

The Impact of Greenwashing on Brand Trustworthiness of the Cosmetic Industry in Western Province Sri Lanka: The Mediating Role of Environmental Consciousness

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With the rising demand for eco-friendly products in Sri Lanka, particularly in the Western Province, the cosmetics industry has witnessed a shift towards sustainable and organic offerings. However, greenwashing—misleading marketing practices that exaggerate a brand’s environmental efforts—has raised concerns about brand trustworthiness. This study examines the impact of greenwashing on brand trust in the Sri Lankan cosmetics industry, emphasizing the mediating role of environmental consciousness. It hypothesizes that consumers with higher environmental awareness are more negatively affected by greenwashing, leading to reduced trust in cosmetic brands.

A quantitative research approach was employed, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from a sample of consumers in the Western Province. The survey assessed consumer perceptions of greenwashing, environmental awareness, and brand trustworthiness. Statistical analyses, including regression analysis, were conducted to examine relationships between variables and evaluate the mediating role of environmental consciousness.

The results indicate that greenwashing has a significant negative impact on brand trustworthiness. Additionally, environmental consciousness partially mediates this relationship, suggesting that consumers with higher environmental awareness are more sensitive to greenwashing’s adverse effects on brand reputation. These findings underscore the importance of transparency in sustainability claims and the need for genuine environmental practices to maintain consumer trust.

The study is geographically limited to Sri Lanka's Western Province, restricting the generalizability of findings to other regions or industries. Additionally, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time.

The findings provide valuable insights for multiple stakeholders. Consumers will gain awareness of greenwashing tactics, enabling them to make more informed purchasing decisions. Cosmetic brands can use these insights to develop authentic, sustainability-driven marketing strategies that enhance trust and credibility. Policymakers can leverage the findings to implement regulations that discourage greenwashing and promote genuine eco-friendly business practices.

Keywords: *Brand Trustworthiness, Cosmetic Industry, Eco-Friendly, Environmental Consciousness, Greenwashing*