolabel) (Ray & Nayak, 2023).

Advanced green marketing tactics leverage transparent carbon accounting and complete supply chain tractability, often deploying interactive digital interfaces like on-package QR codes. By granting direct access to localized impact metrics, lifecycle assessments, and raw material provenance, firms neutralize information asymmetry and actively foster green trust (Permadi, n.d.). This clear transparency transforms unverified environmental claims into concrete, undeniable product attributes.

4.2 Restructuring Value Equations to Minimize Premium Barriers

Financial sacrifice remains one of the most prominent real-world barriers to sustainable consumption (Bocti et al., 2021; Welinder, n.d.). Green marketing must strategically reframe the value equation away from abstract, distant altruism and toward immediate, tangible consumer benefits.

Marketing strategies should focus on highlighting personal functional value, such as long-term durability, energy cost reductions, improved personal health, and superior ingredient purity (Bocti et al., 2021; Permadi, n.d.). For example, when marketing electric vehicles or energy-efficient home appliances, campaigns should shift their primary emphasis away from carbon reduction metrics. Instead, they should lead with data illustrating substantial long-term fuel savings and minimized maintenance costs (Bocti et al., 2021). By pairing environmental benefits with direct, individual economic returns, the perceived price barrier becomes a calculated investment in personal value (Bocti et al., 2021).



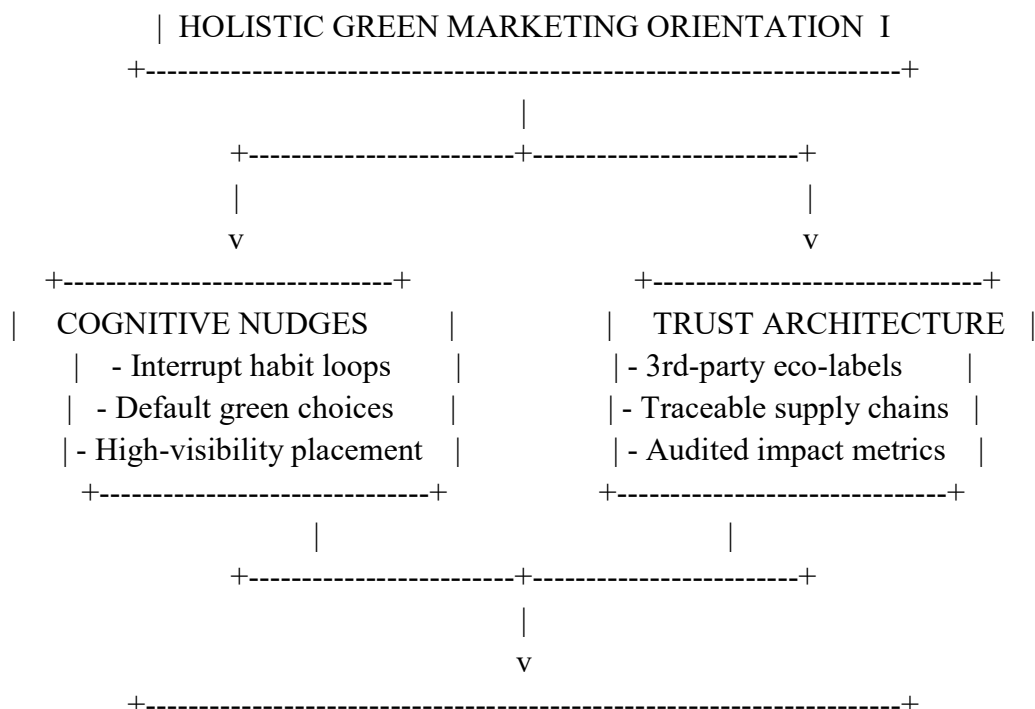
4.3 Redesigning Choice Architecture and Distribution Mechanics

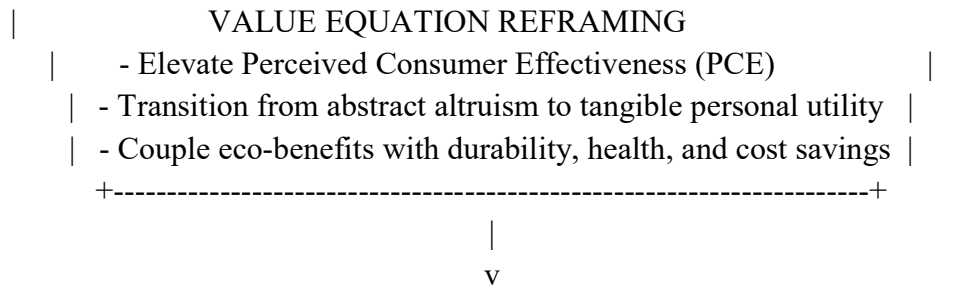
Because conventional retail environments heavily favor low-involvement, habitual consumption routines, green marketers must deliberately interrupt these automated pathways (Welinder, n.d.). This is achieved by systematically altering physical and digital choice architecture:

- **Prominent Point-of-Sale Integration:** Placing sustainable alternatives directly on primary eye-level shelves, alongside conventional market market leaders, to eliminate search and navigation friction (Bocti et al., 2021).
- **Optimized Choice Contexts:** Standardizing pro-environmental choices as the baseline, automatic option in digital checkout structures (e.g., defaulting to carbon-neutral shipping or opting out of single-use plastic packaging).
- **Localized Contextual Prompts:** Deploying real-time behavioral nudges and clear point-of-purchase displays that visibly highlight a product's localized circular economy metrics (Halibas, n.d.).

5. Discussion and Integrated Framework

To optimize corporate resource allocation and ensure marketing campaigns effectively translate consumer intent into verifiable sales, businesses must move away from piecemeal initiatives. This paper proposes a holistic, multi-dimensional execution model:





RESULT: REDUCED CONSUMER INTERFERENCE & CLOSED GREEN GAP

When an enterprise unifies these distinct strategic elements, green marketing functions as a comprehensive system that changes how consumers process choices. Trust architecture systematically dismantles greenwashing cynicism, cognitive nudges break fast-paced shopping habits, and value reframing reduces price resistance (Bocti et al., 2021; Welinder, n.d.).

By addressing both internal psychological factors and external marketplace frictions, this integrated approach enhances a consumer's sense of personal effectiveness (Fabio, n.d.). As a result, the psychological friction that typically derails sustainable intent is minimized, enabling a smooth transition from a positive attitude to a confirmed, pro-environmental purchase (Permadi, n.d.).

6. Conclusion

The green attitude-behavior gap is not an insurmountable flaw in consumer psychology. Rather, it represents a clear market failure driven by systemic informational deficits, misaligned value equations, and poorly optimized retail environments (Bocti et al., 2021; Welinder, n.d.). As shown through the lenses of the Theory of Planned Behavior and modern cognitive value models, moving consumers from passive intent to active purchasing requires businesses to systematically reduce real-world marketplace frictions (Megha, 2024; Permadi, n.d.).

Green marketing serves as the vital link required to solve this problem. By deploying verified eco-labels, transparent supply chain accounting, value-driven pricing strategies, and choice-architecture interventions, firms can systematically eliminate the roadblocks to sustainable consumption (Norstedt, n.d.).

6.1 Future Research Directions

To further advance this domain, future consumer behavior research should prioritize the following empirical horizons:



- **Longitudinal Field Experiments:** Shifting away from self-reported surveys—which are inherently vulnerable to social desirability bias—in favor of tracking long-term, direct observations of real-world consumer transactions (Fabio, n.d.; Wintschnig, n.d.).
- **Cross-Demographic Resilience Analysis:** Investigating how varying macroeconomic factors and localized generational shifts modify a consumer's sensitivity to green price premiums (Bocti et al., 2021; Halibas, n.d.).
- **AI-Driven Choice Customization:** Evaluating the behavioral impact of using real-time machine learning algorithms to deliver personalized carbon-footprint tracking and hyper-localized eco-nudges at the digital point-of-sale.

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