

THE GREEN SCEPTICISM PARADOX: HOW GREEN MARKETING DRIVES WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE THROUGH BRAND IMAGE IN HOSPITALITY

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Abstract

Background: Growing environmental awareness has encouraged companies to adopt green marketing strategies to attract more conscious consumers and increase their willingness to pay. However, green scepticism persists even when a brand has a strong green image, meaning that consumers may continue to question the credibility of environmental claims despite positive brand perceptions.

Purpose: This study examines how green marketing influences willingness to pay more through green brand image, with green scepticism acting as a moderating variable among Millennials and Gen Z.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employed a quantitative approach using purposive non-probability sampling. Data were collected from 245 Millennials and Gen Z consumers engaged with sustainable hospitality in Indonesia and analysed using SEM-PLS with a moderated mediation approach.

Findings/Result: Green marketing significantly strengthens green brand image, which subsequently increases willingness to pay more. Green brand image also mediates the relationship between green marketing and willingness to pay more. However, green scepticism does not significantly moderate the relationship.

Conclusion: The study reveals that a strong green brand image directly drives consumers' willingness to pay more by fostering long-term commitment. Furthermore, green scepticism fails to weaken this relationship, proving that established brand trust allows positive purchasing behavior to persist despite general consumer doubts.

Originality/value (State of the art): This study addresses a key literature gap by applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework to green marketing, a methodology that has not yet been sufficiently utilized to examine how green marketing forces shape consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable brands. It extends sustainable hospitality research by evaluating willingness to pay more through green brand image and green scepticism in the Indonesian context.

Keywords: green marketing, green brand image, green scepticism, willingness to pay more, sustainable consumer behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the hospitality and tourism industry has become increasingly concerned about its environmental impact, driven by rising traveller awareness and demand for eco-friendly products and services (Elkhwesky, 2022). In response, businesses across the sector have begun adopting greener practices, including waste reduction, energy efficiency, water-saving technologies, sustainable sourcing, and recycling initiatives (Prakash et al. 2023). At the same time, the rapid growth of the accommodation sector remains heavily concentrated in high-density destinations such as Bali and Java (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). While this growth boosts the economy, it also increases environmental pressures, especially in Bali, where tourists generate more plastic waste than locals (Tindell et al. 2023). This strain is further compounded by food waste from hotels and restaurants (Sadyasmara et al. 2025).

Along with growing environmental pressures, consumer awareness of sustainability has increased significantly, reflecting a broader global trend in which environmental concerns are closely linked to personal well-being and influence decision-making (GoodStats, 2024; NielsenIQ, 2022). As environmental awareness increases, 95% of Indonesian travelers are willing to pay more for eco-friendly accommodations (Chaniago & Widyanti, 2024). This phenomenon, known as willingness to pay more, represents the maximum price premium an individual is willing to pay for environmental benefits (Wei et al. 2018). Beyond ecological motives, status concerns often drive green consumption, as choosing expensive sustainable products in public signals social prestige and reinforces pro-environmental behavior (Griskevicius et al. 2010). In response to this demand, many hospitality firms have adopted green practices such as energy efficiency and waste management (Ahn & Kwon, 2020). These initiatives form part of green marketing, which integrates environmental considerations into product, pricing, and promotional strategies (Irawati et al. 2023). This study uses the S-O-R framework to explain how external factors influence consumer actions. Green marketing serves as the environmental stimulus, which impacts the consumer's internal cognition before affecting behavior. This process relies on a strong green brand image as a psychological mediator representing this state in consumer memory (Aaker &

Biel, 2009). A consistent green brand image fosters trust and enhances perceived value (Nguyen-Viet et al. 2024). Ultimately, this internal process influences the final consumer response, making consumers more willing to pay a premium with a credible green brand image supported by visible environmental efforts (Plotkina et al. 2025). To elicit greater willingness to pay, companies frequently leverage independent green certifications and recognized labels to enhance consumer perceptions and validate operational claims (Damigos, 2023; Nguyen et al. 2019).

However, the effectiveness is limited by changing consumer perceptions. In the digital age, constant exposure to persuasive corporate content makes cognitive caution a logical safeguard against unverified environmental claims (Nguyen et al. 2023). Essentially, increased awareness and experience make consumers more critical of corporate sustainability efforts. This heightened sensitivity to environmental benefits and safety concerns results in greater scepticism about company motives, which then leads to negative perceptions of the product and reduced behavioral intentions (Nguyen et al. 2019). This erosion of trust manifests as green scepticism, a cognitive response in which consumers doubt the accuracy of environmental claims (Mohr & Ellen, 1998). According to Attribution Theory, this scepticism arises when consumers attribute a firm's "green" message to profit-seeking motives rather than to genuine concern (Leonidou & Skarmas, 2015). Prior studies have also linked greenwashing with consumer confusion, where unclear and ambiguous sustainability claims increase doubts about the credibility of firms' environmental messages (Farooq & Wicaksono, 2021).

In this context, green scepticism serves as a critical moderator. Even if a firm establishes a strong and visible green brand image, high levels of scepticism can filter or weaken its impact. As consumers become more knowledgeable about sustainability, their distrust of green marketing grows, increasing scepticism toward companies' motives (Nguyen et al. 2019). The success of environmental actions depends entirely on this level of scepticism. High green scepticism significantly weakens the positive impact of environmental actions. Conversely, when scepticism is low, these initiatives effectively enhance a brand's moral image and generate positive reactions from consumers (Li et al. 2026).

As more people realise that tourism activities and development can cause serious environmental damage (Trang et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2020), eco-friendly consumption and sustainable product development have become top priorities in today's tourism and hospitality industry. While many researchers have explored whether consumers are willing to pay premium prices for sustainable products (Lim et al. 2018; Stampa et al. 2020) and ecotourism services (Chaminuka et al. 2012; Jurado-Rivas & Sánchez-Rivero, 2019), empirical understanding remains remarkably constrained regarding eco-friendly hotels in developing countries, particularly Indonesia (Nelson et al. 2021). This gap is further compounded by the fact that most existing studies concentrate heavily on Western countries, leaving it unclear how green initiatives shape consumer behavior across different cultural settings, as cultural values fundamentally influence how consumers perceive and respond to environmental claims (Nguyen-Thi-Phuong et al. 2023). Beyond the geographic limitation, a theoretical gap persists, as frameworks such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response model have not been sufficiently applied to examine how green marketing forces shape consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable brands in the hospitality context (Nguyen et al. 2025). To address the identified gaps, this study uses the Stimulus-Organism-Response model to develop a moderated-mediation framework. This model examines how green marketing efforts influence consumers' willingness to pay a premium, with green brand image as a mediating variable. It also introduces green scepticism as a moderator to capture how consumer doubt affects these relationships. The framework is empirically tested within Indonesia's hospitality industry, specifically targeting environmentally conscious Millennials and Generation Z (Villa-Castaño, 2026).

The primary objective is to evaluate how these green marketing dynamics influence the willingness to pay more across four key hospitality subsectors: hotels, restaurants, cafes, and airlines. This broad scope is justified because these customer-centric sectors share a similar consumer psychology regarding sustainability and premium pricing (Blazquez-Resino et al. 2015; Han, 2021; Le et al. 2024). Ultimately, this study aims to provide a cross-applicable framework to green consumption literature while offering practical strategies for hospitality firms to build credible brand equity before scepticism undermines trust.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the relationships between green marketing, green brand image, green scepticism, and willingness to pay more in the hospitality sector. It further focuses on how these constructs interact in influencing consumers' intention to pay a premium for environmentally responsible hospitality services. The research was conducted in Bali and Java, Indonesia, as these regions represent the highest density of accommodation establishments and active sustainability initiatives in the national hospitality sector (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024; Suhardono et al. 2025). The data used in this study were primary data collected directly from respondents through structured questionnaires.

Data collection was conducted using questionnaires distributed online through platforms such as Google Forms. The measurement of variables utilised a 5-point Likert scale to capture respondents' perceptions regarding green marketing, green brand image, green scepticism, and willingness to pay more. The target population consists of consumers in Bali and Java who have engaged with sustainable hospitality businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, or airlines, within the past 12 months. The sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling, with criteria including respondents who have experience with sustainable hospitality services and are aware of environmental or sustainability issues. According to Hair et al. (2010), the recommended SEM sample size is 5-10 times the number of indicators. With 24 indicators, the required sample ranged from 120 to 240 respondents. Therefore, the 245 responses collected were considered adequate.

The data analysis technique used in this study is Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS. The measurement model includes assessing indicator reliability through outer loadings, with values above 0.7 indicating strong validity. However, for exploratory research, loadings between 0.5 and 0.6 are considered acceptable. Convergent validity is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values above 0.5 indicating adequate validity. Internal consistency reliability is evaluated using composite reliability, with values between 0.60 and 0.70 acceptable for exploratory research (Hair et al. 2022). Discriminant validity is evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), which measures how distinct each

construct is from the others, with values below 0.90 confirming adequate discriminant validity.

To further improve methodological robustness, common method bias was assessed using Kock's (2015) full collinearity approach, with VIF values for all latent variables calculated together in SmartPLS. VIF values at or below the conservative threshold of 3.3 confirm that the dataset is free from common method bias. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is used to evaluate the model's explanatory power. The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating stronger explanatory power. Finally, hypothesis testing is conducted based on path coefficients, with statistical significance determined at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$) (Hair et al. 2022).

Hypothesis Development

Within the context of green marketing strategies, positive experiences with eco-friendly products can strengthen consumers' perceptions of product quality and ethical value (Tran et al. 2022). Since many environmental attributes are not directly observable, consumers rely on signals such as product experience and eco-labels to reduce uncertainty, enhance perceived value, and increase their willingness to pay a premium price (Abubakari et al. 2025). Empirical evidence supports this relationship, as demonstrated by the fact that a majority of tourists report a willingness to pay higher prices for hotels holding green certifications (Nelson et al. 2021). Similarly, evidence indicates that 75.8% of consumers are willing to pay a premium for products with sustainable packaging, suggesting that consumers are generally prepared to accept higher prices when environmental benefits are clearly communicated and perceived as credible (Hao et al. 2019). Therefore, consumers who perceive greater value from green products are expected to exhibit a stronger willingness to pay a premium price. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Green marketing positively influences willingness to pay more.

Green marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions of a brand's environmental commitment, as communicating transparent sustainability initiatives enables firms to strengthen their green brand image and be perceived as more socially responsible (Li et al. 2026). Empirical evidence supports this relationship, showing that the effective implementation of green practices in the hospitality sector positively influences

corporate image (Yadav et al. 2016). Furthermore, customers' experiences with products and services have been found to significantly affect their perceptions and evaluations of a brand (Maanda et al. 2020). Positive green attributes communicated through products, services, and marketing activities can foster favorable perceptions of a brand's environmental responsibility, while environmentally oriented marketing strategies and sustainability-focused promotions further strengthen these perceptions by enhancing brand image and reinforcing associations with environmental sustainability (Sheykhani et al. 2024). Therefore, stronger green marketing efforts are expected to contribute positively to the development of a favorable green brand image. Synthesizing this empirical foundation, the following relationship is hypothesized: H2: Green marketing positively influences green brand image.

Consumers tend to assign greater value to brands that align with their personal values and beliefs (Su & Reynolds, 2017). A credible green brand image that consistently delivers on environmental promises can strengthen consumer trust and increase willingness to pay a premium (Akturan, 2020). This effect is particularly evident among younger consumers, as Generation Z shows a stronger willingness to pay for brands that emphasise sustainability, positive societal impact, and inclusivity (Goedertier et al. 2024). While a strong green brand image enhances perceptions of environmental responsibility and reinforces confidence in sustainability commitments to increase a brand's perceived purchasing value, this effect is further amplified by consumers' social involvement and environmental concern, which systematically strengthen their willingness to pay a higher price (Leong & Koay, 2026). Therefore, consumers who hold more favorable perceptions of a brand's green image are expected to exhibit a greater willingness to pay a premium. Consequent to these synthesized bases, the following hypothesis is established:

H3: Green brand image positively influences willingness to pay more.

Green marketing activities are designed to communicate a firm's environmental commitment through initiatives such as eco-friendly practices, sustainability labels, and environmental communication (Fraj et al. 2011). However, these efforts do not directly translate into favorable consumer responses unless they shape consumers' perceptions of the brand (Lin et al. 2024).

In this regard, green brand image serves as an important mechanism through which green marketing influences consumer behavior (Baca & Reshidi, 2025). Empirical evidence shows that green brand image mediates the relationship between sustainability-related efforts and consumers' behavioral outcomes, including purchase intentions and willingness to pay, particularly when these efforts are perceived as meaningful and trustworthy (Plotkina et al. 2025). Similarly, eco-friendly advertising, sustainability labels, and environmental communication increase willingness to pay only when they successfully build a credible and positive green brand image (Majeed et al. 2022). This pattern is further supported in the hospitality context, where consumers who perceive a hotel's environmental practices as genuine are more likely to develop a favorable green brand image, fostering trust and perceptions of quality that ultimately encourage a greater willingness to pay a premium (González-Rodríguez et al. 2020). Therefore, green marketing is expected to increase consumers' willingness to pay a premium indirectly by strengthening the brand's green image. Integrating this empirical foundation, the following relationship is hypothesized:

H4: Green brand image mediates the relationship between green marketing and willingness to pay more.

Consumer scepticism toward environmental claims can significantly influence the effectiveness of green marketing efforts (Goh & Balaji, 2016; Musgrove et al. 2018). A high level of scepticism toward green advertising reduces consumers' likelihood of engaging in green consumption and weakens their responsiveness to sustainability-related messages (Cheng et al. 2020). Scepticism also acts as a barrier to pro-environmental behavior by diminishing environmental concern and knowledge, thereby reducing consumers' willingness to pay more for green offerings (Goh & Balaji, 2016). In addition, consumers' brand perceptions decline when they are disillusioned by misleading sustainability claims, particularly in the context of product innovations (Bladt et al. 2024). While genuine green initiatives can enhance a brand's moral image and generate favorable consumer responses, these positive effects are weakened or may even become negative when consumers exhibit high levels of scepticism toward environmental claims (Li et al. 2026). Therefore, consumer scepticism is expected to weaken the positive influence of green marketing on green brand image, leading to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

H5: Green scepticism moderates the relationship between green brand image and willingness to pay more.

This proposed research framework (Figure 1) illustrates how green marketing contributes to the development of a favorable green brand image, which subsequently increases consumers' willingness to pay a premium by enhancing trust and perceived value. However, consumer scepticism acts as a critical barrier in this relationship. When scepticism is high, consumers are more likely to question the credibility of a brand's environmental claims, thereby weakening the positive influence of green brand image on willingness to pay a premium. Consequently, even a strong green brand image may be less effective in encouraging consumers to pay higher prices if they remain doubtful about the authenticity of the brand's sustainability commitments.

RESULTS

Before the main data collection, a pre-test was conducted with 30 respondents using SmartPLS to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Indicators with outer loadings below the acceptable threshold and items failing to meet the AVE criterion of 0.50 were removed iteratively (Hair et al. 2022). As a result, five indicators were excluded from the final instrument, including two items measuring perceived contribution to environmental sustainability through paying a premium, one item measuring the frequency of exposure to green advertising, one item capturing overall impression of the eco-friendly brand, and one item reflecting perceptions of the firm's concern for ecosystem conservation. The remaining items demonstrated satisfactory measurement properties and were retained for the main survey. Following these iterative removals, all remaining indicators achieved outer loadings above 0.60, AVE values exceeding 0.50, and Composite Reliability values above 0.70, confirming satisfactory validity and internal consistency. The refined questionnaire was subsequently used to collect data from 245 respondents.

To ensure the questionnaire accurately captured the study's constructs in the Indonesian context, established measurements from prior research were adapted and carefully translated to preserve the original meaning across languages. Green marketing was operationalized using a 14-item scale across four

operational dimensions, namely product, price, place, and promotion, with both the dimensional framework and items adapted from (Nguyen et al. 2025). Green brand image was measured using a 6-item scale structurally rooted in the corporate, user, and product image dimensions established by Aaker and Biel (2009), while willingness to pay more was captured through a 4-item scale conceptually framed around the benefit and sacrifice dimensions proposed by Zeithaml (1988), with both measurements drawn directly from the instrument used by Baah et al. (2025). While green scepticism is treated as a unidimensional construct, measured using items adapted from Leonidou & Skarmeas (2015) and Matthes & Wonneberger (2014).

As summarized in Table 1, the respondent profile for this study is dominated by the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts, with 54.9% of participants aged 17–29 and 46.1% aged 30 and above. This demographic mix is ideal for the research, as these generations are the primary drivers of sustainable consumption. The sample is notably well-educated and economically stable, with 50.6% holding at least a bachelor’s degree and 35.9% earning above Rp5,000,000 per month, reflecting both environmental awareness and financial capacity to consider paying a premium for green offerings. Professionally, the group consists mainly of students and private employees (74.7% combined), with sustainable hospitality experience centered primarily on accommodations (43.3%).

Construct Reliability and Validity

The Initial measurement model analysis, revealed that several indicators of the green marketing construct exhibited low outer loadings, resulting in

an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value below the recommended threshold of 0.50. These indicators represented consumers’ evaluations of green pricing and operational sustainability practices, including the perceived value of eco-friendly pricing, the use of reusable serving utensils, efforts to reduce plastic packaging, the adoption of energy-efficient facilities, and the provision of green spaces. The relatively weak performance of these indicators may reflect consumers’ limited ability to consistently observe and evaluate such practices, as sustainability initiatives related to pricing, operations, and facilities are often less visible than product or communication-based environmental attributes. Following the recommended refinement procedure, these indicators were removed to improve the measurement model.

After refinement, as displayed in Table 2, the outer loadings ranged from 0.679 to 0.885. Although two items exhibited loadings slightly below the recommended 0.70 threshold, they were retained according to Howard (2016) because the green marketing construct has achieved the AVE threshold of 0.509, exceeding the minimum acceptable level. Reliability assessment further demonstrated satisfactory results, with Cronbach’s Alpha values exceeding 0.70 and Composite Reliability values ranging from 0.826 to 0.910, indicating good internal consistency. In addition, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.290 to 2.517, well below the conservative threshold of 3.3, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity issues among the indicators. Overall, these findings confirm that the measurement model possesses adequate validity and reliability and is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

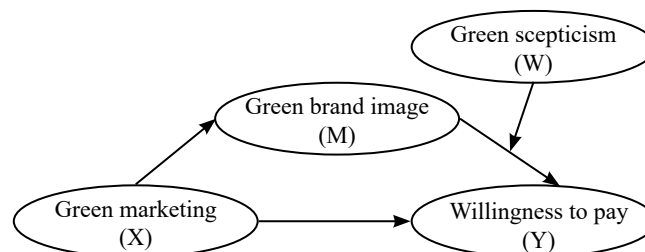


Figure 1. Framework of the study the influence of green marketing on willingness to pay more through green brand image with the moderating role of green scepticism

Table 1. Profile of respondents with sustainable hospitality experience

Variable	Classifications	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	26.7
	Female	180	73.3
Age	17-29	132	54.9
	≥ 30	113	46.1
Highest Level of Education	High School	94	38.4
	Diploma	27	11
	Bachelor's Degree	107	43.7
	Master's Degree or higher	17	6.9
Occupation	Students	93	38
	Private sector employee	90	36.7
	Civil servants	17	6.9
	Entrepreneur	38	15.5
	Others	7	2.9
Average Monthly Income	< IDR2,000,000	45	18.4
	IDR2,000,000 – IDR3,500,000	50	20.4
	>IDR3,500,000 – IDR5,000,000	62	25.3
	> IDR5,000,000	88	35.9
	Hotel / Homestay / Villa	106	43.3
Type of Service	Restaurant	42	17.1
	Cafe	72	29.4
	Airlines	25	10.2

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. As shown in the HTMT matrix through Table 3, all values were below the conservative threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al. 2015). The highest HTMT value was observed between green marketing and green brand image at 0.869, which remains within the acceptable range. These results indicate that each construct in the model is empirically distinct and that discriminant validity has been successfully established.

Path Coefficients (Hypothesis Testing)

The structural model results indicate that four out of five hypotheses were supported. Green Marketing (GM) had a significant positive impact on both Willingness to Pay More (WTPM) ($\beta = 0.276, p < 0.001$) and Green Brand Image (GBI) ($\beta = 0.670, p < 0.001$). Furthermore, GBI significantly influenced WTPM ($\beta = 0.220, p = 0.003$) and successfully mediated the relationship between GM and WTPM ($\beta = 0.148, p = 0.008$). However, the moderating role of Green Scepticism (GS) on the relationship between GBI and WTPM was not supported ($\beta = -0.055, p = 0.535$), suggesting that

scepticism does not significantly alter the relationship between green brand image and willingness to pay more in this context.

Further in the analysis, as shown in Table 4, the structural framework accounted for 44.9% of the variance in green brand image and 29.2% of the variance in willingness to pay more (WTPM). These values indicate moderate explanatory power, particularly for green brand image. The comparatively lower value for WTPM suggests that consumers' willingness to pay a premium is influenced by additional factors beyond those included in the present model. Although green brand image significantly predicted willingness to pay more ($\beta = 0.220, p = 0.003$), the magnitude of the effect was relatively modest. This finding is consistent with Li et al. (2020), who argued that consumer evaluations in hospitality settings are shaped by a range of factors, including service quality, facility quality, location, and the prestige of the establishment, all of which influence perceived value. Accordingly, sustainability constitutes only one component of the broader hospitality experience, and willingness to pay a premium is likely driven by a combination of considerations that extend beyond environmental factors alone.

Table 2. Construct reliability and convergent validity results for green marketing, green brand image, green scepticism, and willingness to pay more among Indonesian hospitality consumers

Variable	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	VIF
Green Marketing		0.808	0.861	0.509	
This company offers products of good quality without harming the environment.	0.748				1.594
This product meets my needs in a way that is responsible toward the environment.	0.693				1.395
Compared to other brands, this company's products are proven to be more environmentally friendly.	0.679				1.478
Promotions from this company make me more interested in purchasing environmentally friendly products.	0.734				1.556
Advertisements from this company help me understand why their products are better for the environment.	0.713				1.521
In my opinion, this company's offering of environmentally friendly products is very appealing.	0.711				1.412
Green Brand Image		0.721	0.826	0.542	
This eco-friendly brand does not only prioritize profit but also the environment.	0.751				1.326
This eco-friendly firm operates in a socially conscious manner.	0.748				1.421
I feel responsible for the environment when I use this eco-friendly brand.	0.702				1.277
I feel that using this eco-friendly brand reflects a sustainable lifestyle.	0.744				1.418
Green Scepticism		0.888	0.910	0.716	
I do not believe in most of the sustainability claims made in advertising.	0.835				1.849
Most sustainability claims in advertising are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers.	0.885				2.517
Companies advertise sustainability because they are solely motivated by profits.	0.846				2.391
Companies advertise sustainability because their competitors are doing the same.	0.816				2.257
Willingness to Pay More		0.753	0.844	0.575	
I will pay a premium to experience the sustainable products/services of this company.	0.787				1.661
It is acceptable to pay extra to sustainability-focused firms.	0.724				1.398
I am prepared to spend more to purchase from this sustainable hospitality firm.	0.802				1.550
It is okay to spend more time to purchase the products/services of this firm.	0.716				1.290

To examine the nature of the interaction effect, a simple slopes analysis was conducted (Figure 2). The plot demonstrates that the positive relationship between green brand image and willingness to pay more remains relatively consistent across low (-1 SD), mean, and high (+1 SD) levels of green scepticism. As the three slopes are largely parallel, the positive effect of green brand image on willingness to pay more appears consistent regardless of the level of green scepticism. Although respondents with higher green scepticism exhibited slightly higher overall willingness to pay more, the differences between the slopes were minimal and statistically negligible. This indicates that the interaction term does not meaningfully change the strength of the relationship between green brand image and willingness to pay more. Therefore, the moderating effect of green scepticism was not supported.

Empirical results demonstrate that green marketing is the primary determinant in establishing a green brand image. When businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, or airlines, transparently communicate their sustainable practices, they stimulate deeper emotional consumer engagement. Consequently, consumers perceive the brand as high-quality and socially responsible. The successful implementation of these sustainable initiatives, paired with a strong green image, significantly enhances a firm's overall corporate reputation within the hospitality sector (Yadav et al. 2016). Ultimately, this emphasizes that green marketing extends beyond just a superficial gesture; it serves as a critical mechanism for building brand trustworthiness, particularly when consumers can readily verify a company's authentic sustainability efforts (Plotkina et al. 2025).

Table 3. HTMT results for the discriminant validity assessment of all constructs among Indonesian hospitality consumers

	GBI	GM	GS	WTPM
Green Brand Image (GBI)				
Green Marketing (GM)	0.869			
Green Scepticism (GS)	0.117	0.161		
Willingness To Pay More (WTPM)	0.583	0.582	0.310	
Green Scepticism × Green Brand Image	0.386	0.251	0.050	0.225

Table 4. Direct and indirect effect hypothesis testing results and R² values for the structural model of green marketing, green brand image, willingness to pay more, and green scepticism among Indonesian hospitality consumers

Hypothesis	Standardized Coefficients	T Statistics	p-Values	Results
GM → WTPM	0.276	3.831	0.000	Significant
GM → GBI	0.670	8.327	0.000	Significant
GBI → WTPM	0.220	2.972	0.003	Significant
GM → GBI → WTPM	0.148	2.664	0.008	Significant
GS × GBI → WTPM	-0.055	0.620	0.535	Not Significant
	R ² (adjusted)			
GBI	0.447			
WTPM	0.280			

Note: Green Brand Image (GBI); Green Marketing (GM); Green Scepticism (GS); Willingness To Pay More (WTPM)

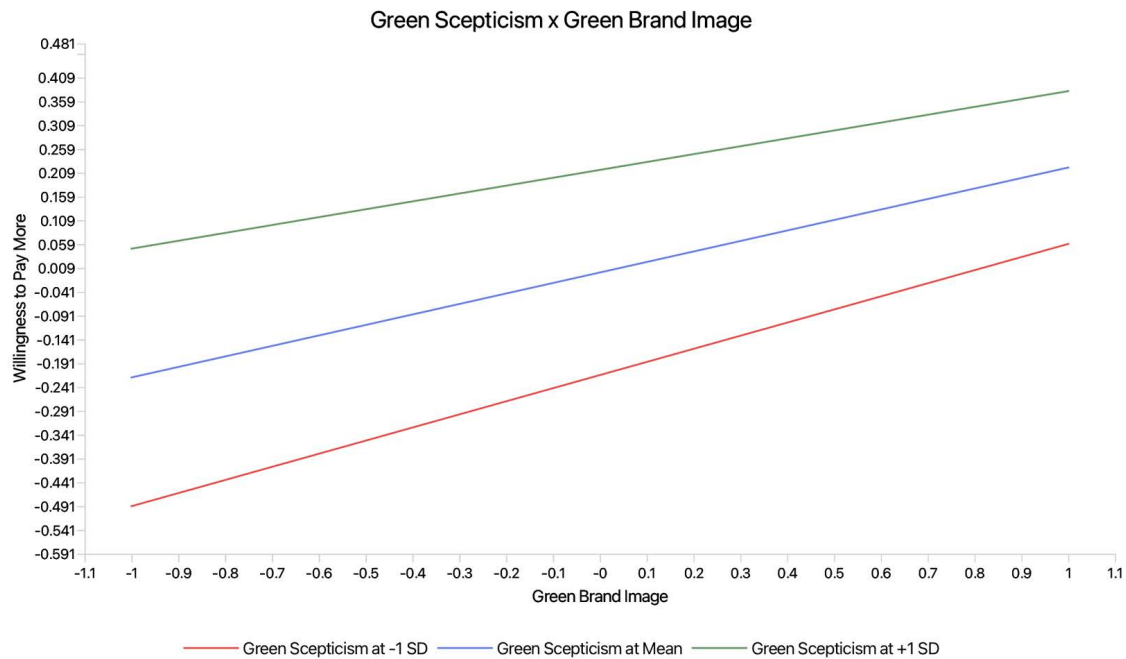


Figure 2. Simple slope plot of green brand image and willingness to pay more at different levels of green scepticism

Both green marketing practices and a strong brand image can increase customers' willingness to pay more. Consumers may initially respond positively to sustainability initiatives, especially when these practices enhance perceptions of the company's social and environmental responsibility. Prior studies suggest that such initiatives can strengthen customers' emotional attachment to a brand, ultimately increasing their willingness to support the business and pay premium prices (Suttikun & Mahasuweerachai, 2023). Consequently, this study validates that a green brand image serves as an important mediating mechanism linking corporate environmental action to consumer behavioral intentions. While direct marketing campaigns may stimulate consumer interest, their capacity to justify premium pricing strategies is significantly amplified when supported by a credible firm reputation (González-Rodríguez et al. 2020).

Among environmentally conscious consumers, willingness to pay more is often driven not only by functional benefits but also by emotional and symbolic value. Consumers may experience positive emotions, self-pride, and personal satisfaction when supporting brands perceived as environmentally responsible (Griskevicius et al. 2010). This emotional reward, often referred to as the "warm glow" effect, emerges when individuals feel that their consumption choices contribute to broader social or environmental good.

These effects may become stronger among consumers with a strong green self-identity, as sustainable consumption reflects their personal values and self-concept (Mahasuweerachai & Suttikun, 2022). Such tendencies are particularly relevant among Generation Z consumers, who are characterized by heightened awareness of environmental and social issues (Choi et al. 2025). Nevertheless, these positive responses are more likely to emerge when consumers perceive the brand's sustainability commitment as authentic and credible. When environmental initiatives align with consumers' personal values and identity, they are more willing to support the brand and accept premium pricing (Gomes et al. 2023).

Building on these findings, this study reveals a compelling scepticism paradox where green scepticism was expected to reduce willingness to pay more, but the results show no meaningful effect. This suggests that when customers truly trust a brand's authentic green image, they tend to overlook general doubts. This resilience occurs because evaluations of corporate social responsibility motives are deeply contextual, heavily shaped by specific sub-domain factors such as message focus, source objectivity (Kang & Atkinson, 2021; Kang & Sung, 2022), industry norms, and corporate history (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2015), which heavily shape how consumers perceive these corporate social responsibility motives.

This finding explicitly contradicts the conventional view that high scepticism automatically devalues green brand evaluations (Li et al. 2026). This divergence can be explained by demographic and cultural differences, as consumer scepticism toward sustainability claims is highly influenced by demographics (Van Kenhove & Biro, 2016). Asian cultures, such as Indonesia, are highly collectivist (Power et al. 2010), where individuals tend to prioritize social harmony over purely individual interests. In this context, environmental responsibility is often perceived not only as a personal concern but also as a contribution to the broader community. Thus, as a collectivist society, Indonesian consumers may already possess a relatively favorable baseline attitude toward environmentally friendly practices (Lee et al. 2023).

At the same time, modern Indonesian consumers are increasingly attracted to products and services that provide emotional satisfaction, premium experiences, and social prestige (IDN Research Institute, 2025; Widyastuti et al. 2024). Choosing eco-friendly hospitality services may therefore generate both hedonic values, by making consumers feel personally satisfied, and symbolic value, by signaling a modern and socially responsible lifestyle to others. The combination of collectivist values and status-related motivations may strengthen consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable hospitality services. Consequently, even when consumers experience some degree of scepticism toward green claims, the perceived social, emotional, and symbolic benefits associated with environmentally friendly consumption may still outweigh their doubts, leading them to remain willing to pay more.

The dual nature of consumer motivations further clarifies the absence of a moderating effect of green scepticism on the relationship between green brand image and willingness to pay more (Dogan & Ozmen, 2019). While green consumption can be driven by genuine altruism, it is increasingly conceptualised as a mechanism for strategic impression management (Shaikh & Ashill, 2025; Spielmann, 2021). Consumers often utilize highly visible environmentally friendly products or services to project a socially desirable image (Yan et al. 2024). This behavior aligns with the concept of virtue signaling, defined as the public expression of sentiments or actions intended to demonstrate one's moral character and social responsibility (Amponsah &

Owusuaa-Foster, 2025; Westra, 2021). As the pursuit of social differentiation and status signaling overrides doubts about a company's hidden motives (i.e., greenwashing) (Hasni et al. 2025), green scepticism fails to diminish the consumer's ultimate willingness to pay more.

Collectively, these dynamics suggest that scepticism does not simply dissipate on its own. To successfully override doubt, consumer experiences must be validated by structural credibility and verifiable transparency (Chopdar & Paul, 2023; Lin et al. 2023). A positive reputation acts as a psychological shield, increasing consumer confidence in a company's intentions (Heinberg et al. 2021). Furthermore, the Elaboration Likelihood Model suggests that consumers do not automatically distrust green advertising; when an authentic story is clear, informative, and believable, it actively reduces scepticism and improves consumer responses (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Managerial Implications

Based on the findings, there is a clear and practical takeaway for marketing managers seeking to encourage consumers to pay premium prices for hospitality services that incorporate green initiatives. Instead of mainly concentrating on reducing consumer scepticism, hospitality businesses should prioritize developing a strong and credible green brand image, as this appears to be a more influential factor in encouraging consumers' willingness to pay more. The findings suggest that green scepticism does not substantially weaken consumers' purchasing intentions when the brand is perceived as genuinely committed to sustainability. In such cases, consumers may place greater emphasis on the overall credibility and reputation of the brand rather than on their doubts regarding specific environmental claims.

Therefore, managers should avoid relying on vague or excessively promotional environmental messaging. Sustainability communication should instead be transparent, specific, and grounded in verifiable actions. Firms that consistently embed green marketing efforts into their core business operations are better positioned to build a credible green brand identity that fosters genuine consumer trust and enhances consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for sustainable hospitality services.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate that green marketing builds a strong green brand image, which subsequently drives consumers' willingness to pay more. Interestingly, green scepticism does not significantly weaken this relationship, suggesting that a trusted brand image establishes a baseline of value that shields consumer purchasing intent from broader doubts. Theoretically, these findings extend the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework by revealing this unique shielding effect, while also advancing Attribution Theory by proving that collectivist cultural contexts can neutralize suspicious consumer attributions. Ultimately, maintaining transparency and credibility ensures that environmental marketing efforts successfully translate into a real willingness to pay premium prices.

Recommendations

This study adopts a broad hospitality perspective by encompassing hotels, restaurants, cafes, and airlines. Although these subsectors share customer-centered service characteristics that may generate similar consumer responses toward green initiatives (Han, 2021; Le et al. 2024), differences in operational contexts should still be acknowledged, as they may limit the generalizability of the findings across specific hospitality settings.

To address these boundaries, future research should expand in three key directions. First, future studies should include older cohorts such as Baby Boomers and Generation X to examine whether levels of green scepticism differ across life stages and purchasing power levels (Mason et al. 2025). Second, given the broad coverage of this study, further research may focus on individual hospitality subsectors, such as hotels, restaurants, or airlines, to capture more context-specific consumer behavior (Fubah et al. 2026). Finally, incorporating additional variables into the model could further improve its ability to explain consumers' willingness to pay more. In particular, future research may consider the role of social status and identity-related factors (Fan et al. 2025), as previous studies have shown that individuals with higher social status tend to exhibit stronger green consumption tendencies, while the green purchasing behavior of individuals

with lower social status may depend on the symbolic value associated with green products (Feng et al. 2025). Examining these factors may provide deeper insights into the social and psychological mechanisms underlying consumers' willingness to pay a premium for sustainable hospitality offerings.

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