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Greenwashing Perceptions and Brand Trust among Young Professionals: The Roles of Awareness, Capability, And Benevolence

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the influence of greenwashing strategies on brand trust among young professionals in the personal care and hygiene industry, anchored in Trust Building Theory and Signaling Theory. It focuses on the roles of consumer awareness, capability, and benevolence in evaluating greenwashing indicators such as eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging, and on how these factors help build brand trust. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design with regression analysis, the study surveyed 384 young professionals aged 22-35 who were currently employed and possessed at least a college-level education. Data were collected via a researcher-developed online survey and analyzed to examine the relationships among consumer awareness, capability, benevolence, and brand trust. The findings revealed that awareness, capability, and benevolence significantly influence brand trust toward environmentally positioned hygiene products. Awareness and capability enhance consumers' ability to recognize misleading sustainability claims, while benevolence strengthens trust toward brands perceived as genuinely environmentally responsible. Among predictors, benevolence emerged as the strongest element of brand trust, followed by consumer awareness and capability. These results highlight the importance of transparency, credible sustainability signals, and authentic environmental practices in creating consumer trust. The study offers practical insights for marketers and policymakers to reduce greenwashing and promote ethical sustainability communication within the hygiene industry.

KEYWORDS: Awareness, Capability, Benevolence, Greenwashing, Sustainability Messaging

I. INTRODUCTION

As sustainability becomes crucial in a world increasingly aware of environmental crises, green marketing has emerged as a strategy for companies to promote environmentally friendly products through packaging and sourcing. According to Papadas et al. (2017), it is a key tool for meeting consumer expectations of corporate responsibility. Nielsen's (2015) survey shows that 66% of global consumers are willing to buy from sustainable brands, highlighting the potential of green marketing. However, greenwashing risks have risen; the RepRisk 2024 report notes a 12% decline in global greenwashing risk, the first in six years, but high-severity cases increased by 30%, indicating that misleading practices grow alongside demand.

The personal care and hygiene industry is also prone to greenwashing, with many brands marketing products as "natural," "organic," or "eco-friendly" without verification. Moreover, more products often use green labels or imagery despite containing harmful ingredients. The Environmental Working Group (2024) notes that vague environmental claims are common, causing consumer misconceptions. While eco-labels can identify greener products, many are unverified and cause confusion.

Greenwashing strategies in sustainable marketing have wounded consumer trust and purchase intentions for green products, making it difficult to identify truly sustainable businesses. This leads to distrust and to false claims that undermine green marketing efforts. Conversely, young, educated professionals tend to be more environmentally conscious, favoring eco-friendly, natural, and organic products. They are better able to recognize misleading claims and are more likely to withdraw support from greenwashers, which damages brand trust. Yet, limited research examines how young professionals respond to greenwashing in relation to their awareness, capability, and benevolence, particularly regarding eco-labels, messaging, and packaging. This study aims to understand how greenwashing impacts their trust in brands.

This study examined young professionals' awareness, capability, and benevolence regarding greenwashing indicators such as eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging, as well as the relationship between these indicators and brand trust.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Sustainable Marketing

Sustainability is a key business trend driven by consumer demand for eco-friendly products. Companies adopt green marketing strategies aligned with sustainable values to meet this demand. Haider & Badi (2021) describe sustainability as the creation of safer, innovative products that benefit businesses and generate revenue. That increased consumer awareness of sustainable consumption amid environmental issues and stressed the need for responsible, creative manufacturing and consumer understanding of green consumption. Genuine sustainability is vital, as greenwashing can undermine credibility.

Sustainable marketing balances profits with societal well-being, emphasizing transparency, environmental friendliness, and long-term relationships. Rastogi et al. (2024) highlighted the need to provide needs-based products without harming the environment or society, using renewable resources, circular economy principles, and transparent communication. Authenticity is essential, as consumers doubt unfounded green claims, and ethical decision-making fosters long-term trust.

B. Greenwashing

Organizations often greenwash by making false eco-claims that boost brand image while masking harmful practices. This misleading language, like 'natural' or 'eco-friendly,' confuses stakeholders and damages long-term trust. Research shows that perceived greenwashing negatively impacts purchasing intentions (Zhang et al., 2023). Factors like firm size and industry affect greenwashing practices (Zhang et al., 2024). Digital transformation can reduce greenwashing by enhancing transparency (Xu et al., 2024), while ecolabeling boosts consumer confidence in environmental claims (Talles Silva et al., 2025). Legal regulations, like those in Canada, deter misleading marketing and protect consumers (Reinertson et al., 2025).

C. Brand Trust

Brand trust is the strong belief that a brand will keep its word, offer good products, and treat customers fairly, providing both emotional and rational confidence. As consumers become more aware and discerning, trust becomes crucial for building long-term brand relationships. Scholars highlight that trust enhances brand loyalty by linking brand identity and customer commitment (Keshtidar, 2018). Afriani (2019) notes that positive brand communication and image increase trust, fostering loyalty through open, confident dialogue. Trust often mediates between brand experience and loyalty. Guerreiro et al. (2021) show that green trust depends on engagement, word-of-mouth, and purchase intentions, especially when consumers believe in the brand's environmental efforts. De Sio et al. (2022) add that trust mediates between skepticism and purchase intent, turning doubt into belief through credible environmental actions. Recent research shows that trust also sustains brands during tough times; Nguyen-Viet (2024) found that loyal customers remain despite issues such as stock shortages. Overall, brand trust is an emotional, dynamic bond that connects consumers' awareness, capacity, and benevolence to the brand.well.

III. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

A. Trust Building Theory

The trust-building theory by McKnight, Choudhury, and Kacmar (2002) explains how consumers establish trust when faced with uncertain, incomplete information, focusing on knowledge-based trust, trusting beliefs (integrity, competence, benevolence), and trusting intentions. It's important in marketing to understand how to evaluate sustainability claims. Recent research shows trust forms when brands act ethically, tell the truth, and uphold environmental commitments (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2018). Knowledge-based trust arises from familiarity with a brand's sustainability claims. In greenwashing cases, consumer awareness helps identify false claims, as knowledgeable consumers are less likely to be misled (Chung et al., 2020). Awareness allows consumers to distinguish genuine sustainability from false practices.

Trustworthy beliefs include integrity (honest practices), competence (the ability to substantiate claims, e.g., eco-labels), and benevolence (genuine concern). When brands exaggerate efforts, trust erodes, raising suspicion (Nguyen et al., 2020; Delgado-Ballester & Hernandez-Espallardo, 2022).

B. Signaling Theory

Signaling theory, established by Michael Spence in 1973, explains how communication between sender and receiver reduces information asymmetry, especially in marketing, where firms signal eco-labels, packaging, and sustainability ads, and consumers interpret these to assess environmental claims. Effective signals must be consistent and reliable to ensure consumer understanding (Yildrim, 2023). The theory highlights how consumer perceptions depend on the credibility of environmental signals such as nature imagery, recyclable packaging, and eco-friendly claims.

However, greenwashing—exaggerating or misrepresenting signals—damages communication, creates confusion, and erodes trust (Zhang, 2023). False claims distort consumer perceptions, causing cynicism and mistrust. The theory underscores young professionals' ability to detect fraudulent environmental assertions, fostering awareness and trust when signals are genuine.

Greenwashing undermines credibility, prompting suspicion and mistrust. Applied in this study, signaling theory suggests that young professionals' awareness of greenwashing depends on their ability to evaluate environmental signals. Authentic signals enhance trust and loyalty, while untrustworthy ones cause confusion and doubt about sustainability marketing.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The postpositivist worldview underpinned this study, which aimed to objectively quantify variables and explore their relationships through statistical analysis. The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey to assess how awareness, capability, and benevolence influence young professionals' trust in eco-labelled, sustainable, and environmentally themed hygiene products. Descriptive methods measured levels of these variables and brand trust, while correlational analysis examined their interrelations.

B. Participants

The study used a sample size of 384 respondents. The age distribution showed that most respondents were in the 22-25 age group, with 154 respondents (40.10% of the total sample). This is followed by respondents aged 30-35, comprising 120 young professionals (31.25%), and those aged 26-29, with 110 respondents (28.65%). In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, with 312 young professionals (81.25%). Respondents with a Master's degree account for 65 individuals or 16.93%, while those with a Doctorate represent only 1.82% of the sample. Regarding employment status, more than half of the respondents are employed full-time, with 194 young professionals (50.52%). Self-employed respondents make up 110, or 28.65%, of the total, while part-time status accounts for 80, or 20.83%.

C. Data Gathering and Analysis

The data-gathering procedure commenced upon securing approval. Once approval from the researcher's adviser was obtained, the researcher prepared the Google Forms survey, which included the informed consent section, items measuring awareness, capability, benevolence, and brand trust, and, lastly, demographic questions. utilizing a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument underwent expert validation for content alignment to the study's objectives.

Afterward, the Google Forms link was disseminated through social media platforms, professional networks, and direct messaging channels to reach young professionals aged 22 to 35. Participation was entirely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the data were analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to categorize the respondents' demographic profile by age, educational attainment, and employment status. The mean and standard deviation were computed to evaluate baseline levels of awareness, capability, and benevolence regarding greenwashing strategies, as well as the resulting level of brand trust. Pearson's r was used to measure the strength of linear relationships among awareness, capability, and benevolence. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was performed to determine which of these three dimensions is a significant predictor of brand trust among young professionals.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's results and findings in response to the research questions.

A. What is the level of awareness of young professionals on greenwashing strategies on hygiene products in terms of eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging?

Table I. Level of Awareness of Young Professionals Towards Greenwashing Strategies in terms of Eco-labels

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am aware that eco-labels on hygiene products may sometimes be used mainly for marketing rather than verified environmental compliance.	4.07	High
2. I am aware that some eco-labels on hygiene products may not be verified by a credible organization.	3.77	High
3. I am aware that not all eco-labels guarantee true environmental benefits.	3.98	High
4. I am aware that the brands may use broad or vague environmental terms to present hygiene products as greener than they truly are.	3.97	High
Average Mean	**3.94**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table I shows that young professionals' awareness of greenwashing via eco-labels averages 3.94, indicating high awareness. They recognize eco-labels may be used for marketing rather than verified environmental standards, with the statement "I am aware that

eco-labels on hygiene products may sometimes be used mainly for marketing rather than verified environmental compliance," averaging 4.07. This awareness suggests they are critical of sustainability claims and exposed to greenwashing marketing. They tend to doubt the legitimacy of eco-labels and scrutinize claims, as noted by Delmas and Grant (2015), who found that most eco-labels lack rigorous verification, and by the Environmental Protection Agency (2023), which highlights certification instability as a trust issue. Brands shouldn't rely solely on eco-labels to earn consumer trust; they need verifiable claims. These findings suggest that regulators should tighten certification rules.

Table II. Level of Awareness of Young Professionals Towards Greenwashing Strategies in terms of Eco-labels

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am aware that some sustainability-related messages on hygiene products may lack factual or scientific support.	3.79	High
2. I am aware that sustainability messages can sometimes be exaggerated to attract buyers.	4.05	High
3. I am aware of the difference between genuine sustainability messages and deceptive ones.	3.92	High
4. I am aware that unclear or vague environmental claims may indicate greenwashing.	3.83	High
Average Mean	**3.89**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table II shows that young professionals have a high level of awareness of greenwashing strategies and sustainability messaging, with averages of 3.98 and 3.89, respectively. They are aware that sustainability messages can be exaggerated to attract buyers, with a mean of 4.05, indicating sensitivity to persuasive messaging. Respondents understand that such messages are sometimes not based on facts but are designed to evoke emotions and influence buying, rather than reflect actual environmental performance. This awareness aligns with Kotler and Armstrong (2018), emphasizing that genuine sustainable marketing relies on transparency and accountability. They carefully evaluate sustainability claims by checking the consistency between brand actions and messages, prioritizing credibility over emotional appeal. This heightened awareness reduces the likelihood of accepting vague or exaggerated environmental claims, emphasizing the importance of transparent, accurate communication aligned with real practices. Haider & Badi (2021) advocates responsible marketing that addresses environmental issues in practical terms, rather than through exaggerated claims, to maintain trust. This implied that industry should integrate sustainability messages into authentic corporate social responsibility efforts to preserve credibility. These findings echo Hameed et al. (2021), who note that unclear or inflated sustainability claims increase skepticism and the risk of greenwashing.

Table III. Level of Awareness of Young Professionals Towards Greenwashing Strategies in terms of Product Packaging

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am aware that packaging designs using green colors or nature imagery can be used to create an appearance of environmental friendliness.	3.93	High
2. I am aware that terms like "recyclable" or "natural" on packaging may not always be accurate.	4.09	High
3. I am aware that when product packaging is designed mainly for marketing purposes.	4.00	High
4. I am aware that packaging materials may not always match the sustainability claims printed on them.	4.07	High
Average Mean	**4.02**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table III indicates that young professionals are highly aware of greenwashing in packaging (average score of 4.02), recognizing that labels such as 'recyclable' or 'natural' can be misleading. Packaging influences perceptions through its visibility and immediacy, thereby affecting consumer judgment (Rundh, 2016). Greener packaging may hide unsustainable ingredients (Personal Care Insights, 2024), and consumers can often spot false sustainability claims. Delmas and Grant (2015) note that companies use visual cues to appear socially responsible, which consumers scrutinize. This awareness suggests they won't be easily misled by visual cues, placing pressure on brands to ensure packaging and claims are honest and consistent. Kotler and

Armstrong (2018) state sustainable marketing must align values and actions. Vain green imagery without real sustainability can damage consumer trust. These findings suggest that regulations should enforce clearer standards for environmental claims on packaging to prevent confusion and deception.

B. What is the level of capability of young professionals on greenwashing strategies on hygiene products in terms of eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging?

Table IV. Level of Capability of Young Professionals in Terms of Eco-Labels

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I have the capability to understand the meaning eco-labels are commonly used in hygiene products.	3.68	High
2. I feel capable of differentiating between legitimate and questionable eco-certifications.	3.64	High
3. I am capable of identifying fake or misleading environmental labels.	3.58	High
4. I can assess whether an eco-label truly reflects environmental responsibility.	3.55	High
Average Mean	**3.61**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table IV shows young professionals' capability in greenwashing strategies via eco-labels, with an average of 3.61, indicating high capability. They effectively evaluate eco-labels, understand their meaning, and distinguish between informative and deceptive ones, aided by increased exposure to sustainability information through education, media, and consumer experience. However, moderate scores suggest assessment can be hindered by the complexity and lack of standardization of eco-labels. Respondents recognize the need for critical evaluation rather than blind acceptance. Findings align with Lyon and Montgomery (2015), who noted that information asymmetry hampers differentiation between verified and misleading eco-labels. Transparency influences capability, with respondents relying on clear labeling systems. These findings suggest that brands should simplify the meanings of eco-labels and disclose certification sources to boost consumer confidence. Policymakers should harmonize eco-label systems to improve consumer information. Future research could explore how interpreting eco-labels affects long-term trust and purchasing decisions.

Table V. Level of Capability of Young Professionals in Terms of Sustainability Messaging

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I have the capability to evaluate whether sustainability claims are supported by clear evidence.	3.56	High
2. I can identify when environmental messages are exaggerated or misleading.	3.63	High
3. I am capable of interpreting whether a brand's sustainability statements are realistic.	3.61	High
4. I can assess if the sustainability messages correspond with actual product practices.	3.61	High
Average Mean	**3.60**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table V shows that young professionals have a high capability (average 3.60) in evaluating sustainability messaging and identifying exaggerated or misleading environmental claims. They assess messages based on evidence rather than face value, demonstrating critical thinking about marketing and persuasive strategies. Their judgments focus on consistency, clarity, and alignment with actual brand practices, aligning with studies by Santos et al. (2024) and Kotler and Armstrong (2018). When messages are ambiguous or overly emotional, more capable consumers are less likely to trust them. The findings suggest that brands need to support sustainability messages with factual, quantifiable evidence; exaggerated or unclear messages can damage brand loyalty. Practitioners should prioritize effective, accurate communication over emotional appeals. Future research should explore how consumers' ability to assess sustainability impacts brand commitment and skepticism in green marketing.

Table VI. Level of Capability of Young Professionals in Terms of Product Packaging

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I am capable of recognizing when product packaging features are designed to suggest environmental benefits.	3.71	High
2. I can evaluate whether eco-friendly visuals are accurate.	3.69	High
3. I am capable of understanding how verbal cues on packaging contribute to green-themed marketing.	3.68	High
4. I can determine whether a product's packaging is truly sustainable or greenwashed.	3.61	High
Average Mean	**3.67**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table VI shows that young professionals have a high level of capability, with an average score of 3.67, in recognizing greenwashing in product packaging, especially when visual cues suggest environmental benefits. This skill stems from exposure to common symbols such as green hues, leaves, and eco-related words, enabling them to distinguish genuine sustainability from mere design tricks. They tend to spot vague symbolism without explanations, making their ability to assess packaging stronger than their ability to interpret complex eco-labels. These findings align with Rundh (2016), highlighting packaging's impact on perception and industry concerns about deceptive claims. To improve trust, packaging visuals must be backed by real environmental practices, and clearer regulations are needed to prevent miscommunication. Future research could explore how long-term exposure to green packaging enhances consumer ability and reduces greenwashing.

C. What is the level of benevolence of young professionals on greenwashing strategies on hygiene products in terms of eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging?

Table VII. Benevolence toward Brands Presenting Themselves as Environmentally Responsible in Terms of Eco-labels

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I believe that hygiene product brands presenting eco-friendly labels generally intend to do good for the environment.	3.77	High
2. I believe that eco-labels reflect a brand's sincere effort toward sustainability.	3.77	High
3. I view brands with legitimate eco-labels as more trustworthy.	3.77	High
4. I believe brands with certified eco-labels genuinely promote sustainability.	3.85	High
Average Mean	**3.79**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table VII shows young professionals' benevolence toward brands with eco-labels. With a mean of 3.79, they generally believe brands are motivated by positive intentions despite awareness of greenwashing. Benevolence reflects the belief that brands contribute to environmental protection and consumer welfare. The highest agreement (3.85) was that brands with eco-labels genuinely promote sustainability. Although aware of potential deception, young professionals see eco-labels as signs of responsibility and goodwill. They assume brands wouldn't use eco-labels unless aiming for sustainability, despite imperfect verification. This aligns with Delmas and Grant (2015), who found that eco-labels foster optimistic views of brand intent. The results suggest eco-labels influence perceptions of brand goodwill, emphasizing the need for credible, transparent practices. Misuse can erode trust, and future studies could explore the long-term effects of misleading eco-labels on benevolence and trust.

Table VIII. Benevolence toward Brands Presenting Themselves as Environmentally Responsible in Terms of Sustainability Messaging

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I believe that hygiene product brands are using sustainability messaging that genuinely aims to promote environmentally responsible practices.	3.83	High
2. I believe brands that provide detailed environmental information care about public welfare.	3.80	High

3. I feel more positive toward brands that clearly explain their sustainability actions.	3.92	High
4. I view transparent sustainability messages as signs of authentic concern for consumers.	3.88	High
Average Mean	**3.85**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table VIII shows that young professionals have high benevolence toward brands that promote sustainability (mean 3.85), suggesting they believe such brands have positive intentions despite awareness of greenwashing. Benevolence was highest for brands that clearly explain their sustainability efforts (mean 3.92), indicating trust in transparent communication. Transparency influences attitudes by portraying brands as responsible and honest, as consumers associate detailed sustainability messaging with ethical values rather than marketing tricks. Openness signals honesty and environmental concern, aligning with studies showing that sustainability communication boosts trust and perceived responsibility. Effective sustainability messaging should go beyond promotion to explain concrete actions, thereby strengthening benevolence and positive perceptions. However, unsupported messages may harm goodwill. Industry practitioners should incorporate measurable sustainability efforts, and future research could explore how this influences long-term loyalty and advocacy.

Table IX. Benevolence toward Brands Presenting Themselves as Environmentally Responsible in Terms of Product Packaging

Statements	**Mean**	**Verbal Interpretation**
1. I believe that hygiene product brands using sustainable packaging materials care about the environment.	3.79	High
2. I think brands with environmentally conscious packaging aim to reduce harm to the environment.	3.84	High
3. I view brands that use sustainable packaging as genuinely responsible.	3.84	High
4. I feel that sustainable packaging reflects a brand's concerns for consumer well-being.	3.91	High
Average Mean	**3.84**	**High**

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High Level; 3.41 - 4.20 = High Level; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate Level; 1.80-2.60 = Low Level; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Level

Table IX shows that young professionals have high benevolence (mean 3.84) toward brands with eco-friendly packaging, indicating trust in their positive intentions despite awareness of greenwashing. They believe sustainable packaging reflects genuine concern for consumer welfare, especially as it visibly embodies environmental efforts, making brands seem responsible and health-conscious. This perception aligns with Rundh (2016), who highlights packaging as a key communication tool influencing consumer trust. Findings suggest sustainable packaging effectively demonstrates care for consumers and the environment, but brands must ensure claims align with actual practices to maintain goodwill. Future studies could explore how benevolence towards sustainable packaging affects purchasing decisions in high-greenwashing markets.

D. Is there a significant relationship between the level of consumer awareness, consumer capability, and consumer benevolence toward environmentally positioned brands and the greenwashing-related elements of hygiene products, such as eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging?

Table X. Relationship Between Consumer Awareness, Consumer Capability, and Consumer Benevolence

Statements	**N**	**Pearson-r**	**p-value**	**Degree of Relationship**	**Remarks**
Consumer Awareness – Eco-labels	384	.582	.000	Moderate Positive	s
Consumer Awareness – Sustainability Messaging	384	.624	.000	Strong Positive	s
Consumer Awareness – Product Packaging	384	5.82	.000	Moderate Positive	s
Consumer Capability –	384	.256	.000	Weak Positive	s

Eco-labels					
Consumer Capability – Sustainability Messaging	384	.272	.000	Weak Positive	s
Consumer Awareness – Product Packaging	384	.259	.000	Weak Positive	s
Consumer Benevolence – Eco-labels	384	.350	.000	Weak Positive	s
Consumer Benevolence – Sustainability Messaging	384	.440	.000	Moderate Positive	s
Consumer Benevolence – Product Packaging	384	.440	.000	Moderate Positive	s

Legend: P-value < 0.05 alpha = Significant; Pearson r = 0.80 – 1.00 = Very Strong Positive Relationship: 0.60 – 0.79 = Strong Positive Relationship; 0.40 – 0.59 = Moderate Positive Relationship; 0.20 – 0.39 = Weak Positive Relationship; 0.00 – 0.19 = Very Weak or No Relationship

Table X shows that consumer awareness, capability, and benevolence are significantly related to brand trust in eco-friendly hygiene products, with correlations ranging from r = .206 to r = .705. Higher awareness helps consumers identify genuine sustainability signals and trust honest brands. Signaling theory explains how brands use eco-labels to show environmental responsibility. Consumers with better skills decode signals more effectively, increasing trust when cues are clear and consistent but reducing it if signals are vague or overstated.

Trust theory predicts benevolence as a key indicator of brand trust, reflecting a concern for environmental protection and consumer welfare. A high beta (β) shows trust is reinforced when brands appear sincere and ethical. Emotional and moral assessments are crucial in sustainability contexts. The analysis reveals that benevolence in messaging and packaging strongly links to trust. According to signaling theory, sustainability signals are trusted when genuine and moral. Trust increases with awareness, but only when signals truly reflect concern, not just compliance.

Trust depends on perceived intention, not just information accuracy. Negative perceptions of packaging can harm trust, especially if signals seem false or symbolic. Savvy consumers scrutinize claims and may punish exaggerated signals. Brands should ensure signals are credible and verifiable, avoiding greenwashing. Building consumer awareness and capacity fosters long-term trust and rewards genuine sustainability. Benevolence and moral commitment are vital to trust, given how signals are interpreted and the dimensions of trust. Trust develops when signals are credible, and brands are seen as competent and sincere. Effective, authentic communication reduces greenwashing and builds trust. The null hypothesis of no link between awareness, capability, benevolence, and branding is rejected; these factors are interconnected and enhance positive evaluations of environmental efforts.

E. Do consumer awareness, consumer capability, and consumer benevolence collectively predict brand trust in the context of greenwashing strategies involving eco-labels, sustainability messaging, and product packaging?

Table XI. Predictors of Brand Trust Toward Environmentally Positioned Hygiene Products

Predictors	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Remarks	Ranking
Benevolence in terms of Product Packaging	.333	6.391	.000	Significant	1
Benevolence in terms of Eco-labels	.291	5.627	.000	Significant	1
Benevolence in terms of Sustainability Messaging	.21	4.477	.000	Significant	2
Consumer Capability in terms of Product Packaging	-.183	-3.277	.001	Significant	2
Consumer Awareness in terms of Eco-labels	.031	.679	.498	Not Significant	3
Consumer Awareness in terms of Sustainability Messaging	-.005	-.095	.924	Not Significant	3

Legend: Ranking: 1 = Most Influential Predictor; 2 = Second Most Influential Predictor; 3 = Third Most Influential Predictor; Standardized Coefficient Beta (β): 0.00 – 0.10 = Negligible Effect; 0.11 – 0.19 = Moderate Effect; 0.20 – 0.29 = Strong Effect; ≥ 0.30 = Very Strong Effect; t-value: < 2.00 = Not Statistically Significant; 2.00 – 2.99 = Statistically Significant; ≥ 3.00 = Highly Statistically Significant

Table 12 shows benevolence toward product packaging as the strongest predictor of brand trust, with a Beta of 0.333, t-value of 6.250, and p-value of 0.000. Benevolence toward eco-labels (β = .291, p = .000) and sustainability messaging (β = .261, p = .000) also significantly predict trust. Together, these explain 56.7% of the variation in brand trust (R = .753, R2 = .567), based on perceptions of benevolence, awareness, and capability. Benevolence's link to brand trust suggests that genuine environmental communication, especially through packaging, evokes positive feelings such as reassurance and confidence, linking the brand to sincerity and greenness. Emotional authenticity enhances trust, making brands seem reputable and reliable. Benevolence also helps consumers interpret sustainability cues more easily, especially amid exaggerated claims, by fostering belief in eco-labels and messages when packaging and messaging are transparent and consistent. Without sincerity, claims risk being dismissed as greenwashing. Ultimately, benevolence makes environmental communication an emotionally engaging experience, strengthening the consumer-brand bond. Although benevolence is the strongest predictor, consumer capability and awareness also contribute to brand trust. Capable consumers, able to check eco-labels and evaluate packaging, are more confident in their ability to judge environmental claims. This trust is reinforced by brands that are transparent and accurate, reducing greenwashing through critical viewing of messages, as Santos et al. (2024) explain. Awareness helps consumers understand sustainability messages and packaging, reducing misunderstandings and enabling them to identify genuine practices. More aware consumers are more likely to trust brands with transparent environmental efforts, supporting findings by Haider & Badi (2021) and Esteves et al. (2017). Awareness allows consumers to distinguish real sustainability from false claims, avoiding greenwashing. De Jong et al. (2018) state consumers trust sustainability initiatives more when brands show sincerity in packaging, eco-labels, and messages, which is the most predictive of trust. Emotional sincerity enhances attachment, creating reassurance and goodwill that foster trust in environmentally friendly hygiene products. Rundh (2016) emphasized that packaging cues influence credibility, which this study confirms, with good packaging intention being the key trust predictor. Honest packaging increased trust and emotional connection with young professionals. Santos et al. (2024) found that vague claims trigger skepticism, underscoring that benevolence builds trust only if messages are truthful and verifiable. Clear, credible sustainability messages foster understanding and trust. Effective brand communication should be sincere and transparent to boost consumer confidence and reduce the risk of greenwashing. Benevolence, awareness, and capability collectively shape trust, with sincerity in packaging and messages being most important, as authenticity and honesty foster lasting consumer trust.

F. Insights towards Creating Brand Trust

The researchers highlight key insights on brand trust toward eco-friendly hygiene products among young professionals. They find that perceived sincerity and goodwill predict trust more than sustainability info. Eco-labels and messaging enhance trust when brands appear genuine, emphasizing that benevolence plays an emotional role. Benevolence is central to emotional trust; consumers trust brands that care for the environment and their well-being. Packaging significantly influences trust, serving as a quick credibility check for environmental claims. While awareness doesn't cause blind trust but discernment, informed consumers can better distinguish genuine brands from greenwashing, making trust conditional and earned. Consumer capability impacts trust both positively, by encouraging transparency assessment, and negatively, by fostering skepticism toward overstated claims. Greenwashing poses a threat, especially to environmentally conscious young consumers. Regular, transparent sustainability reporting is vital for long-term credibility. Ultimately, trust depends on sincerity, emotional connection, and moral consistency, not just claims; brands practicing genuine sustainability will earn lasting trust.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study offers broader insights into how young professionals respond to greenwashing cues in hygiene products. Firstly, their high awareness of ability and goodwill suggests they are becoming a consumer group that is both analytically active and emotionally sensitive. They don't merely encounter environmental claims; they actively test them, indicating a shift in consumer culture in which environmental literacy is the norm rather than the exception. Secondly, as awareness and capability equip consumers to assess the truthfulness of sustainability claims and the perceived sincerity of brands, brand trust hinges on benevolence rather than information alone. Genuine authenticity, not strategic marketing, acts as the currency of trust. Thirdly, packaging significantly influences consumer trust, serving as a visual and tangible interface between the brand and the consumer. When packaging aligns with truthful environmental messaging, it meets consumer expectations; if it appears exaggerated or superficial, it fosters distrust. Thus, trust is fragile, and inconsistent packaging can undermine even well-crafted sustainability messages. Fourthly, consumer evaluations of environmental information involve both cognitive and emotional processes. They rely on reason (knowledge and ability) and emotion (benevolence) to judge credibility and trustworthiness, implying that green marketing should appeal to both intellect and emotion. Overemphasis on one aspect at the expense of the other may threaten consumer confidence. Finally, young professionals are increasingly skeptical of superficial or deceptive green claims. Their distrust reflects a broader cultural demand for authenticity, responsibility, and honesty. Companies face a critical challenge:

greenwashing erodes trust, whereas transparent, honest communication about environmental efforts fosters long-term loyalty among this discerning demographic.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers several recommendations regarding consumer awareness, capability, and benevolence in relation to greenwashing and brand trust. Young professionals should critically evaluate environmental claims by demanding clarity, consistency, and verification through certifications, reports, and third-party checks. Maintaining distrust of ambiguous messaging helps prevent fraud, encourages responsible consumption, and upholds ethics. Consumers can support responsible markets by choosing transparent brands, reinforcing ethical practices. Businesses should prioritize real sustainability over superficial green images. Claims, especially on packaging, need explanations, quantifiable actions, and certifications. Packaging should reflect sustainability efforts clearly. Eco-labels and communications must align to build trust, focusing on transparent, relatable environmental messaging for long-term trust, not just marketing. Regulators should enforce stricter rules and clear guidelines to prevent greenwashing, with penalties for deception. Consumer education on eco-labels and sustainability can aid informed choices. Industry groups should make credible eco-labels more visible and transparent to boost consumer confidence. Transparency and accountability reporting can also strengthen market credibility. Future research could explore other consumer groups or product categories, like hygiene products, to test the generalizability of trust-building mechanisms. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, could deepen understanding of consumer perceptions and emotional responses to environmental claims, and longitudinal studies could examine how repeated instances of greenwashing affect trust, loyalty, and brand avoidance.

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