

GREEN BRAND PERSONALITY AND GREEN PURCHASE INTENTIONS: THE MEDIATION ROLES OF GREEN BRAND ASSOCIATIONS AND GREEN BRAND ATTITUDE

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Abstract- The paper explores the influence of green brand personality on green purchase intentions and discusses the mediation roles of green brand associations and green brand attitude. The research object of this study focuses on Taiwanese consumers who have the purchase experience of information and electronics products in Taiwan. This research employs an empirical study by means of the structural equation modeling (SEM). The results show that green brand personality is positively related to green purchase intentions. Hence, this study suggests that companies must increase their green brand personality in order to enhance their consumers' green purchase intentions. In addition, this study finds out that green brand associations and green brand attitude mediate the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions. The results also demonstrate that green brand personality positively relate to green brand associations and green brand attitude which would positively affect green purchase intentions. It means that green brand personality does not only positively affect green purchase intentions directly, but also positively influence it via green brand associations and green brand attitude indirectly. Hence, if companies would like to increase the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions, they need to raise their consumers' green brand associations and green brand attitude.

Keywords- Green Brand Personality, Green Purchase Intentions, Green Brand Associations, Green Brand Attitude, Green Marketing

I. INTRODUCTION

Green issues have been an important topic in the academic field. Recently more firms are eager to build strong green brands in order to obtain competitive advantages, so they operate in a social responsible way. As a result, it is more popular for companies to position their brands based on environmental functions, characteristics, ingredients, and other related benefits. Green branding has become an imperative issue for firms in the current prevalence of consumer environmentalism. Environmental consciousness of consumers in the market is a green branding opportunity. Previous literature didn't pay attention to green branding very well. Few issues of green branding in prior research, such as green brand equity (Chen, 2010), green brand positioning (Hartmann et al., 2005), and green brand competitiveness (Darnall, 2008), have been explored. Green branding research has been largely overlooked in the field of green marketing. In order to explore the integral framework of green branding, the study aims to systematically analyze the conceptual relations of green branding constructs, green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude, and uncover their influences on green purchase intentions. A green product refers to a product that does not harm the natural environment (Chen, 2010). A green brand is defined as a brand that offers a significant eco-advantage over the incumbents and which appeals to those who are willing to take greenness as a high priority (Grant, 2008). "Brand association" refers to consumers' knowledge

associated with a given brand (Aaker, 1991). This study defines 'green brand association' as the extent to which consumers know about a green brand and how they feel and evaluate the green brand. Brand associations are defined as a critical component of brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Accordingly, green brand associations are recognized as an important component of green brand equity. Green brand associations are crucial for green brand equity which creates substantial value to a green brand by delivering information as a basis for brand differentiation and by generating green brand attitudes.

Brands can be animated, humanized, or to some extent personalized (Fournier and Yao, 1997). Consumers use brands to construct and to maintain their identity and to fulfill emotional pleasure (O'Donohoe, 1993). Brand personality is well discussed in the prior literature (Aaker, 1996). Brand personality provides the brand with human characteristics that are critical to construct brand image. Hence, brand personality represents the emotional side of brand image, while brand image is about the attributes related to the brand (Aaker, 1997).

Branding strategies are important means for obtaining competitive advantage (Aggarwal, 2004). Many valuable constructs have been recently developed in the branding literature including brand personality, brand association, and brand attitude (Thomson, McInnis and Park, 2005; Aaker, 1997). Brand personality could differentiate and build up competitive advantage in consumers' minds (Freling

and Forbes, 2005). Brand personality would affect consumer preference and patronage and develop stronger emotional relationships with the brand (Fournier, 1998). Comparing to product attributes which focus on physical functions, brand personality tends to be a “symbolic function” (Keller, 1993).

Although prior research has highlighted the relevant issues about purchase intentions, no study discusses them about environmental issues from the perspectives of green branding. Thus, this study would like to fill the research gap. This study proposes three novel constructs, green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude, and incorporates the concept of green purchase intentions proposed by Chen and Chang (2012) into an integral framework to further discuss the influence of green brand personality on green purchase intentions in the field of green marketing. Green purchase intentions are crucial for firms in the context of strict international environmental regulations and prevalent customer environmentalism. This paper develops a research framework which can help firms improve their green purchase intentions via its three determinants: green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude.

This study would like to undertake an empirical test to explore the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions. In addition, this paper also investigates the mediation effects of green brand associations and green brand attitude on the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions. This paper plans to build up a new framework of green purchase intentions in compliance with environmental trends to help companies enhance their green purchase intentions and to further extend the literature on green marketing. The structure of this study is as follows. A literature review is discussed in section 2, and six hypotheses are also proposed in this section. In section 3, this study describes the methodology, the sample, and data collection, and the measurement of the constructs. Then, the descriptive statistics, reliability of the measurement, factor analysis, correlation coefficients between the constructs, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and the results of structural equation modeling (SEM) are shown in section 4. In the end, this study mentions the conclusions and implications about the findings, discussions, and possible directions for future research in section 5.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Positive Effect of Green Brand Personality on Green Brand Associations

Green branding can evoke green brand associations of targeted customers by delivering green environmental information about green product

attributes to them. Strong and effective green brand associations can be obtained through specific emotional benefits evoked actively by green branding (Hartmann and Ibáñez, 2006). Green brands can be associated through communication campaigns and advertising. Berry (2000) suggests that brand personality is a powerful driver for building brand association. Thus, this study argues that green brand personality would positively affect green brand associations and proposes the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 1 (H₁).** Green brand personality is positively associated with green brand associations.

2.2 The Positive Effect of Green Brand Personality on Green Brand Attitude

Brand personality is different from implicit human personality, though human and brand personality traits are conceptualized similarly (Aaker, 1997). Brand personality can be created by branding effects experienced by the consumers who contact the brands (Shank and Langmeyer, 1994). Hence, brand personality can be generated from both product related factors (such as physical functionality, packaging, attributes, and pricing) and product not-related factors (such as marketing activities, branding experience, symbols, advertisement effect, and word of mouth) (McCracken, 1989; Aaker, 1997). In the context of environmental management, this study argues green brand personality would positively affect green brand attitude and implies the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 2 (H₂).** Green brand personality is positively associated with green brand attitude.

2.3 The Positive Effect of Green Brand Personality on Green Purchase Intentions

Brand personality is developed from consumer behavior and human psychology theories (Heding et al., 2009). Based on prior research, there is a positively relationship between brand personality and purchase intentions (O’Cass and Lim, 2001; Bouhlel et al., 2011). Chen and Chang (2012) define ‘green purchase intentions’ as the likelihood that a consumer would buy a particular product or brand resulting from his or her environmental needs. In the context of environmental management, this study argues that green brand personality is positively associated with green purchase intentions and proposes the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 3 (H₃).** Green brand personality is positively associated with green purchase intentions.

2.4 The Positive Effect of Green Brand Associations on Green Brand Attitude

Associations are receivers’ memories and fantasies evoked by stimuli (Praxmarer and Gierl, 2009). Since brand cognitions may be positive and negative (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989; Olson et al., 1982), positive associations are positive cognitions while negative associations are negative cognitions. Brand

associations may evoke feelings and emotional responses (Escalas, 2004; Schindler and Holbrook, 2003; Sujun et al., 1993). Furthermore, if consumers remember or fantasize about brand cognition, perceived familiarity with the brand may rise which also leads to a positive affective reaction (Zajonc and Markus, 1985; Schlosser, 2003). Hence, this study argues that green brand associations positively affect green brand attitude, and implies the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 4 (H₄).** Green brand associations are positively associated with green brand attitude.

2.5 The Positive Effect of Green Brand Associations on Green Purchase Intentions

Brand associations are one kind of a complex and comprehensive model of long-term memory (Anderson, 1983). According to Keller (1993), brand associations constitute consumers' image of a specific brand which refers to perceptions about the brand. Hence, brand associations held in consumer memory can reflect brand image (Keller, 1993). Brand associations provide great value because they represent bases which can influence consumers' purchasing decisions. As a result, brand associations can influence consumers' purchase decisions by offering reputation and credibility in the brand. Thus, this paper asserts that green brand associations positively affect green purchase intentions and proposes the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 5 (H₅).** Green brand associations are positively associated with green purchase intentions.

2.6 The Positive Effect of Green Brand Attitude on Green Purchase Intentions

Attitude is an individual's internal evaluation of an object such as a brand or a product (Sallam and Wahid, 2012). Purchase intention could represent how likely it is that the individual would purchase a product (Phelps & Hoy, 1996). Previous research has found that attitudes play an important role in affecting consumers' purchase intentions (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Yi, 1990). Prior literature demonstrates that brand attitudes positively affect purchase intentions (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Yi, 1990). Thus, this paper asserts that green brand attitude positively affects green purchase intentions and proposes the following hypothesis:

- **Hypothesis 6 (H₆).** Green brand attitude is positively associated with green purchase intentions. This study asserts that green brand personality positively affect green purchase intentions, while green brand associations and green brand attitude mediate the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions. The research framework is shown in Fig. 1.

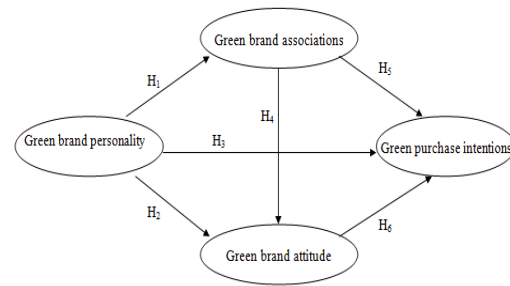


Fig. 1. Research framework

III. METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

3.1 Data Collection and The Sample

The unit of analysis in this study is consumer-level. This study applies the questionnaire survey to verify the hypotheses and research framework. The research object of this study focuses on Taiwanese consumers who have the purchase experience of information and electronics products in Taiwan. The questionnaires were randomly mailed to consumers who had the purchase experience of information and electronics products. This study sent 700 questionnaires to the consumers who were sampled. There are 252 valid questionnaires, and the effective response rate is 36%.

IV. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

This study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) to verify the hypotheses, and utilizes AMOS 21.0 to obtain the empirical results by means of the method of maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). All six paths estimated are significant. Therefore, H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, H₅, and H₆ are all supported in this study. This study demonstrates that the increase of green brand personality can not only comply with the popular consumer environmentalism, but also enhance green purchase intentions. In addition, the results indicate that green brand associations and green brand attitude are positively associated with green purchase intentions. Therefore, this study proves that green brand associations and green brand attitude partially mediate the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions. Thus, companies should increase their green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude to enhance their green purchase intentions to satisfy their environmental needs. The research of structure model is shown in Fig. 2.

Fig 2. The results of the structural model.

Hypothesis	Proposed effect	Path coefficient	Results
H ₁	+	0.209*	H ₁ is supported
H ₂	+	0.227*	H ₂ is supported
H ₃	+	0.220*	H ₃ is supported
H ₄	+	0.190*	H ₄ is supported
H ₅	+	0.235*	H ₅ is supported
H ₆	+	0.197*	H ₆ is supported

Note: * p<0.05.

CONCLUSIONS

Green brand personality plays an important role in the market. Prior literature is not conclusive on how green purchase intentions can be built up and retained in an integral way under the context of prevalent green marketing nowadays. Therefore, this study offers a perception approach of green branding as a way to stimulate the building process of green purchase intentions. This study develops a research framework to discuss the influence of green brand personality on green purchase intentions and to explore the mediation roles of green brand associations and green brand attitude. The empirical results show that green brand personality positively influences green purchase intentions. In addition, this study indicates that green brand associations and green brand attitude have mediation effects on the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions. The results also demonstrate that green brand personality is positively associated with green brand associations and green brand attitude which would positively affect green purchase intentions. All hypotheses proposed in this study are supported. Therefore, this study suggests that companies should raise their green brand personality in order to enhance their consumers' green purchase intentions. Besides, if companies would like to increase the positive relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions, they need to enhance their green brand associations and green brand attitude.

Since green marketing has become an effective marketing approach nowadays, firms should apply the prevalent green opportunities to differentiate and to position their products in order to penetrate the green markets. The main challenge for companies is how to raise green purchase intentions in the popularity of green marketing. This study combines the concept of green branding to develop a research framework of green purchase intentions in the field of green marketing. The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between green brand personality and green purchase intentions and to discuss the partial mediation effects of green brand associations and green brand

attitude. Companies must increase their green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude to enhance their consumers' green purchase intentions in the environmental era. An effective starting point for marketers is to develop strategies for increasing perceptions of green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude and for helping potential customers to develop sufficient green purchase intentions to build up a longer-term relationship in the context of environmental management. In view of finite resources, companies need to consider how best to deploy resources to enhance the positive factors of green purchase intentions. Green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude would increase green purchase intentions, so marketers must raise the perceptions of green brand personality, green brand associations, and green brand attitude for their brands. Finally, this study hopes that the research results are helpful to managers, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, and contribute to future research as reference.

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