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## **Impact of Green Brand Equity Dimensions on Green Purchase Intention of the Customers at the Supermarket Sector with Special Reference to Colombo District**

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### **A B S T R A C T**

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of green brand equity dimensions on the green purchase intention of the customers in the supermarket sector of Sri Lanka. The Supermarket sector of Sri Lanka is expanded attracting a huge customer base compared to the traditional stores. Green initiatives are focused on the modern retailing sector of Sri Lanka. Brand Equity is a key area in Brand Management and in academic research. Green brand equity is creating equity with respect to green instantiates. Brand equity dimensions are explored and brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are identified commonly. This study is focused on the impact of green brand awareness and association, Green perceived quality and Green brand loyalty on the green purchase intention of the customers in the supermarket sector with special reference to the Colombo district. Brand equity is the knowledge existing among educated and knowledgeable people. Knowledge and literacy rates are determined based on demographic factors of age, income, and educational level. Variables of Green brand equity of green brand awareness and association as an integrative variable, green perceived quality, and green brand loyalty are identified as independent variables and green purchase intention as the dependent variable. Customers with high awareness and association consider the rationale of sustainable branding rather than paying and indicated an insignificant positive relationship. Green perceived quality and green brand loyalty indicated a significant positive impact on green purchase intention. The findings of the study provide useful insights for managers in taking decisions on green branding.

**Keywords:** Green brand awareness and association, Green perceived quality, Green brand loyalty, Green purchase intention

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## **1. Introduction**

The concept of green marketing was first discussed in a seminar on “ecological marketing” organized by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1975 (Boztepe, 2012). AMA defined the concept of green marketing in three ways. First is the retailing definition of Green marketing focuses on the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally protected. Second is the social marketing definition which defined Green Marketing as the development and marketing of products designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality. The third is the environmental definition defined as Green Marketing as the efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns Choudhary & Gokarn (2013). The concept of Green marketing emerged in western however the force of “going green” is now extending to Asian countries (Lee, 2008). The green brand is one that offers a significant eco advantage and which appeals to those who are willing to make a green high priority. Positioning a brand as a “green brand” entails active communication and differentiation of the brand from its competitors through its environmentally sound attributes (Hartmann et al., 2005).

### **1.1. Research problem**

With the growing ecological issues such as globalization and environmental concern the customers' sustainability concerns increased. In Sri Lanka, there is a growing interest among the customers in the green aspect. According to Kotler & Keller (2012), brand equity is the added value endowed on products and services. Keller (1993) defined customer-based brand equity as the “effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” and conceptualized brand knowledge comprised of brand awareness and association. Aaker (1991) conceptualized the customer-based brand equity as a multidimensional concept as a set of five assets: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary assets, and the first four are considered as most important variables in the concept of brand equity Relying on Keller (1993) high brand equity levels are known to affect consumer preference and purchase intention, profit and share returns, market power and sustainable competitive advantage, brand extension and consumer willingness to pay premiums. There is a lack of knowledge and literature revealed about green brand equity in the supermarket sector of Sri Lanka. The green brand equity dimensions based on the multidimensional brand equity perspective are not researched under the green brand equity context. However, there is a new way that supermarkets are adapting green branding and engaging with different green initiatives and green practices to support their green branding in Sri Lanka leads to the question, ‘What is the Impact of the Green brand Equity dimensions on the green purchase intention of the customers at the Supermarket Sector of Sri Lanka?’

## **2. Literature review**

Papista et al., (2013) stated a green brand is “a specific set of brand attributes and benefits related to the reduced environmental impact of the brand and the respective consumer perception as being environmentally sound” (p. 76). Hartmann et al., (2005) identified a green brand identity as a specific set of brand attributes and benefits related to reducing the environmental impact of the brand and its perception as being environmentally sound. The environmental consciousness of the consumers is a great opportunity for organizations doing green branding. So that Companies can position their brands based on environmental functions, characteristics, ingredients, and other related benefits (Chang & Fong, 2010). Pflanz (2010) identified three categories of green brands; the first is defined as the brands which have greening as the core, the second group includes the brands which the greening integrated into

their core and the third includes brands that have green claims as to their guarantees. All three aspects are identified in the supermarket sector of Sri Lanka.

Modern Retailing sector in Sri Lanka: Modern Retailing is dominated by Supermarkets, departmental stores and Hypermarkets and modern retailers provide unique selling experiences to the customers (Wanninayake, 2012). A supermarket is a large retail store offering a variety of food, and households and is organized into departments and differs from traditional stores (Ushantha et al., 2014). The total percentage of supermarkets' contribution is 15 % of the industry and the rest is dominated by traditional stores (Wanninayake & Randiwela, 2007). There are over 300 supermarkets and dominant players in the industry are Cargills (Cargills Ceylon plc), Keells, (John Keells Holdings), Arpico supercenters (Richard Peiris) and others are small retail chains of Magna, Laughs SunUp, Crystal, etc. (Gajanayake et al., 2011).

## **2.1. Brand equity**

Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, it is a name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity is defined in the literature as added value endowed to products and services (Kotler & Keller, 1993) and the expression of the relationship between the organization offering and its customers (Hakala et al., 2012). Yoo, Donthu, & Lee (2000) developed two distinctive brand equity named overall brand equity and multidimensional brand equity which are measured using brand awareness, brand association as an integrative perspective, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. There are two perspectives of brand equity called the financial company-based perspective and the consumer-based perspective (Keller, 1993). Customer-based Brand Equity (CBBE) provides insight and a deeper understanding of consumer behavior which is essential to develop branding strategies (Christodoulides et al., 2009). Keller (1993) defined customer-based brand equity as the "effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" and conceptualized brand knowledge comprised of brand awareness and association. Aaker (1991) conceptualized customer-based brand equity as a multidimensional concept as a set of five assets: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary assets. Green Brand Equity is identified in the literature. Chen (2010) defined green brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities about green commitments and environmental concerns linked to a brand, its name, and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service (p. 313). Green marketing activities will reflect positively on the company's brand equity (Mourad & Ahamad, 2012). Chen (2010) conceptualized Green brand image, Green trust, and Green satisfaction as factors creating green brand equity. Green brand perceived value, Brand credibility, and Green brand image drive for green brand equity (Ng et al., (2014).

### *2.1.1. Green brand equity dimension*

Green Awareness and Association: Mourad & Ahmed (2012) identified this as "likelihood to recognize and recall the environmental features of the brand" (p. 523). Awareness is created with knowledge whereas environment knowledge is the knowledge of facts, concepts, and relationships concerning the natural environment and the ecosystems (Vazifehdoust et al., 2013). Environment knowledge has a significant impact on consumer's purchase intention (Kaufmann et al., 2012) providing information regarding green products, eco-labeling green messages, in order to get familiar with the green brands and involved with purchasing decisions (Tariq, 2014) green positioning, increased the knowledge and influence the purchase intension (Wu et al., 2019) awareness creates familiarity drives the intension for purchasing (Rizwan et

al., 2014). According to Chen (2010) green brand association is “extend to which consumers know about a green brand and how they feel and evaluate the green brand” (p. 107). In green marketing, attitude toward the environment and perception of the brand is held as two separate nodes in the memory (Akturan, 2018) when a brand positions itself with eco-friendly attributes, these two separated nodes become part of each other set of associations (Ng et al., 2014). According to Rios et al., (2006), in the context of environmental association created with attributes of the environmental performance of product-related which are the environmentally friendly chemical composition and non-product related which are packaging and recycling. A green brand can be associated with communication campaigns and advertising evoking environmental attributes (Shan et al., 2016). Green perceived Quality: Consumers’ perception on green aspects and good quality leads to the customer’s purchase intention of green products (Suhaily et al., 2020).

According to Chen et al., (2013), Green perceived quality is defined as “the customer’s judgment about a brand’s (or a product’s) overall environmental excellence or superiority” (p. 66). Unique quality attracts more customers (Zeithamal, 1988) creates long-term customer relationship and influence the purchase intention of the customers (Loureiro & Miranda, 2011). Green Brand Loyalty: Strong loyalty toward the brand with green aspects leads to the preference for the green brands (Panda et al., 2020)

According to Kang & Hur (2012), Green loyalty is defined as a “consumer’s commitment to repurchase or otherwise continue using a green brand” which also includes the repeated purchase of green products and services and word-of-mouth testimony (p. 308). Chang & Fong (2010) found green customer loyalty as “customer wanted to maintain a relationship with an institute which involved environmental or green concerns and committed to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product consistently in the future.

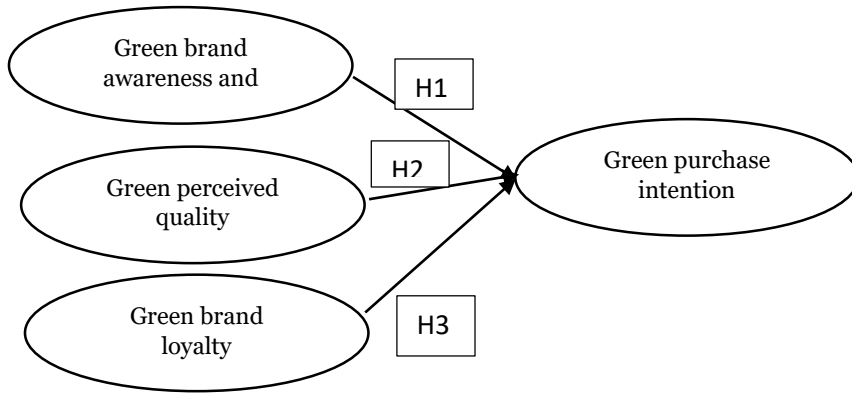
## **2.2 .Green purchase intention**

Chen & Chan (2013) defined Green purchase intention as “the likelihood that a consumer would buy a particular product resulting from his or her environmental needs” (p. 507). According to Akturan (2018), Green purchasing intention is the subjective probability that consumers will purchase green products. According to Rizwan et al., (2014) Green purchase intention is to “buy product or service which is less or not harmful for the society and environment or the internal willingness of people to buy less harmful and environmentally friendly products” (p. 292). Borin et al., (2013) considered consumers’ purchase intention of alternative green products namely new green products, recycled refurbished products, and products from companies that adopt green processes in their daily processes such as solar panels.

## **3. Methodology**

The conceptualization is based on the study done by Yoo et al., (2000), Akturan (2018) and (Mourad & Ahmed, 2012). The study done by Akturan (2018) is recent research based on Green brand equity and Green brand association. Considering Yoo et al., (2000) they found the Brand equity dimensions based on the studies done by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) which proposed brand equity dimensions comprised of perceived quality, brand loyalty, and Brand awareness and the brand association. However Akturan (2018) measured the Green brand association and Mourad & Ahmed (2012) measured the green brand awareness similarly to the study done by Yoo et al.,(2000) which measured brand equity dimension variables combining the brand awareness with the brand association. Kang & Hur (2012) conducted a study on green brand

loyalty and Chen, Lin & Chang (2013) perceived quality is determined. By analyzing the above studies, the conceptual model is proposed as follows.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

Sources: Yoo et al., (2000);Akturan (2018) ; Mourad & Ahmed (2012), Chen Lin & Chang (2013); Kang & Hur ( 2012) and Chen & Chang (2012)

**H1:** Green brand awareness and association have a significant positive impact on green purchase intension

**H2:** Green perceived Quality has a significant positive impact on green purchase intension

**H3:** Green Brand Loyalty has a significant positive impact on green purchase intension

**Table 1: Operationalization Table**

Variable	Indicator	Source
Green brand association and green brand awareness	Recognize due to environmental commitment	Yoo et al.,(2000) Akturan (2018) Mourad & Ahmed (2012)
	Awareness due to environmental reputation	
	Top of mind recall of environmental characteristics	
	Recall of environmental image of brand	
Green perceived quality	Ability to imagine the brand as one with environmental concern	Chen et al., (2013)
	Best benchmark with environmental concern	
	Reliable with respect to environmental consideration.	
	Excellence with respect to the environmental image	
Green Brand loyalty	Professional respect for environmental reputation	Kang & Hur (2012)
	Recommend brand to others as environmentally friendly	
	Always use this as environmentally friendly	
	Willing to pay more than other brands for environmental commitment	

Green purchase intention	Intend to purchase Expect to purchase Glad to purchase	Chen & Chang (2012),
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#### 4. Data Analysis

The deductive approach and quantitative technique are considered data analyzed by SPSS. Demographic data gather based on Socio-Economic Classification (SEC) conducted by the Survey Research Lanka (SRL).

**Table 2: Reliability Test**

	<b>Green brand Awareness and association</b>	<b>Green perceived quality</b>	<b>Green brand loyalty</b>
Chronbach's Alpha	0.826	0.779	0.689

Chronbach's Alpha value should be above 0.7 for identifying the internal consistency of the variables (Field, 2009). 0.826, 0.779 indicates the internal consistency indicating the values greater than 0.7. According to Malhotra (2010), a Cronbach alpha value above 0.6 indicates acceptable internal consistency. Since 0.68 is much closer to 0.7 and considering Malhotra's argument green brand loyalty is considered internally consistent. A significant value obtained for Green brand awareness and association, green brand loyalty, and Green perceived Quality is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 ( $0.000 < p=0.05$ ) therefore it was concluded that the variable is valid.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Green brand awareness and association</b>	<b>Green perceived quality</b>	<b>Green brand loyalty</b>
Mean	3.8224	3.65	3.9093
Standard Deviation	0.76547	0.78	0.8234

The highest mean value of 3.9093 is for green brand loyalty as the customers more agreed with the green brand loyalty indicators. High variance is indicated in green loyalty. A multiple regression model is run to determine the model fit. In regression analysis, various assumptions are made in order to create the "generalization" of the findings to a wider population since it is important to create the findings that are important for a wider population (Field, 2009). The predictor variable must be quantitative or categorical and the outcome variable has to be quantitative and unbound, predictors need some variation without zero. Effective multicollinearity should be absent where not having a perfect linear relationship among predictors. According to Bowerman & O'Connel (as cited in Field, 2009), Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is considered whether a predictor has a strong linear relationship with other predictors. Accordingly, a VIF value greater than 1 implies a bias on the established argument, and a tolerance level less than 0.1 have a problem. However, Menard (as cited in Field, 2009) indicates a tolerance level below 0.2 has a serious problem. In the model, the VIF values are 1.977, 1.740 and 1.630 respectively for green brand awareness and association, green perceived quality, and green brand loyalty which fulfills the condition. And the tolerance level is 0.506, 0.575 and 0.614 respectively for the variables which satisfy the condition and indicates that

multicollinearity is not an issue for the model. Durbin Watson values closer to 2 means the variables are uncorrelated and the value of 1.930 which is closer to the 2 indicates that the assumption is met in the model

**Table 4: Model Summary**

<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>F Change</b>	<b>Sig. F Change</b>
0.665 <sup>a</sup>	0.443	32.016	0.000

Explanatory power (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates the degree to which the variance of the dependent variable is explained by independent variables. Accordingly, 0.443 (43%) of the variance of the green purchase intention of the customers in the supermarket sector is explained by the green brand awareness and association, green perceived quality, and green brand loyalty. ANOVA model is shown that the regression model is significant since the significant level is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. The objective of this study is to identify the impact of each dimension of green brand equity on green purchase intention.

**Table 5: Coefficients of Variables**

<b>Model</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1 (Constant)	1.494		0.000
Green brand awareness and association.	0.15	0.172	0.074
Green perceived quality.	0.277	0.323	0.000
Green brand Loyalty.	0.234	0.289	0.001

b value indicates the degree of the dependent variable can be affected by a certain independent variable while other independent variables remain constant. The significance level which satisfies ( $p < 0.05$ ) is accepted as significant. Accordingly, Green brand awareness and association are insignificant as the b value is 0.074. Green perceived quality and green loyalty are significant with b values of 0.0000 and 0.001. Beta values obtained indicates a positive relationship among the variables.

#### **4.1 .Results and discussion**

According to Mourad & Ahmed (2012) brand awareness is studied separately with green brand preference and defined green awareness as likely to recognize and recall the environmental features of the brand. The study researcher revealed there is an insignificant relationship between green brand awareness and green brand preference. Akturan (2018) has identified green association impact on green brand equity and revealed green association has an impact on green brand equity. According to Suki (2013) consumers who are have some concern for the environment having a strong preference and purchasing that product. Previous studies were done by Yoo et al., (2000) that brand equity is analyzed from a multidimensional perspective by integrating green brand awareness and association since the association is stronger when exposed to communication created through awareness. According to Rizwan et al., (2014) study finds it is extremely stressed that consumers may be less concerned about green aspects however they will tend to purchase if better market communication is established. However, the study indicates the B coefficient indicates 0.15 which means having a positive impact however the independent variable is not significant since 0.074 which is not less than 0.05.

This is consistent with the findings of Mourad & Ahamed (2021) identified the insignificant relationship between green awareness and green brand preference. In the Sri Lankan context, this is insignificant due to the facts of high literacy of consumers. The reason for the finding could be the High Literacy rate and the educational background of Sri Lankans compared to other developing countries. According to the Human Development Report (UNDP, 2020), Sri Lanka obtained 0.780 which is above the other South Asian countries and developing countries. With high literacy consumers are more rational based and focused on the fact whether the supermarkets are really focusing on green aspects with sustainability perspectives rather than obtaining commercial gains. Chen, Lin & Chang (2013) the green perceived quality has a positive impact on positive word of mouth which indicated customers are attracted when having good perceived quality. Perceived quality delivers value to the customer giving them a purchase reason since that differentiates the brand from the other competitors (Zeithamal, 1998). B coefficient of 0.277 and significant level is 0.000 ( $P < 0.05$ ) indicates green purchase intention is having a significant positive impact on green purchase intention. Green brand loyalty is having many antecedents such as repeat purchases, and positive word of mouth (Kang & Hur, 2012). In the study conducted by Chang & Fong (2010) green loyalty is created with green quality, green cooperative image and green satisfaction. (Yoo et al., 2000) found that brand loyalty has a positive impact on the purchase intention of the customers. The B coefficient of green brand loyalty is 0.234 and the significance value is 0.001 ( $P < 0.05$ ) brand loyalty has a significant positive impact on green purchase intention. Loyal customers contribute towards spreading positive word of mouth, are willing to pay more always use the supermarket from other competitive supermarkets

## 5. Conclusion

The study it is found that green brand awareness and association is not having a significant impact on green purchase intention. current customers believe the green aspect is a kind of marketing implication. It is important if Managers could focus on raising the green brand equity through a proper truthful communication platform and reliable green initiatives. The green perceived quality has a positive significant impact on green purchase intention. This could lead the managers to improve the quality aspects of respect to the environmental attributes which brings more customer's attention and that could be able to uplift the profits through purchase intension which becomes actual purchase in the future. Green brand loyalty has a significant positive impact on green purchase intention. Creating a loyal customer base is important to improve the positive word of mouth, repurchasing, and willingness to pay more. When the customers become loyal because of the green aspects that lead to the purchase intention of the customers. Focusing on a limited market segment restricted to the Colombo district is a limitation of the study. In future studies the same study could be done in non-urban areas with the participation of more respondents.

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