

# The Influence of Digital Marketing on Generation Z's Purchase Intention Toward Green Products: The Mediating Roles of Green Brand Trust and Brand Image at The Body Shop Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper examines the influence of digital marketing strategy on Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia, with green brand trust and brand image positioned as mediating variables. The study develops an integrated conceptual framework grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework and Signalling Theory to explain how digital marketing activities shape consumer behavioral intentions through psychological mechanisms. In this framework, digital marketing strategy functions as the external stimulus, while green brand trust and brand image represent internal organismic responses that influence purchase intention as the behavioral outcome. The paper also proposes both parallel and serial mediation relationships between green brand trust and brand image in explaining sustainable consumer behavior among Generation Z. The conceptual analysis suggests that credible and sustainability-oriented digital marketing communication can strengthen consumer trust, enhance positive brand image, and ultimately increase purchase intention toward environmentally friendly products. Furthermore, green brand trust is proposed as a stronger foundational mechanism that subsequently reinforces brand image. This study contributes to the green marketing and consumer behavior literature by offering an integrated conceptual model that combines cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions within the context of sustainable digital marketing. The framework also provides managerial insights for ethical brands in designing authentic digital communication strategies to engage environmentally conscious Generation Z consumers in emerging markets.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, green brand trust, brand image, purchase intention, Generation Z, sustainable products

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, global consumption patterns have increasingly shifted toward sustainability due to rising environmental concerns, stricter regulatory pressures, and growing consumer awareness of climate-related issues (Kotler et al., 2021; UNEP, 2023). As a result, consumers are no longer guided solely by price and functional attributes, but also by ethical considerations and environmental responsibility embedded in products and corporate practices (Peattie & Belz, 2018). Within this evolving landscape, Generation Z has emerged as a highly influential consumer segment. As digital natives, they are highly active on social media and

tend to integrate environmental values, ethical concerns, and identity expression into their consumption decisions (Priporas et al., 2020; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Their strong reliance on digital platforms also makes them particularly responsive to brand communication in online environments, especially in relation to sustainability-related messages.

In parallel, digital marketing has developed into a strategic mechanism that goes beyond promotion, enabling interactive engagement, personalized communication, and relationship building between brands and consumers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Tuten & Solomon, 2020). Through social media ecosystems, brands can deliver sustainability narratives in more immersive and persuasive ways, shaping consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions. However, despite the rapid growth of green marketing practices, there remains a critical gap in the literature. First, studies examining how digital marketing contributes to the formation of green brand trust in integrated models remain limited, particularly in the context of contemporary digital platforms such as influencer marketing and short-form video content. Second, research simultaneously examining green brand trust and brand image as dual mediating mechanisms—especially in a sequential structure—remains underexplored. Third, empirical evidence from Indonesia’s green cosmetics sector is still limited, even though the market is rapidly expanding and highly relevant for Generation Z consumers. Responding to these gaps, this study focuses on the influence of digital marketing strategy on Generation Z’s purchase intention toward green products. The Body Shop Indonesia is positioned as a proposed empirical context, considering its strong association with ethical branding, sustainability initiatives, and digital engagement strategies in the beauty industry.

Despite this growing importance, the green product market continues to face information asymmetries that complicate consumer decision-making. The proliferation of greenwashing—where brands exaggerate or fabricate environmental claims—has eroded consumer confidence and produced widespread scepticism toward sustainability messaging (Isac et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025; Persakis et al., 2025). In this opaque informational environment, two psychological constructs assume central explanatory significance: green brand trust and brand image. Green brand trust captures the consumer's confidence that a brand will honour its environmental commitments and refrain from deceptive practices (Chen & Chang, 2019; Handriana et al., 2024). Brand image, in turn, encapsulates the cumulative associations, perceptions, and meanings that consumers form about a brand through repeated exposure to its communications, products, and corporate behaviour (Keller, 2019; Tan et al., 2022). Both constructs have been shown to mitigate consumer uncertainty, foster loyalty, and ultimately stimulate purchase intention (Konuk, 2021; Nurlatifah et al., 2025).

Although the literature on green marketing and consumer behaviour has expanded significantly, several substantive research gaps remain. First, scholarship that explicitly links digital marketing strategies to the formation of green brand trust remains comparatively limited, particularly in studies that account for the distinctive logics of contemporary digital ecosystems such as influencer marketing, short-form video platforms, and algorithmic personalisation (Aldaihani et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2025). Second, research that simultaneously incorporates both green brand trust and brand image as parallel mediators within a single, theoretically integrated framework is conspicuously rare, leaving the relative magnitudes and complementary roles of these mechanisms underspecified (Noor et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025). Third, the predominant geographical focus on developed markets and a handful of Asian economies—principally India, Pakistan, China, and Vietnam has produced an underrepresentation of the Indonesian context, especially in the rapidly evolving green beauty and personal care segment (Frontiers in Sustainability, 2025; Destiani & Qadriah, 2025). Fourth, while The Body Shop has long been emblematic of ethical and sustainable

beauty branding (Lestari & Rakhma, 2021; Latterly, 2025), few studies have rigorously examined how its digital communication translates into Generation Z purchase intention through the parallel mechanisms of trust and image.

Building on these gaps, the present conceptual paper proposes an integrative model that examines the influence of digital marketing strategy on Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products, with green brand trust and brand image positioned as both parallel and serial mediators. The empirical setting is The Body Shop Indonesia, a brand that has consistently positioned itself around ethical sourcing, cruelty-free formulation, refillable packaging, and Community Fair Trade partnerships (The Body Shop, 2024; Purwanti et al., 2024). The proposed framework is grounded in established behavioral and communication theories, where digital marketing functions as the external stimulus, green brand trust and brand image operate as internal psychological mechanisms, and purchase intention represents the behavioral response. Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973; Connelly et al., 2011) is also used as a complementary lens to explain how transparent digital communication reduces information asymmetry related to sustainability claims.

The contributions of this paper are threefold. Theoretically, it advances the literature on digital green marketing by conceptualising the dual mediating roles of trust and brand image, thereby integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioural pathways into a unified framework. Methodologically, it provides a rigorous foundation for subsequent empirical testing using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), a widely used approach in contemporary marketing research involving latent constructs (Hair et al., 2022). Practically, the framework offers actionable insights for marketing managers in developing credible and engaging digital narratives that foster authentic relationships with environmentally conscious Generation Z consumers in emerging markets.

Despite the growing body of literature on green marketing, digital marketing, and consumer behavior, a critical gap remains in the integration of sequential mediation mechanisms within Generation Z contexts, particularly in emerging markets such as Indonesia (An & Ngo, 2025; Liu et al., 2025). Existing studies predominantly examine green brand trust and brand image either as independent mediators or as parallel mediating constructs (Noor et al., 2022; Nurlatifah et al., 2025). However, limited research has explicitly investigated the sequential (serial) mediation pathway in which green brand trust acts as a foundational psychological mechanism that subsequently shapes brand image before influencing purchase intention (Hokky & Bernarto, 2021; Yang, 2024). This gap is particularly evident in digital marketing environments, where continuous exposure to social media content may first build credibility (trust) and only then translate into structured cognitive and affective brand perceptions (image) (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Kumar et al., 2025). Furthermore, empirical studies focusing on Generation Z in Indonesia remain scarce, despite this cohort being highly active in digital ecosystems and increasingly influential in shaping sustainable consumption trends (Mirah & Martini, 2025; Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). Therefore, there is a need for a more integrated conceptual model that captures both parallel and sequential mediation effects within a single framework to better explain how digital marketing stimuli are transformed into green purchase intentions (An & Ngo, 2025; Sandeep et al., 2025).

An integrated conceptual framework is increasingly required to explain how digital marketing stimuli can generate green purchase intention through both parallel and sequential mediation mechanisms (An & Ngo, 2025; Sandeep et al., 2025). Although previous international studies have started to acknowledge possible sequential links between green brand trust and brand image, empirical testing of this serial mediation structure is still relatively scarce, particularly within emerging economies (Noor et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025). Existing literature commonly treats brand trust and brand image as independent or parallel mediating variables, rather than examining whether a causal order exists between them (Noor et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025). In Indonesia, research on green marketing and digital consumer

behaviour is still dominated by simplified models such as direct effects or single mediation, while more complex relationships like trust leading to image and then to purchase intention are rarely investigated (Destiani & Qadriah, 2025; Sari & Novita Sari, 2025). Consequently, limited empirical evidence is available to explain how early perceptions of credibility created by digital marketing evolve into stronger brand associations before influencing buying intention.

This issue becomes more critical in the context of Generation Z in Indonesia, as their purchasing decisions are typically driven by multi-layered cognitive and psychological processes rather than simple linear evaluation (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). Moreover, studies that focus specifically on sequential mediation in green cosmetics or ethical beauty sectors in Indonesia remain very limited. Therefore, understanding how sustainability communication is processed over time—starting from trust formation, followed by brand image development, and ending with purchase intention—remains an important research gap that needs to be addressed (Liu et al., 2025; Persakis et al., 2025).

Therefore, to address the identified gaps in the literature regarding the limited examination of sequential mediation mechanisms and the underexplored integration of green brand trust and brand image within digital green marketing models, this study aims to develop and test a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains how digital marketing stimuli translate into Generation Z's green purchase intention through both parallel and sequential psychological processes (An & Ngo, 2025; Wang et al., 2023; Khurana et al., 2025). Specifically, the study seeks to investigate the direct effect of digital marketing strategy on purchase intention, the mediating roles of green brand trust and brand image both independently and in parallel, as well as the sequential pathway in which green brand trust strengthens brand image, which subsequently enhances purchase intention (Chen & Chang, 2019; Keller, 2019; Nurlatifah et al., 2025).

This investigation is situated within the contextual relevance of The Body Shop Indonesia, a leading ethical cosmetics brand recognized for its long-standing commitment to cruelty-free practices, sustainable sourcing, and environmental activism (The Body Shop, 2024; Purwanti et al., 2024). Rather than being treated merely as an empirical setting, The Body Shop serves as a contextual lens through which the dynamics of sustainability-oriented digital communication can be meaningfully interpreted, particularly in relation to Generation Z consumers who are highly responsive to authenticity, ethical credibility, and digitally mediated brand interactions (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). In this way, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital sustainability communication can shape consumer psychological mechanisms and behavioral intentions in the green product market (S-O-R framework: Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Wang et al., 2023).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Foundation: The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Framework**

A detailed explanation of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework has been relocated to this Literature Review section in order to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the study and to ensure a clearer separation between theoretical discussion and research design. This structure allows the conceptual model to be more firmly grounded in established theory before being operationalized in the proposed research framework.

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) paradigm, originally formulated within environmental psychology by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), provides a parsimonious yet powerful lens for understanding how external marketing stimuli are transduced into observable consumer behaviours through internal psychological states. Within this

framework, the stimulus (S) refers to environmental cues that act upon the consumer, the organism (O) denotes the cognitive and affective evaluative processes that mediate exposure to those cues, and the response (R) captures the resulting behavioural outcomes such as approach, avoidance, or purchase (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Jacoby, 2002). The framework has since been widely adopted in marketing scholarship to explain how marketing-controlled stimuli translate into purchase-related behaviours through trust, attitude, perceived value, and similar mediating constructs (Wang et al., 2023; Khurana et al., 2025).

Recent applications of S-O-R have explicitly incorporated digital marketing activities as stimuli that activate organism states such as green trust, perceived authenticity, and emotional engagement, which in turn shape sustainable purchase intention (Erensoy et al., 2024; An & Ngo, 2025; *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2024). For example, Wang et al. (2023) extended the S-O-R logic to green fashion consumption and found that green trust played a significant mediating role between marketing stimuli and sustainable purchase decisions. Similarly, Khurana et al. (2025) employed the S-O-R-based model in green cosmetics to demonstrate that influencer credibility activates brand trust, which subsequently drives purchase intention and willingness to pay a premium. These developments substantiate the suitability of S-O-R as a unifying theoretical structure for the present conceptual model, where digital marketing acts as the stimulus, green brand trust and brand image function as parallel organism states, and purchase intention represents the response.

The S-O-R framework is further reinforced by Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973; Connelly et al., 2011), which posits that in conditions of information asymmetry, such as those that pervade the green product category, well-crafted brand signals reduce uncertainty and enable consumers to infer underlying quality and credibility. Digital marketing, when transparent and consistently aligned with verifiable practices, functions as a positive signal that strengthens trust; conversely, perceived greenwashing acts as a negative signal that undermines it (Rahman et al., 2025; MDPI, 2026). The combination of S-O-R and Signalling Theory, therefore, provides both a behavioural and an informational foundation for the present model.

### **Digital Marketing Strategy in Sustainability Communication**

Digital marketing constitutes the deployment of digital channels—social media, search platforms, e-commerce ecosystems, email, and content hubs—to deliver targeted, measurable, and interactive brand experiences (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Beyond its promotional function, digital marketing now operates as a strategic infrastructure for relationship-building, behavioural data collection, and cocreative consumer engagement (Kotler et al., 2021; Tuten & Solomon, 2020). Within sustainability communication, digital marketing assumes a particularly central role because the credibility of green claims depends substantially on transparent, multi-channel evidence that can be verified by socially networked consumers (Aldaihani et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2025).

Among the various dimensions of digital marketing, Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) have attracted growing scholarly attention. Following Kim and Ko (2019), SMMA are typically conceptualised across five to six dimensions: interactivity, informativeness, customisation, trendiness, entertainment, and electronic word-of-mouth. Empirical work has consistently shown that these dimensions enhance brand-related perceptions, including perceived quality, perceived value, and trust (An & Ngo, 2025; Erensoy et al., 2024). In the cosmetics sector specifically, An and Ngo (2025) demonstrated that SMMA significantly elevated Generation Z's perceived quality ( $\beta = 0.726$ ) and perceived value ( $\beta = 0.503$ ), thereby translating into stronger purchase intentions and amplified eWOM. Within the green product context, social media further allows brands to articulate sustainability narratives through rich multimedia formats, interactive Q&A, and collaborations with credible influencers, which jointly enhance environmental awareness and

ethical brand associations (Putri et al., 2024; *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2024). However, the digital amplification of brand messaging is a double-edged instrument. Where claims are exaggerated or unsupported by demonstrable practices, digital marketing can intensify scepticism and accelerate negative word-of-mouth, particularly among informationally savvy consumers (Persakis et al., 2025; Khandai et al., 2025). The implication for green marketing communication is therefore clear: digital strategy must be anchored in substantive sustainability practices and consistent narrative architectures to function as a positive signal rather than a vehicle for greenwashing.

### **Generation Z as Sustainable Digital Consumers**

Generation Z is increasingly recognised as the demographic vanguard of sustainable consumption. Having matured within a media environment saturated by climate discourse, social activism, and brand-led purpose campaigns, this cohort exhibits a distinctive value-driven decision-making logic that integrates ethical, environmental, and identity-related considerations (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Mirah & Martini, 2025). Comparative generational studies indicate that Generation Z consumers are more likely than predecessors to assess brand authenticity, scrutinise corporate behaviour, and reward firms that demonstrate alignment between their stated values and operational practices (Alruthaya et al., 2023; Kajabnark, 2025).

Several behavioural patterns are particularly salient. First, Generation Z relies heavily on user-generated content, peer reviews, and influencer-mediated narratives rather than traditional advertising, treating authenticity as an essential precondition for trust (Pratiwi et al., 2025; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Second, Generation Z displays acute sensitivity to greenwashing, with research indicating that perceived deceptive sustainability claims significantly reduce purchase intention and erode brand loyalty (Di Pillo et al., 2025; Lu et al., 2022). Third, the cohort exhibits a strong preference for brands that operationalise sustainability through tangible practices—such as cruelty-free formulation, responsible sourcing, recyclable packaging, and refill schemes—rather than abstract claims (Agustina et al., 2024; Destiani & Qadriah, 2025). Fourth, the cohort's purchasing decisions are increasingly shaped through interactive digital touchpoints, including TikTok, Instagram, and community-based platforms, where peer validation and identity expression coalesce with consumption behaviour (Putri et al., 2024).

Despite these tendencies, the well-documented attitude–behaviour gap in green consumption remains a persistent feature among Generation Z consumers, where pro-environmental attitudes do not always translate into corresponding purchase decisions due to barriers such as price premiums, perceived quality compromises, and brand credibility concerns (Mirah & Martini, 2025; Sandeep et al., 2025). Bridging this gap requires marketing communications that simultaneously construct trust and image—two psychological constructs that anchor the present conceptual model.

### **Green Products and Sustainable Consumption Behaviour**

Green products are typically defined as offerings designed to minimise environmental impact across their life cycle, encompassing responsible sourcing, low-emission production, recyclable or biodegradable packaging, and end-of-life disposability considerations (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2023). The expansion of green product categories particularly in food, fashion, personal care, and household reflects a broader shift in which sustainability has migrated from a peripheral marketing claim to a core dimension of corporate strategy (Sari & Novita Sari, 2025; Perret et al., 2025). For consumers, green

products signal both functional benefits and value-laden meanings, including environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and personal identity expression (Confente et al., 2020).

Within the cosmetics segment, the green product category has experienced particularly rapid expansion, driven by health-conscious consumers, regulatory pressure on chemical formulations, and the growing influence of younger generations who prioritise ethical beauty (Limbu & Ahamed, 2023; *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 2025). Practices such as eco-labelling, transparent ingredient disclosure, and green branding have been shown to substantively shape consumer perceptions and purchase behaviour (Sari & Novita Sari, 2025; Tan et al., 2022). The Body Shop occupies an emblematic position in this segment, having pioneered ethical beauty since 1976 through cruelty-free formulation, fair-trade sourcing, refillable packaging, and active campaigning against animal testing (The Body Shop, 2024; Purwanti et al., 2024). Its long-standing programmes—such as Community Fair Trade and Forever Against Animal Testing—provide a robust foundation for green brand trust and a coherent brand image grounded in ethical advocacy (Latterly, 2025)

### **Green Brand Trust**

Green brand trust refers to the consumer's willingness to rely on a brand based on the credibility, integrity, and demonstrated ability of that brand to fulfil its environmental commitments (Chen & Chang, 2019). Distinct from generic brand trust, green brand trust is specifically anchored in the consumer's evaluation of the brand's sustainability performance and the consistency between its environmental claims and operational practices (Handriana et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025). Within an environment where greenwashing threatens to erode confidence in sustainability messaging, green brand trust functions as a critical psychological resource that reduces perceived risk and facilitates purchase decisions (Isac et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025).

Empirical research consistently establishes the role of green brand trust as a key antecedent of purchase intention. In the cosmetics sector, Limbu and Ahamed (2023) demonstrated that green trust significantly elevates purchase intention and repurchase behaviour, while Handriana et al. (2024) showed that green perceived quality and consumer satisfaction shape green trust, which in turn drives long-term commitment to ecologically responsible cosmetic brands. In digital contexts, social media marketing has been shown to significantly enhance green trust, which subsequently mediates the relationship between marketing stimuli and eco-friendly purchase intention (*Frontiers in Psychology*, 2024). Conversely, Supryanita et al. (2025) and Persakis et al. (2025) document the corrosive effect of perceived greenwashing on green trust, with downstream consequences for brand loyalty and purchase intention. These findings collectively underscore the centrality of green brand trust as both an outcome of credible digital marketing and a precursor of pro-environmental behaviour.

### **Brand Image**

Brand image is conceptualised as the constellation of perceptions, beliefs, and associations that consumers hold about a brand, formed through cumulative exposure to its products, communications, and corporate behaviour (Keller, 2019). A strong brand image generates competitive advantage by enhancing recognition, differentiation, and emotional resonance, all of which feed into elevated loyalty and purchase intention (Cardoso et al., 2022; Nurlatifah et al., 2025). In the contemporary marketplace, brand image is no longer constructed solely through firm-controlled communications; rather, it emerges from the interaction between corporate messaging, consumer-generated content, and influencer narratives circulating across digital platforms (Aldaihani et al., 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2025).

Within sustainability marketing, green brand image a specific facet of brand image associated with environmental responsibility has been shown to play a decisive role in

shaping consumer evaluations and behaviour (Tan et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2024). Thamara et al. (2025) found that green marketing significantly strengthens brand image, while Khansa and Sigit (2024) confirmed a positive and significant effect of green marketing strategy on brand image and purchase decisions in Indonesia. In the case of The Body Shop, Lestari and Rakhma (2021) demonstrated that green marketing and green brand image jointly shape consumer attitudes and reinforce purchase intention. The cumulative evidence suggests that brand image operates as a parallel cognitive-affective mechanism through which digital marketing stimuli are transformed into purchase intention, complementing the role of green brand trust.

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention denotes the consumer's psychological readiness or planned likelihood to acquire a particular product or service in the foreseeable future (Kotler & Keller, 2021). It represents a key behavioural antecedent that bridges attitudinal evaluations and actual purchase behaviour, and is therefore widely employed as a proximal outcome variable in consumer research (Ajzen, 1991; Wulansari et al., 2025). Within green consumption studies, purchase intention captures the consumer's willingness to choose environmentally responsible alternatives despite potential trade-offs in price, convenience, or perceived performance (Mirah & Martini, 2025; Alhomaid, 2025).

In digital marketing contexts, purchase intention is increasingly shaped by mechanisms that are unique to networked environments, including electronic word-of-mouth, peer reviews, influencer endorsements, live streaming, and algorithmically curated content (Bagas et al., 2023; Lou & Yuan, 2019). For Generation Z specifically, the resonance of authentic brand storytelling, influencer credibility, and value-laden communication is particularly pronounced, as their decision-making frequently integrates utilitarian, hedonic, and ethical considerations (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2025). In the green cosmetics segment, purchase intention has been associated with multiple antecedents including environmental concern, perceived value, brand credibility, and resistance to greenwashing (Limbu & Ahamed, 2023; Di Pillo et al., 2025), all of which reinforce the importance of trust and image as proximal mediators.

### **The Body Shop in the Indonesian Market Context**

The Body Shop occupies a distinctive position in the Indonesian beauty market as a brand that has long been synonymous with ethical and sustainable cosmetics. Founded in 1976 by Anita Roddick, the brand has cultivated a global identity grounded in cruelty-free product testing, naturally inspired ingredients, refillable packaging schemes, and Community Fair Trade partnerships (The Body Shop, 2024; Latterly, 2025). In Indonesia, where Generation Z constitutes a substantial share of the consumer base for personal care and is increasingly attentive to ethical brand attributes, The Body Shop's positioning resonates with the cohort's value-driven orientation (Mirah & Martini, 2025; Destiani & Qadriah, 2025). Initiatives such as 'Bring Back Our Bottles' and the Youth Collective Council illustrate how the brand operationalises sustainability through participatory, community-anchored programmes that align with Generation Z's preference for authentic engagement (Purwanti et al., 2024).

Despite its strong heritage, The Body Shop has navigated periods of organisational turbulence in recent years, including ownership transitions and store closures in some markets (Happi, 2024). Such episodes underscore the importance of dynamic digital communication strategies capable of reinforcing brand trust and image during periods of structural change. For the Indonesian market, where digitally native Generation Z consumers form a critical

demographic, the strategic challenge is to ensure that digital marketing translates the brand's ethical heritage into contemporary, credible, and emotionally engaging narratives that strengthen both green brand trust and brand image. This positioning makes The Body Shop a particularly fitting empirical context for investigating the proposed conceptual model.

### **Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework**

Building on the literature review, this section articulates eight propositions that link digital marketing strategy to Generation Z's purchase intention through the parallel and serial mediating mechanisms of green brand trust and brand image. The propositions are anchored in S-O-R logic: digital marketing functions as the stimulus, green brand trust and brand image jointly constitute the organism states, and purchase intention represents the response. A serial mediation pathway is also proposed, in which trust acts as a precursor to image.

#### **H1: Digital Marketing Strategy and Purchase Intention**

Within the S-O-R framework, digital marketing strategy operates as a salient external stimulus that directly shapes behavioural outcomes when its content is perceived as relevant, credible, and persuasive. Empirical evidence from the green consumption literature confirms that digitally mediated marketing particularly through social media exerts a significant positive effect on purchase intention (An & Ngo, 2025; Alhomaid, 2025; Wulansari et al., 2025). For Generation Z, whose information environments are dominated by digital touchpoints, the immediacy and interactivity of digital content render it a primary determinant of purchase consideration (Pratiwi et al., 2025). The cumulative evidence supports the proposition that digital marketing exerts a direct positive effect on purchase intention even before the activation of mediating organism states.

**H1:** Digital marketing strategy has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia.

#### **H2: Digital Marketing Strategy and Green Brand Trust**

Drawing on Signalling Theory, digital marketing communications that consistently and transparently articulate environmental commitments operate as positive signals that reduce information asymmetry and accumulate consumer trust over time (Connelly et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2025). Recent empirical work indicates that green advertising storytelling, transparent eco-labelling, and credible influencer collaborations significantly enhance green brand trust (Kumar et al., 2025; *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2024). Conversely, communications perceived as exaggerated or inauthentic damage trust and accelerate brand scepticism (Persakis et al., 2025). Where digital marketing is grounded in verifiable sustainability practices—as is the case with The Body Shop's Community Fair Trade and refill programmes—the resulting signal is interpreted as credible and progressively builds trust.

**H2:** Digital marketing strategy has a positive and significant influence on green brand trust among Generation Z consumers of The Body Shop Indonesia.

#### **H3: Digital Marketing Strategy and Brand Image**

Brand image is constructed through cumulative exposure to brand communications, especially in environments where information density is high. Digital marketing—through coherent visual identity, narrative consistency, and value-laden storytelling—functions as a primary mechanism through which brand image is shaped in the contemporary marketplace (Keller, 2019; Aldaihani et al., 2024). Empirical studies in the Indonesian context confirm that digitally executed marketing campaigns significantly enhance brand image, particularly when the content is perceived as relevant to the target cohort's values (Khansa & Sigit, 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2025). For Generation Z, whose exposure to The Body Shop's brand communications occurs predominantly through Instagram, TikTok, and e-commerce

platforms, the impact of digital marketing on brand image is expected to be particularly pronounced.

**H3:** Digital marketing strategy has a positive and significant influence on the brand image of The Body Shop Indonesia among Generation Z consumers.

#### **H4: Green Brand Trust and Purchase Intention**

Green brand trust functions as a psychological safeguard that reduces consumers' perceived risk in conditions of information asymmetry, thereby facilitating the conversion of attitudinal favourability into purchase intention (Chen & Chang, 2019; Limbu & Ahamed, 2023). Recent studies in the green cosmetics context demonstrate that green brand trust exerts a substantial positive influence on purchase intention, with Noor et al. (2022) reporting a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.496$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). Isac et al. (2025) further show that green brand trust mediates the negative effects of greenwashing perceptions, reinforcing its role as a buffering mechanism. For Generation Z consumers—who tend to be highly attentive to brand authenticity—green brand trust is expected to translate directly into stronger purchase intention.

**H4:** Green brand trust has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia.

#### **H5: Brand Image and Purchase Intention**

Brand image shapes consumer evaluations by activating emotional, symbolic, and identity-related associations that elevate perceived value and preference (Keller, 2019; Tan et al., 2022). A robust body of empirical evidence indicates that brand image exerts a significant positive effect on purchase intention, both directly and through complementary mechanisms such as perceived value and brand credibility (Nguyen et al., 2025; Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). In the green cosmetics segment, a strong green brand image has been associated with enhanced sustainable consumption behaviour, reflecting the deep alignment between brand meanings and consumer self-concept (Watson et al., 2024; Lestari & Rakhma, 2021). Generation Z, in particular, is responsive to brand images that communicate ethical credibility and lifestyle resonance.

**H5:** Brand image has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia.

#### **H6: Green Brand Trust as Mediator of Digital Marketing on Purchase Intention**

Within the S-O-R logic, green brand trust constitutes an internal organism state that channels the impact of external digital marketing stimuli into behavioural responses. Recent empirical work substantiates this mediating role: Li and Chen (2025) demonstrate that brand trust mediates the influence of ESG practices on green purchase intention, while Alhomaïd (2025) confirms that green brand trust serves as a partial mediator in the green marketing–purchase intention relationship. The *Frontiers in Psychology* (2024) study further reports that green trust functions as a strong mediator (indirect effect = 0.306) in the link between social media marketing and eco-friendly purchase intention, exceeding the mediating effect of perceived information usefulness. Hence, digital marketing is expected to influence purchase intention not only directly but also indirectly through the activation of green brand trust.

**H6:** Green brand trust positively mediates the relationship between digital marketing strategy and Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia.

### **H7: Brand Image as Mediator of Digital Marketing on Purchase Intention**

Brand image, similarly conceptualised as an organism state, mediates the relationship between marketing stimuli and behavioural responses by translating exposure into structured cognitive-affective associations (Keller, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2025). Empirical research provides consistent support for this mechanism. Li and Shan (2025) found that perceived value mediates the impact of green advertising on purchase intention, while studies recommended by ICAME (2024) explicitly call for testing brand image as a mediator within green marketing models targeted at Generation Z. In the Indonesian context, Pratiwi et al. (2025) and Nurlatifah et al. (2025) provide consistent evidence that brand image mediates the effect of social media marketing on purchase intention. Brand image is therefore proposed as a complementary mediator alongside green brand trust.

**H7:** Brand image positively mediates the relationship between digital marketing strategy and Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia.

### **H8: Serial Mediation of Green Brand Trust and Brand Image**

Beyond their individual mediating effects, green brand trust and brand image are conceptually interconnected in a sequential mediation mechanism. Green brand trust functions as a foundational cognitive construct that, once established, strengthens and stabilises brand image by enhancing the credibility of brand-related associations (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Cardoso et al., 2022). Empirical studies support this directional relationship, showing that brand trust significantly contributes to the formation of brand image (Hokky & Bernarto, 2021; Nurlatifah et al., 2025), while perceptions of greenwashing weaken brand image through the erosion of trust (Yang, 2024).

In the context of this study, digital marketing strategy is expected to enhance green brand trust, which subsequently strengthens brand image and ultimately increases Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia. This sequential relationship reflects a serial mediation pathway, where trust acts as a prerequisite mechanism that enables the formation of a more favourable and stable brand image, particularly in environments characterised by high information uncertainty and greenwashing risk.

**H8:** Green brand trust and brand image serially mediate the relationship between digital marketing strategy and Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia, such that digital marketing enhances green brand trust, which strengthens brand image, and subsequently increases purchase intention.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 integrates the eight hypotheses into a coherent S-O-R-based structure. Digital marketing strategy is positioned as the external stimulus, while green brand trust and brand image function as parallel and serially linked organism states. Purchase intention represents the behavioural response. The framework simultaneously captures three pathways: (i) the direct effect of digital marketing on purchase intention; (ii) the parallel mediating effects of green brand trust and brand image; and (iii) the serial mediation pathway in which trust strengthens image, which in turn elevates purchase intention. This structure advances prior research by integrating constructs that have typically been examined in isolation and by explicitly modelling the sequential interrelation between trust and image.

## **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Proposed Research Method**

As this study adopts a conceptual approach, The Body Shop Indonesia is not positioned as a direct empirical object, but rather as a proposed research context for future

studies intended to empirically validate the conceptual framework (Hair et al., 2022). Accordingly, this section is designed to provide a methodological guideline that may support future empirical investigations (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Future studies are recommended to employ a quantitative cross-sectional research design involving Generation Z consumers in Indonesia who have interacted with or purchased products from The Body Shop and have been exposed to the company's digital marketing activities through social media and e-commerce platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (An & Ngo, 2025). Respondents may be selected using purposive sampling techniques based on criteria associated with Generation Z demographics and previous engagement with the brand's digital communication activities (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

The proposed variables can be operationalised using established multi-item measurement scales adapted from previous studies. Digital marketing strategy may be measured through dimensions including interactivity, informativeness, personalisation, entertainment, trendiness, and electronic word-of-mouth, following the framework proposed by Kim and Ko (2019) as well as An and Ngo (2025). Green brand trust may be adapted from the scales developed by Chen and Chang (2019) and Handriana et al. (2024), while brand image indicators may follow Keller (2019) and Tan et al. (2022). In addition, purchase intention may be measured using indicators adapted from Kotler and Keller (2021) together with Limbu and Ahamed (2023). All responses are recommended to be evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Hair et al., 2022).

To examine the proposed relationships among variables, future empirical research is suggested to apply Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), particularly Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), because this analytical approach is considered appropriate for analysing complex models involving multiple mediating constructs (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis may focus on evaluating both the measurement model and the structural model in order to determine the explanatory capability and predictive relevance of the proposed conceptual framework (Hair et al., 2022).

## **4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Discussion and Theoretical Contributions**

The proposed framework yields several theoretical and managerial implications. From a theoretical standpoint, it advances the application of the S-O-R paradigm in green digital marketing by simultaneously incorporating two distinct yet interrelated organism states—green brand trust and brand image—within a single integrative model. While prior studies have examined these constructs in isolation (Noor et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025), the present framework articulates their parallel and sequential mechanisms, offering a more granular understanding of how digital marketing translates into purchase intention. The introduction of a serial mediation pathway (H8) is particularly novel: it formalises the theoretical insight that trust serves as a foundational precondition for the cumulative formation of brand image, especially in product categories characterised by information asymmetry.

The framework also enriches the literature on Generation Z's sustainable consumption behaviour. Existing scholarship documents Generation Z's heightened environmental awareness and digital fluency (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025; Mirah & Martini, 2025), yet relatively few studies systematically integrate these characteristics within an S-O-R structure that accommodates the cohort's distinctive epistemic preferences—namely, their reliance on peer-validated digital evidence rather than firm-controlled assertions. By positioning digital marketing as the central stimulus and acknowledging the dual

cognitive-affective filter constituted by trust and image, the framework provides a more accurate account of how Generation Z consumers actually process sustainability claims.

From a managerial perspective, the framework offers actionable guidance for The Body Shop and similarly positioned brands. First, digital marketing communications should privilege transparency, evidence-based storytelling, and consistent visual identity to function as positive signals that build trust over time. Second, brand managers should treat green brand trust as a strategic asset that requires deliberate cultivation through verifiable practices—such as cruelty-free certification, refill programmes, and Community Fair Trade initiatives—rather than through promotional rhetoric alone. Third, brand image should be reinforced through coherent narrative architectures that connect ethical heritage to contemporary cultural concerns relevant to Generation Z, such as climate justice, inclusive beauty, and ethical sourcing. Fourth, the serial mediation pathway implies that investments in trust-building activities yield compounding returns by simultaneously strengthening brand image and elevating purchase intention.

The framework also carries cautionary implications regarding greenwashing. Recent evidence indicates that perceived greenwashing exerts a corrosive effect on green brand trust and brand image, ultimately suppressing purchase intention (Isac et al., 2025; Persakis et al., 2025; Khandai et al., 2025). For brands such as The Body Shop, whose identity rests on a long heritage of ethical practice, the cost of even marginal inconsistency between communicated claims and actual performance can be disproportionately high. Digital marketing strategies must therefore be tightly coupled with substantive sustainability practices and transparent reporting to maintain credibility in an increasingly sceptical media environment.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper proposes an integrative model that explains how digital marketing strategy shapes Generation Z's purchase intention toward green products at The Body Shop Indonesia, with green brand trust and brand image serving as parallel and serial mediators. Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) paradigm and complemented by Signalling Theory, the framework articulates eight propositions that collectively address theoretical and contextual gaps in the green digital marketing literature. The model contributes to scholarship by integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioural mechanisms within a unified structure while accounting for the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z in emerging markets.

Conceptually, the eight hypotheses in this study can be summarised into three main claims. First, digital marketing strategy has a direct influence on purchase intention, indicating that exposure to relevant and authentic digital communication can directly increase consumers' intention to purchase green products. Second, there is a parallel mediation mechanism through green brand trust and brand image, each functioning as distinct psychological pathways that mediate the effect of digital marketing on purchase intention. Third, there is a serial mediation mechanism, in which digital marketing first builds green brand trust, which then strengthens brand image, ultimately leading to increased purchase intention.

For future research, empirical testing of this model should be conducted with more rigorous and measurable methodological standards. It is recommended that studies employ the PLS-SEM approach with a minimum of 200 Generation Z respondents in Indonesia to ensure the stability of structural model estimation. In addition, a pretest of research instruments is essential before main data collection to ensure content validity, item clarity, and initial construct reliability. Future studies should also include more specific control or moderator variables such as perceived greenwashing, level of environmental knowledge, and intensity of digital engagement, in order to reduce estimation bias and capture more accurate variations in

consumer behaviour. Furthermore, a longitudinal approach is recommended so that the dynamic changes in green brand trust and brand image can be observed over time, allowing the proposed causal relationships to be tested more comprehensively.

Thus, although still conceptual in nature, this model provides a strong theoretical and methodological foundation for future empirical research on how digital marketing strategy can shape green product purchasing behaviour among Generation Z consumers.

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