
THE ROLE OF ECO-LABELLING IN SHAPING TRUST IN THE CONSUMER

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ABSTRACT

With the growing emphasis on sustainable consumption, eco-labelling has become an important mechanism for guiding consumer decision-making and fostering trust in environmentally responsible products. This study investigates the role of eco-labelling in shaping consumer trust and purchase intentions, with specific attention to certification legitimacy, transparency, and credibility. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to consumers in Ernakulam district, Kerala. The analysis reveals that eco-labels act as credible information cues that reduce uncertainty, enhance perceptions of product quality, and reinforce beliefs in corporate responsibility. The findings further indicate that trustworthy eco-labelling practices contribute to stronger brand image, consumer confidence, and long-term brand loyalty. These insights hold practical implications for marketers, policymakers, and certification authorities seeking to strengthen eco-labelling frameworks as a means of promoting sustainable consumption and building consumer trust.

KEYWORDS: Eco-labelling, Consumer Trust, Sustainable Consumption, Certification Credibility, Brand Loyalty, Environmental Standards.

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumer interest in sustainable products has increased recently due to growing worries about climate change and environmental deterioration, putting eco-labelling at the forefront of conversations about responsible consumption. Eco-labels serve as informational cues that

lower ambiguity and direct customer decision-making by conveying the ethical and environmental qualities of items. Eco-labels not only indicate a product's environmental value but also act as a means of fostering consumer and company trust by offering reliable and transparent information. In sustainability markets, where customers frequently struggle to confirm the veracity of environmental promises and are growing more suspicious of greenwashing tactics, trust is especially crucial. Eco-labels are essential for building enduring customer-business relationships because, when viewed as trustworthy, they boost consumer confidence, build brand reputation, and promote environmentally friendly purchasing practices. However, a number of variables, including label design, certification requirements, consumer knowledge, and regulatory enforcement, affect how effective eco-labelling is. Although eco-labels have a great deal of potential to affect sustainable purchase habits, different consumer categories and circumstances have different levels of trust-building capacity. In the larger context of sustainability, this study intends to investigate how eco-labelling shapes customer trust by looking at how consumer perceptions and label credibility affect purchase decision.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the association between demographic variables (age and gender) and the frequency of eco-label checking behaviour among consumers.
2. To analyze the extent to which eco-labels, product attributes, perceived consumer effectiveness, and environmental concern influence green purchase behaviour.
3. To evaluate the general demographic profile of consumers and their level of awareness regarding eco-labelling and eco-labelled products.

1.2 SCOPE

The relationship between consumer demographics (age, gender, and education) and eco-label checking behaviour, as well as the impact of eco-label awareness, environmental concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness on willingness to pay more for eco-labelled products, are the two main areas of focus for this study, which looks at how eco-labelling affects consumer trust. The research is limited to consumer perceptions and self-reported behaviours across broad retail products rather than specific categories or actual sales data. Instead of assessing the technical validity of eco-labels, it concentrates on how consumers view and respond to them. The findings are meant to support businesses, policymakers, and certifying bodies in promoting sustainable consumption and bolstering the credibility of eco-labels.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant association between demographics and ecolabel checking behavior.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant association between demographics and eco label checking behavior.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was restricted to a single district in Kerala, which may not capture the diverse perceptions of consumers across India.
- The survey was conducted within a limited time frame, which reduced the possibility of gathering a larger and more varied sample.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With increasing awareness of environmental sustainability, eco-labels have become crucial in guiding consumer decisions and fostering trust in green products. Research has consistently shown that eco-labels enhance consumer confidence, although the role of demographic factors like age and gender appears minimal.

For instance, Silinkina (2025) and Gorton et al. (2021) both highlighted that while eco-labels improve trust, demographic variables do not significantly influence the frequency of label checking, reinforcing the limited impact of personal characteristics on eco-label usage.

Consumer awareness and concern for the environment are pivotal in shaping purchase intentions. Li (2025) emphasized that environmental consciousness drives the willingness to buy eco-friendly products, a finding echoed by De Canio (2023), who also noted that familiarity with eco-labels moderates this effect.

Similarly, Bastounis et al. (2021) found that consumers are willing to pay more for eco-labeled products, particularly organic labels, indicating that perceived environmental benefits enhance purchase motivation.

The credibility and transparency of eco-labels are also critical for influencing consumer behavior. Khan, Hassan, and Sajid (2025) reported that eco-labels only effectively guide sustainable choices when perceived as trustworthy and aligned with personal environmental values.

Dupont (2020) further emphasized that consumer trust depends on the label's perceived legitimacy and the clarity of the environmental benefits it conveys.

Mabrouk and Boussad (2025) demonstrated that when combined with broader green marketing practices, eco-labels strengthen both consumer trust and purchase intentions, highlighting their role in reinforcing positive perceptions and confidence in products.

Overall, the literature suggests that eco-labels serve as a key driver of consumer trust and pro-environmental behavior, particularly when consumers recognize their credibility and relevance to environmental outcomes.

These findings underscore the importance of eco-labelling in influencing purchase decisions and provide a foundation for the present study, which investigates how certification legitimacy, transparency, and credibility shape consumer trust and intentions to buy eco-friendly products.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design to examine how eco-labelling influences consumer trust and purchase behaviour. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among consumers in Ernakulam district, Kerala. The sampling technique employed was convenience sampling, and a total of 104 respondents participated in the survey. Data collection was carried out using Google Forms, which included two sections: the first focused on demographic details such as age, gender, and education, while the second addressed consumer perceptions of eco-labels, their checking behaviour, willingness to pay more, and the role of environmental concern. In addition to primary data, secondary information was sourced from academic journals, articles, and reports related to eco-labelling and sustainable consumption. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, correlation, and multiple regression analysis with the help of IBM SPSS to assess the relationships among key variables such as eco-labels, consumer effectiveness, and green purchase behaviour.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

4.1 Demographics and general survey questions related to Eco labelling and consumer trust

Demographic Characteristics	Percentage
GENDER	
Female	48.07
Male	51.94
Total	100
AGE	

18-28	71.15
29-38	19.23
39-48	7.69
Above 49	1.92
Total	100
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	
Bachelor's Degree	53.84
Master's Degree	34.61
Others	11.53
Total	100
<i>Sample Size:104</i>	

The sample consists of 104 respondents with a nearly equal distribution of males (51.94%) and females (48.07%). Most participants are young adults aged 18–28 years (71.15%), while smaller proportions belong to the 29–38 (19.23%), 39–48 (7.69%), and above 49 (1.92%) age groups. In terms of education, the majority have a bachelor's degree (53.84%), followed by a master's degree (34.61%), and a few have other qualifications (11.53%). This indicates that the study primarily reflects the views of young and well-educated consumers.

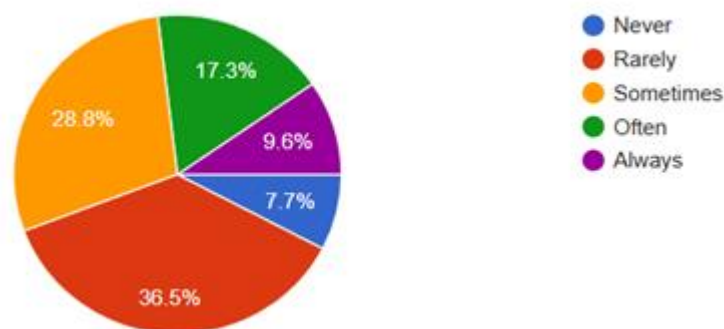


Figure 1. “How Often Consumers Look for Eco-Labels on the Products They Purchase”

The most common response was Rarely, accounting for the largest share at 36.5%. This was closely followed by those who said Sometimes, at 28.8%.

Together, these two groups make up over 65% of all responses.

Conversely, frequent participation is less common. A smaller segment of 17.3% reported doing the activity Often, while a mere 9.6% said they do it Always. The least frequent response was

Never, representing 7.7% of the participants.

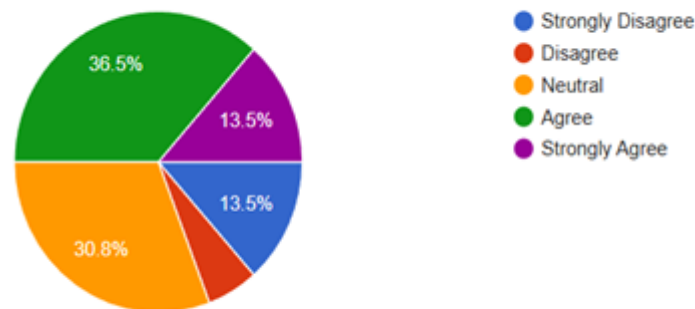


Figure 2. Belief in Eco-Labels' Environmental Responsibility.

Looking at the chart, the largest group of people, making up 36.5%, expressed that they Agree with the statement. Another significant portion, at 30.8%, chose to remain Neutral.

Interestingly, the percentages for those who Strongly Agree and those who Strongly Disagree are identical, both at 13.5%.

The smallest group by far is those who simply Disagree, representing just 5.7% of the total.

Overall, the data shows a clear leaning toward agreement, as exactly half of the responses fall into the "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" categories.

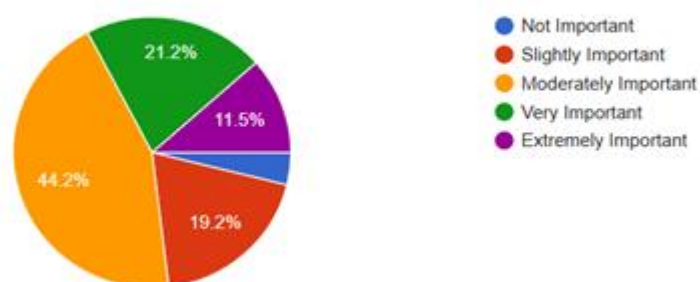


Figure 3. Importance of Environmental Concerns in Purchase.

The majority of respondents (44.2%) indicated that environmental concerns are moderately important in their purchasing decisions. Additionally, 21.2% considered them very important, and 11.5% viewed them as extremely important, showing that a significant portion of

consumers are environmentally conscious to varying degrees.

On the other hand, 19.2% rated environmental concerns as slightly important, while a small number of respondents viewed them as not important at all. These results reflect a general trend toward growing awareness of sustainability, although the intensity of concern differs among individuals. Overall, most consumers seem to factor in environmental responsibility when making purchase choices, even if it is not always the top priority.

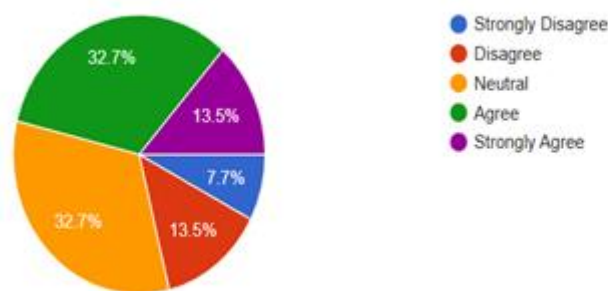


Figure 4. Perceived Quality of Eco-Labelled Products.

The results show a mixed perception among consumers. 32.7% of participants agreed, and 13.5% strongly agreed that eco-labelled products are of higher quality. This suggests that nearly half of the respondents associate eco-labels with better product standards or performance.

However, 32.7% remained neutral, indicating uncertainty or a lack of clear opinion. A smaller portion either disagreed (13.5%) or strongly disagreed (7.7%), suggesting that some consumers may question the credibility of eco-labels in determining quality. Overall, while many view eco-labelled products positively, a significant share still remains unconvinced or indifferent about their superiority in quality.

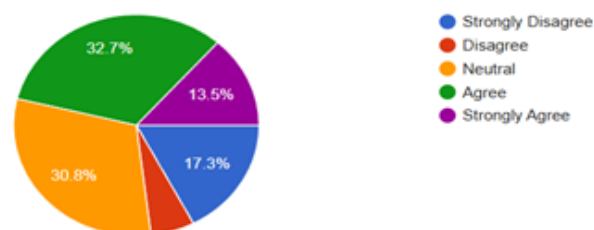


Figure 5. Premium Purchase Intention for Eco-Friendly Products.

A notable proportion of respondents expressed a willingness to support sustainable choices even at a higher cost—32.7% agreed and 13.5% strongly agreed. This reflects a positive consumer attitude toward supporting environmentally responsible products, even when it comes with additional expense.

On the other hand, 30.8% remained neutral, indicating that while they may be open to eco-friendly products, price sensitivity might still be a concern. A smaller group either disagreed (5.8%) or strongly disagreed (17.3%), suggesting that affordability remains a barrier for some. Overall, the responses reveal that a majority are open to paying extra for sustainability, but there is still a considerable portion that may need more incentives or awareness to shift their spending behavior.

4.2 CHI-SQUARE TEST:

Gender Vs How often do you look for eco-labels on the products you purchase?

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant association between gender and how often consumers look for eco-labels when purchasing products.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a significant association between gender and how often consumers look for eco-labels when purchasing products.

Table: Gender Vs How often do you look for eco-labels on the products you purchase?							
		How often do you look for eco-labels on the products you purchase?					Total
		Never	2	3	4	Always	
Gender	Female	2	14	17	8	8	49
	Male	6	24	13	10	2	55
Total		8	38	30	18	10	104

The crosstab results show that among female respondents, the majority often or always looked for eco-labels, with 17 reporting “sometimes” and 8 reporting “always.” In contrast, male respondents more frequently reported “rarely” (24) or “sometimes” (13) compared to females. While both genders demonstrated awareness of eco-labels, females showed a relatively stronger inclination toward actively seeking them, whereas males displayed a more moderate

level of engagement.

Age Vs How often do you look for eco-labels on the products you purchase?

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** There is no significant association between age and how often consumers look for eco-labels when purchasing products.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** There is a significant association between age and how often consumers look for eco-labels when purchasing products.

Table: Age Vs How often do you look for eco-labels on the products you purchase?							
		How often do you look for eco-labels on the products you purchase?					Total
		Never	2	3	4	Always	
Age	18-28	8	31	18	10	6	73
	29-38	2	5	5	4	3	19
	39-48			4	4		8
	Above 49			2	1	1	4
Total		10	36	29	19	10	104

The age-based crosstab indicates that the younger group (18–28 years) was the most active in checking eco-labels, with 31 reporting “rarely,” 18 “sometimes,” and 16 reporting “often or always.” Older age groups such as 29–38 and 39–48 showed smaller but still consistent interest in eco-labels, while the oldest group (above 49) had only limited responses across categories. This suggests that eco-label awareness and usage are more visible among younger consumers, likely due to higher exposure to sustainability messaging.

Table: Chi-Square Summary

Demographic Variable	Factor	Chi-Square Value	df	p	Significant or Not significant
Gender	<i>How often do you look</i>	4.75	4	.313	Not Significant

Age	<i>for eco-labels on the products you purchase</i>	11.34	12	.50	Not Significant
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Chi-Square Analysis: Association between Demographic Variables and Eco-Label Checking Behaviour.

The chi-square test was used to determine whether demographics like gender and age affect the frequency at which consumers check eco-labels when buying products. The findings showed that there was no statistically significant correlation between gender and frequency of checking eco-labels, $\chi^2(4, N = 104) = 4.75, P = 0.313$. In the same way, the age did not significantly correlate with eco-label checking behaviour, $\chi^2(12, N = 104) = 11.34, p = 0.50$. These results indicate that consumers, including male and female buyers, as well as representatives of various age groups, are characterized by the same pattern of paying attention to and using eco-labels.

In spite of the fact that descriptive statistics indicated that younger respondents and especially members of the age category of 18-28 years were a little more active in checking eco-labels, it was not a statistically significant difference. This result shows that demographic factors do not have a strong influence on the eco-label awareness and behaviour. Rather, it seems that the issue of sustainable consumption and faith in eco-labels is a common value among consumer groups.

The increased involvement of the young adults may also be explained by the increased exposure to the environmental education and sustainability messages due to the digital media, but the general homogeneity indicates that the attitudes towards environmental sustainability become more widespread. Such findings are matched with previous research by Silinkina (2025) and Gorton et al. (2021), identifying little demographic impact on the use of eco-labels and by Dupont (2020), who highlighted that perceived credibility and transparency of eco-labels are more determinant of the establishment of trust than individual characteristics. Practically, this lack of demographic impact means that marketers and policymakers should not divide eco-labelling campaigns between the genders and the age. Rather we should work towards enhancing the realness, the visibility and the understanding of eco-labels to all the consumers.

The results have demonstrated the significance of earning trust by way of open certification

and communication that has the potential to motivate eco-friendly decisions irrespective of the demographic status. Although the research is narrowed to one district in Kerala and might not reflect larger groups of people, it gives a valuable insight that eco-label checking has become a socially shared behaviour.

Future research may elaborate on this study by using bigger and more heterogeneous sample of study or include the psychological aspects of the people like their lifestyle, values, and environmental beliefs to give a more insight into the motivation behind the eco-label awareness. Comprehensively, the findings confirm that green behaviour is becoming more prevalent among clients, and it is a general trend in the direction of purchasing sustainability and trust in authentic eco-labeling activities.

Correlations: Eco-Labels, Product Attributes, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, Environmental Concern, and Green Purchase Behaviour.

Table: Correlations Summary

Variable	n	Eco-Labels	Product Attributes	Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	Environmental Concern	Green Purchase
1. Eco-Labels	104	1	.840**	.827**	.887**	.847**
2. Product Attributes	104	.840**	1	.820**	.895**	.851**
3. Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	104	.827**	.820**	1	.875**	.853**
4. Environmental Concern	104	.887**	.895**	.875**	1	.948**
5. Green Purchase	104	.847**	.851**	.853**	.948**	1

Note : Sample size = 104. ** indicate $p < .05$. 1= Eco-Labels, 2=Product Attributes, 3=Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, 4=Environmental Concern, 5=Green Purchase.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the interrelationship between significant variables, i.e. eco-labels, product attributes, perceived consumer effectiveness, environmental concern and green purchase behaviour. The results showed that there are significant and positive correlations between all these variables, which means that they shift in interlocking relationships to affect the consumer trust and eco-friendly buying. In particular, the eco-labels were found to have strong positive correlations with the product attributes ($r = 0.840$, $p < 0.05$), perceived consumer effectiveness ($r = 0.827$, $p < 0.05$), environmental concern ($r = 0.887$, $p < 0.05$) as well green purchase behaviour ($r = 0.847$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that when consumers consider eco-labels, they are more likely to be conscious of the more environmentally friendly features of products, have the belief that they have the potential to influence the situation, and have the greater likelihood of purchasing green products. On the same note, product attributes also correlated positively with the perceived consumer effectiveness ($r = 0.820$, $p < 0.05$), environment concern ($r = 0.895$, $p < 0.05$), and green purchase behaviour ($r = 0.851$, $p < 0.05$). That means that consumers relate the quality and performance of products with eco-friendliness and these aspects are the key factors in their sustainable decision-making. Furthermore, the perception of consumer effectiveness positively correlated with environmental concern ($r = 0.875$, $p < 0.05$) and green purchase behaviour ($r = 0.853$, $p < 0.05$), so that those who think that their choice will have a positive influence on the environment are people who demonstrate a higher concern of the environmental issues and make this concern turn into actual purchasing behaviour.

The best correlation was recorded between the environmental concern and green purchase behaviour ($r=0.948$, $p < 0.05$), and it was noted that the consumers who are more environmentally aware are much more apt to partner with green purchasing. All these findings imply that the attitudes of consumers regarding sustainability are closely linked. Eco-labels can be regarded as a credible information signal, which supports their environmental beliefs and perceptions of product quality among the consumers. When consumers are aware that eco labelled products resonate with the values, they grow more trustful with the brands and have more purchase intentions. The result is in line with the works of Li (2025) and De Canio (2023), who emphasized the importance of environmental consciousness in intention to purchase eco-friendly products. In the same manner, Khan et al. (2025) and Mabrouk and Boussad (2025) identified that the perceived effectiveness of actions is a mediator of the relationship between the environmental attitudes and actual green behaviour. The positive correlation between the environmental concern and the purchase

intention as noted in the current study goes ahead to validate the argument that the environmental concern and ethical motive are better predictors of sustainable consumption compared to demographic or economic factors. It also augments the theory that was developed by Dupont (2020) according to which credibility and transparency of eco-labels boost the consumer confidence, and Gorton et al. (2021) accentuated that the only way that eco-labels could operate is that they had to be perceived as trustworthy.

In general, the correlation analysis shows that eco-labelling supported by the credible certification and consumer awareness reinforces the psychological relationship between the environmental concern and green purchasing. This brings out the fact that the belief in eco-labels, coupled with individual responsibility towards sustainability, is critical in the development of positive attitudes and actual devotion to environmentally conscious buying behaviour by consumers.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS of Eco-Labels, Product Attributes, Perceived Consumer Effectiveness, and Environmental Concern as Predictors of Green Purchase Behaviour.

Table: Regression analysis summary					
Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
	B	SE	Beta (β)		
Constant	0.426	0.846		0.504	0.617
Eco-Labels	0.009	0.134	0.007	0.071	0.944
Product Attributes	-0.012	0.177	-0.007	-0.066	0.947
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	0.126	0.125	0.099	1.012	0.317
Environmental Concern	1.123	0.176	0.862	6.371	0.000
Note: Constant = .426, $F(3,100)= 107.79$, $p<.05$, $R^2= .902$, Dependent=Green Purchase.					

A multiple regression was performed to test the overall impact of eco-labels, product attributes, perceived consumer effectiveness, and environmental concern on green purchase behaviour. The model outcomes were found to be statistically significant, $F(3,100) = 107.79$, $p = \text{less than } 0.05$, and established a model R^2 of 0.902, i.e., it postulated that these

four predictors accounted approximately 90.2 percent of the green purchase behaviour. This shows that the combination of variables chosen is a high explanatory variable in predicting the sustainable purchasing intentions among the consumers. But, in the case of individual predictors, the most important variable was the environmental concern ($b = 0.862$, $t = 6.371$, $p < 0.001$) affecting green purchase behaviour. The remaining predictors, which included eco-labels ($b = 0.007$, $p = 0.944$), product attributes ($b = -0.007$, $p = 0.947$) and perceived consumer effectiveness ($b = 0.099$, $p = 0.317$) in the model, were not found to be significant.

It shows that all the four factors are conceptually connected to sustainability, but it is the amount of environmental concern of the consumer that decisively determines the actual green purchasing behaviour. This implies that when people have high environmental attitudes and regard the protection of the environment as an individual duty, they will have higher chances to take actions and make environmentally friendly choices. Conversely, eco-labels and product features despite their environmental responsibility communication end up becoming indirect without the backing of actual environmental concern. This result aligns with the fact of awareness and moral engagement as being the powerhouses behind intention to action by Li (2025) and De Canio (2023). The absence of a direct significant influence of the eco-labels, product characteristics, and perceived consumer efficacy can be viewed as the indicator, that consumers might already connect these indicators to larger values of the environment, thus allowing the environmental concern to be dominant in their decisions. According to Dupont (2020), the success of eco-labelling heavily relies on its perceived transparency and trustworthiness to the consumers. In the same way, Khan et al. (2025) noted that consumer purchase decisions are more heavily dependent on intrinsic motivation to conserve the environment than external product cues alone even though consumers are aware of eco-labels. These views are reflected in the current results and eco-labelling is argued to be a strengthening phenomenon and not a driving force.

Theoretically, the findings emphasize the key role of environmental concern in determining green purchasing, both psychologically and behaviourally. It establishes that emotional involvement in the issues of sustainability is the base out of which consumer trust and purchase intention are made. This in reality implies that the marketers and policymakers cannot afford to merely post eco-labels on the packaging. They ought to adopt the need to intensify environmental consciousness through education, open communication and sincerity in claims about green to ensure consumer appreciation. Whenever consumers are convinced

that eco-labels are truly some measure of environmental integrity, they tend to turn their concern into actual purchasing behavior.

On the whole, the results of the regression analysis show that eco-labels, product features, and perceived influence of the person are part of the wider framework of sustainability but environmental concern is the strongest and most stable predictor of green purchase behaviour. This observation supports the notion that long-term eco-friendly consumer behaviour altogether should be centered on the need to develop environmental values and trust because these psychological concerns are the real basis of sustainability-based marketing and policy.

CONCLUSION

Eco-labelling plays a vital role in influencing consumer trust and encouraging sustainable buying decisions. By offering reliable and transparent information, it helps reduce doubts, improves perceptions of product quality, and supports brand loyalty. However, its effectiveness depends on addressing issues such as limited consumer awareness, doubts about credibility, and the need for consistent regulations. Strengthening certification systems, educating consumers, and ensuring authenticity in labelling are essential steps forward. With these improvements, eco-labelling can become a key driver of consumer confidence and a strong promoter of sustainable consumption.

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