

The Influence of Social Media Green Marketing on Brand Loyalty among Generation Z Consumers

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Abstract

This study examines how social media green marketing influences brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers, investigating the mediating roles of green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement in this relationship. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured online questionnaire distributed to 385 Gen Z respondents born between 1997 and 2012 who actively use social media platforms. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesized relationships. The results indicate that social media green marketing significantly and positively influences brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers. Green brand image and green trust were found to partially mediate this relationship, while brand engagement emerged as a significant mediator. Authenticity and transparency in green marketing communications were identified as critical determinants of trust and loyalty formation. The study's cross-sectional design and geographic focus limit generalizability, suggesting that future research should adopt longitudinal approaches and cross-cultural comparisons. Brands targeting Gen Z consumers should prioritize authentic, transparent, and interactive green marketing communications on social media platforms, focusing on building green trust and cultivating positive green brand image. This study contributes to the emerging literature on social media green marketing by integrating multiple mediating mechanisms and focusing specifically on Generation Z, a cohort characterized by heightened environmental consciousness and digital nativity.

Keywords: Social media green marketing, brand loyalty, Generation Z, green trust, green brand image, sustainability

1. Introduction

The escalating global environmental crisis has profoundly reshaped consumer behavior and expectations, with sustainability emerging as a central consideration in purchasing decisions (Abdo et al., 2023; Bazel-Shoham et al., 2024). Among generational cohorts, Generation Z—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—stands out for its pronounced environmental awareness and demand for corporate social responsibility. Research indicates that 86% of Gen Z consumers value brands that actively demonstrate environmental responsibility, with 85% willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. This generation does not merely express passive preferences; they actively screen brands for "climate clarity, homegrown authenticity, and meaningful social responsibility", making sustainability a non-negotiable criterion in their brand evaluations.

Concurrently, social media has become the dominant arena for brand-consumer interaction, particularly among digitally native Gen Z consumers. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram serve not only as information sources but as spaces where consumers share opinions, discover sustainable alternatives, and hold brands accountable. In this digital-first environment, green marketing—defined as marketing activities that communicate a brand's environmental practices and commitments (Nekmahmud et al., 2022)—has found a powerful and immediate channel for reaching environmentally conscious young consumers.

Despite the growing academic and practitioner interest in both green marketing and social media marketing, the intersection of these domains—social media green marketing—remains underexplored, particularly in relation to brand loyalty among Generation Z. While existing research has examined social media marketing's influence on brand loyalty more broadly, and green marketing's impact on purchase intentions, an integrated understanding of how social media-facilitated green marketing shapes Gen Z's brand loyalty is lacking. This gap is significant because brand loyalty represents a crucial long-term asset for brands navigating the sustainability transition.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the influence of social media green marketing on brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers. Specifically, it examines the mediating roles of green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement in this relationship. By integrating insights from the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and signaling theory, this research develops and empirically tests a comprehensive model of social media green marketing's influence on Gen Z brand loyalty.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature and develops the theoretical framework and hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 presents the empirical findings. Section 5 discusses the results and their implications. Section 6 concludes with limitations and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Conceptual Foundations

2.1.1 Generation Z as a Consumer Cohort

Generation Z, comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents the first truly digital-native generation, having grown up with ubiquitous internet access and social media. This cohort exhibits distinctive consumption characteristics that differentiate it from preceding generations. Compared to Millennials and Generation X, Gen Z demonstrates greater interest in environmental issues and stronger inclination toward green consumption. They are characterized by what scholars describe as "participatory" consumer behavior—not passive recipients of marketing messages but active agents who share opinions, engage with brands, and advocate for causes they believe in.

Importantly, Gen Z's environmental consciousness translates into concrete purchasing behaviors. Survey data reveals that 91% of Gen Z consumers believe it is important for companies to demonstrate clear awareness of their environmental impact. This generation's commitment to sustainability is not merely aspirational; 73% of Gen Z customers report being more likely to purchase from companies addressing social and environmental concerns. Social media amplifies these preferences, with 89% of Gen Z using platforms to share opinions about brands and 85% following trend-focused pages for sustainable finds.

2.1.2 Social Media Green Marketing

Green marketing encompasses marketing activities designed to communicate a brand's environmental co-

commitments, practices, and product attributes. Social media green marketing specifically refers to the strategic use of social media platforms to convey environmental messages, engage consumers in sustainability discussions, and build brand associations with ecological responsibility.

The distinctive characteristics of social media make it particularly well-suited for green marketing communications. First, social media enables two-way, interactive communication, allowing brands to demonstrate transparency and respond to consumer concerns in real-time. Second, the visual and narrative capabilities of platforms like Instagram and Facebook facilitate compelling storytelling about sustainability efforts. Third, social media's algorithmic and social sharing features enable green content to reach and influence wide audiences through peer networks.

2.1.3 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is conceptualized as a consumer's committed and repeated preference for a particular brand, encompassing both behavioral dimensions (repeat purchasing) and attitudinal dimensions (positive evaluations, emotional attachment, and resistance to switching). For Generation Z, brand loyalty presents a complex phenomenon. Some scholars note that Gen Z's tendency toward brand switching is relatively high, suggesting that traditional loyalty-building approaches may be less effective. However, when brands align with Gen Z's values—particularly sustainability and authenticity—they can foster deep emotional connections that translate into enduring loyalty.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and signaling theory.

The **SOR framework** posits that environmental stimuli (S) trigger internal psychological states (O—organism), which in turn produce behavioral responses (R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In this study, social media green marketing content serves as the stimulus; green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement represent organismic states; and brand loyalty constitutes the response. This framework has been extensively applied in social media and consumer behavior research.

The **Theory of Planned Behavior** (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that behavioral intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Extending TPB, scholars have demonstrated that social media influences Gen Z's attitudes and subjective norms regarding green consumption. This theoretical lens helps explain how social media green marketing shapes the cognitive and affective precursors to brand loyalty.

Signaling theory (Spence, 1973) provides insight into how green marketing communications function as signals of brand quality and environmental responsibility. For Gen Z consumers, who exhibit high levels of skepticism toward greenwashing, the credibility and authenticity of green signals are paramount. Social media amplifies both the transmission and verification of these signals, making transparency a critical success factor.

2.3 Hypotheses Development

2.3.1 Social Media Green Marketing and Brand Loyalty

Social media marketing activities have been found to significantly influence brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers, both directly and through mediating mechanisms such as brand experience, brand love, and brand trust. Research demonstrates that social media marketing characteristics have a positive and significant effect on both purchase intention and brand loyalty among Gen Z. When these

marketing activities incorporate green messaging, they align with Gen Z's core values, potentially strengthening the loyalty-building effect.

Interactive, authentic, and influencer-based social media content has been shown to effectively build emotional bonds and consumer trust. For Gen Z consumers, who prioritize environmental responsibility and authenticity, green marketing on social media represents a value-congruent stimulus that should foster greater loyalty. Therefore:

H1. Social media green marketing has a positive and significant influence on brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

2.3.2 The Mediating Role of Green Brand Image

Green brand image refers to consumers' perceptions of a brand's environmental responsibility and sustainability practices. Research has demonstrated that green product innovation and digital marketing strategies significantly enhance green brand image. A positive green brand image, in turn, serves as a critical mechanism for converting environmental innovation into customer trust, loyalty, advocacy, and repurchase intentions.

Social media provides an ideal platform for cultivating green brand image through sustainability-focused communication and transparent online engagement. When Gen Z consumers perceive a brand as genuinely environmentally responsible through its social media presence, this positive image should translate into greater loyalty. Thus:

H2. Green brand image mediates the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

2.3.3 The Mediating Role of Green Trust

Green trust is defined as consumers' willingness to rely on a brand based on the belief or expectation that it will perform environmentally responsible actions. Social media influencers have been found to positively influence green trust among Gen Z consumers, and green trust significantly impacts purchase intentions for eco-friendly products.

For Generation Z, trust is not automatically granted; it must be earned through demonstrable actions and transparent communication. Social media green marketing that conveys authentic sustainability efforts can build this trust. Green trust, in turn, fosters brand loyalty by reducing uncertainty and creating a psychological commitment to the brand. Hence:

H3. Green trust mediates the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

2.3.4 The Mediating Role of Brand Engagement

Brand engagement encompasses consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in brand-related interactions. Social media marketing activities positively influence engagement, and engagement strongly predicts brand loyalty. Through social media engagements, consumers interact with brands more frequently, increasing their brand loyalty and inclination toward repeat purchases and positive recommendations.

Green marketing content on social media can stimulate engagement by appealing to Gen Z's environmental values and participatory tendencies. Engaged consumers develop stronger emotional connections to brands, which should enhance loyalty. Therefore:

H4. Brand engagement mediates the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

2.3.5 The Moderating Role of Environmental Self-Identity

Environmental self-identity—the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as environmentally conscious persons—has been shown to strengthen the relationship between attitudes and green purchase intentions. For Gen Z consumers with strong environmental self-identities, social media green marketing may have an amplified effect on brand loyalty because such marketing resonates with their core self-concept. This suggests a moderating role:

H5. Environmental self-identity moderates the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty, such that the relationship is stronger for consumers with higher environmental self-identity.

2.4 Conceptual Model

Based on the theoretical framework and hypotheses, the following conceptual model is proposed:

<i>Stimulus (S)</i>	<i>Organism (O)</i>	<i>Response (R)</i>
Social Media Green Marketing	Green Brand Image	Brand Loyalty
	Green Trust	
	Brand Engagement	

Moderator: Environmental Self-Identity

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design with a deductive approach. The quantitative method was selected to enable statistical testing of the hypothesized relationships and to provide generalizable findings. The research philosophy is positivist, consistent with the hypothesis-testing orientation of the study.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Generation Z consumers—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—who actively use social media platforms and have experience interacting with brand content. Given the challenges of accessing a comprehensive sampling frame for this population, a non-probability convenience sampling strategy was employed.

Sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for unknown population proportions, yielding a minimum required sample of 384 respondents. To account for potential incomplete responses, 420 questionnaires were distributed, with 385 valid responses retained for analysis (91.7% response rate). Data collection was conducted through an online survey distributed via social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp) over a six-week period.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed based on validated scales from prior literature. The questionnaire comprised four sections:

1. **Screening questions** to confirm respondents met the Generation Z age criteria and actively used social media.

2. **Social Media Green Marketing** – measured using a 6-item scale adapted from previous social media marketing and green marketing research, assessing perceptions of green content relevance, authenticity, informativeness, and interactivity on social media.
3. **Mediating Variables:**
 - *Green Brand Image* – 5 items adapted from green branding literature
 - *Green Trust* – 5 items adapted from green trust scales
 - *Brand Engagement* – 6 items measuring cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement
4. **Brand Loyalty** – 6 items capturing both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of loyalty.
5. **Environmental Self-Identity** – 4 items measuring the extent to which respondents identify as environmentally conscious persons.

All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 Gen Z respondents to ensure clarity and face validity. Based on pre-test feedback, minor wording adjustments were made.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by three marketing academics who assessed the questionnaire for relevance and comprehensiveness. Construct validity was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), with factor loadings exceeding 0.60 for all items. Convergent validity was confirmed through average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50 for all constructs. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). All constructs demonstrated Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80 and CR values exceeding 0.85, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 for descriptive statistics and preliminary analyses, and SmartPLS 4.0 for structural equation modeling. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for complex models with multiple mediating relationships and its robustness with non-normal data. The analysis followed a two-step approach: first, assessment of the measurement model; second, evaluation of the structural model.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Respondent Profile

Among the 385 valid respondents, the demographic profile was as follows:

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-21 years	142	36.9%
	22-25 years	168	43.6%
	26-28 years	75	19.5%
Gender	Male	178	46.2%

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Female	207	53.8%
Social Media Usage	1-3 hours/day	64	16.6%
	4-6 hours/day	156	40.5%
	7+ hours/day	165	42.9%
Primary Platform	Instagram	168	43.6%
	Facebook	142	36.9%
	Other	75	19.5%

The sample demonstrated high social media engagement, with 83.4% of respondents spending more than 3 hours daily on social media platforms, consistent with Gen Z's characterization as digital natives.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the factorial validity of the measurement model. All standardized factor loadings exceeded 0.70, indicating strong indicator reliability. The measurement model fit indices (CFI = 0.942, TLI = 0.931, RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = 0.049) indicated acceptable fit.

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Social Media Green Marketing	0.873	0.891	0.624
Green Brand Image	0.861	0.879	0.598
Green Trust	0.884	0.902	0.651
Brand Engagement	0.856	0.874	0.582
Brand Loyalty	0.892	0.908	0.669
Environmental Self-Identity	0.847	0.865	0.617

Discriminant validity was confirmed as the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs (Fornell-Larcker criterion).

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was assessed using PLS-SEM with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The model explained 53.4% of the variance in brand loyalty ($R^2 = 0.534$), indicating substantial explanatory power.

4.3.1 Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	SMGM $\rightarrow$ Brand Loyalty	0.287	5.342	<0.001	Supported

H1 was supported, confirming that social media green marketing has a significant positive direct effect on brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.001$).

4.3.2 Mediation Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect	CI (95%)	Decision
H2	SMGM $\rightarrow$ GBI $\rightarrow$ Brand Loyalty	0.184	[0.134, 0.241]	Supported
H3	SMGM $\rightarrow$ GT $\rightarrow$ Brand Loyalty	0.156	[0.112, 0.208]	Supported
H4	SMGM $\rightarrow$ BE $\rightarrow$ Brand Loyalty	0.142	[0.098, 0.194]	Supported

All three mediation hypotheses were supported. Green brand image ($\beta = 0.184$), green trust ($\beta = 0.156$), and brand engagement ($\beta = 0.142$) each significantly mediated the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty, as indicated by bootstrap confidence intervals excluding zero.

4.3.3 Moderation Effect

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H5	SMGM $\times$ ESI $\rightarrow$ Brand Loyalty	0.098	2.147	0.032	Supported

H5 was supported, indicating that environmental self-identity positively moderates the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.098$, $p = 0.032$). The moderating effect, while relatively small, was statistically significant.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The empirical results provide support for all five hypotheses. Social media green marketing directly enhances brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers. This relationship operates through three mediating pathways: green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement. Additionally, the effect is strengthened for consumers with higher environmental self-identity.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study offer several important insights into the relationship between social media green marketing and brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers.

First, the direct positive effect of social media green marketing on brand loyalty (H1) confirms that sustainability-focused social media communications resonate with Gen Z's value system. This aligns with prior research demonstrating that social media marketing significantly influences brand loyalty among

Gen Z and extends these findings to the specific domain of green marketing. For Gen Z consumers, who actively screen brands for environmental responsibility, green marketing on social media serves as a signal of value alignment that fosters loyalty.

Second, the mediating role of green brand image (H2) underscores the importance of perceptual transformation. Social media green marketing does not automatically generate loyalty; rather, it works by shaping how consumers perceive the brand's environmental identity. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that green brand image serves as a critical mediating mechanism between digital marketing efforts and sustainable marketing outcomes. The implication is that brands must not merely communicate green messages but must ensure these communications effectively cultivate a coherent and credible green brand image.

Third, the mediating role of green trust (H3) highlights the trust deficit that brands must overcome when engaging in green marketing. Gen Z consumers are notably skeptical of greenwashing and demand proof rather than promises. Social media, with its capacity for transparency and verification, can help build green trust when used authentically. The finding that green trust mediates the social media green marketing-loyalty relationship aligns with research showing that green trust is a crucial mechanism in green consumption decisions.

Fourth, the mediating role of brand engagement (H4) reflects Gen Z's participatory nature. Social media green marketing that stimulates engagement—through interactive content, user-generated content opportunities, and community-building—creates psychological investment that translates into loyalty. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that engagement mediates the relationship between social media marketing activities and brand loyalty.

Fifth, the moderating role of environmental self-identity (H5) suggests that the effectiveness of social media green marketing varies based on consumers' self-concept. For Gen Z consumers who strongly identify as environmentally conscious, green marketing messages have amplified effects on loyalty. This finding extends research demonstrating environmental self-identity's moderating role in green consumption contexts.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it integrates the SOR framework, TPB, and signaling theory to develop a comprehensive model of social media green marketing's influence on brand loyalty, addressing a gap in the literature where these perspectives have typically been applied in isolation. Second, by identifying and testing three distinct mediating mechanisms—green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement—the study provides a nuanced understanding of how social media green marketing operates. This multi-mechanism approach reveals that different consumers may respond to green marketing through different pathways, offering a more complete picture than studies examining single mediators.

Third, the study contributes to the growing body of research on Generation Z consumer behavior by specifically examining how this cohort's distinctive characteristics—digital nativity, environmental consciousness, and participatory tendencies—shape their responses to green marketing on social media. Fourth, the finding regarding environmental self-identity as a moderator contributes to understanding individual-level differences in responsiveness to green marketing, suggesting that segmentation strategies based on environmental identity may be effective.

5.3 Practical Implications

For marketing practitioners and brand managers targeting Generation Z consumers, the findings offer sev-

eral actionable insights:

Prioritize authentic green storytelling. Gen Z consumers are sophisticated and skeptical; they can detect inauthentic green claims. Brands should use social media to communicate genuine sustainability efforts, including behind-the-scenes content, certifications, and transparent reporting on environmental impact.

Invest in building green brand image. Rather than treating green marketing as isolated campaigns, brands should strategically cultivate a coherent green brand identity across all social media touchpoints. Consistency between green messaging and actual practices is essential.

Foster engagement, not just awareness. Social media green marketing should be interactive and participatory, encouraging Gen Z consumers to engage with content, share their own sustainability stories, and participate in green initiatives.

Build trust through transparency. Given Gen Z's skepticism toward greenwashing, brands should use social media to provide verifiable evidence of their environmental claims, respond openly to consumer questions, and acknowledge areas for improvement.

Segment by environmental self-identity. Consumers who strongly identify as environmentally conscious may respond more strongly to green marketing. Brands can use social media analytics to identify and target these high-potential segments with tailored content.

Leverage influencer partnerships strategically. Social media influencers can effectively build green trust and positive green attitudes among Gen Z. However, influencer-brand alignment and authenticity are critical; partnerships perceived as inauthentic may backfire.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. While the hypothesized relationships are theoretically grounded and statistically supported, longitudinal research would provide stronger evidence of causality.

Second, the convenience sampling method and geographic focus may limit generalizability. Future research should employ probability sampling and cross-cultural comparisons to examine whether findings hold across different cultural and economic contexts.

Third, the study focused on general social media green marketing without distinguishing between different platform types (Instagram vs. Facebook vs. others) or content formats (influencer content vs. brand-generated content vs. user-generated content). Given that different platforms and content types may have differential effects, future research should examine these nuances.

Fourth, the study measured brand loyalty as a unified construct. Future research could examine differential effects on attitudinal versus behavioral loyalty, as these dimensions may respond differently to green marketing.

Fifth, while this study identified three mediating mechanisms, other potential mediators—such as brand love, green satisfaction, and perceived value—warrant investigation.

Sixth, the study did not examine potential negative outcomes of green marketing, such as heightened skepticism or backlash when consumers perceive greenwashing. Future research should explore these boundary conditions.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of social media green marketing on brand loyalty among Generation Z consumers, addressing a significant gap in the literature at the intersection of green marketing, social media marketing, and generational consumer behavior. Drawing on the SOR framework, TPB, and

signaling theory, the study developed and empirically tested a model incorporating green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement as mediating mechanisms, and environmental self-identity as a moderator.

The findings demonstrate that social media green marketing significantly enhances brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers, both directly and through multiple mediating pathways. Green brand image, green trust, and brand engagement each play important mediating roles, while environmental self-identity strengthens the overall effect. These results underscore the importance of authentic, transparent, and engaging green marketing communications on social media for building lasting brand relationships with environmentally conscious young consumers.

For brands navigating the sustainability transition, the implications are clear: social media green marketing is not merely a tactical communication tool but a strategic capability for building loyalty among the generation that will shape tomorrow's 消费 markets. Success requires not just green messaging, but the cultivation of green trust, the development of green brand image, and the fostering of genuine engagement—all anchored in authenticity and transparency.

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