

From Responsibility to Intention: How CSR and Trust Shape Consumer Behavior in Sustainable Cosmetics Indonesia - A Conceptual Paper

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual study examines the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and consumer purchase intention, with trust as a mediating variable, within the context of Indonesia's sustainable cosmetics industry. The research explores how trust mediates the link between consumer perceptions of CSR and their decisions to purchase environmentally friendly cosmetic products. Drawing on an extensive literature review, the study proposes a conceptual model that outlines the relationships among CSR, trust, and purchase intention. This model is intended for future empirical testing using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method. The findings suggest that authentically and consistently implemented CSR practices can foster consumer trust, which in turn enhances purchase intention toward sustainable products. This study contributes to the literature on sustainable marketing and offers practical insights for local cosmetic companies in formulating business strategies grounded in sustainability principles.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, growing global awareness of environmental and sustainability issues has significantly influenced consumption patterns across various industries, including cosmetics. Consumers are no longer concerned solely with product quality; they also evaluate how products are produced, packaged, and distributed. This shift has led to the rise of sustainable makeup cosmetic products made from natural and organic ingredients, free from animal cruelty, packaged in recyclable materials, and manufactured through environmentally friendly processes (Raut et al., 2021; Lee & Choi, 2022).

According to Statista (2023), the global green cosmetics market has experienced rapid growth, driven by increasing consumer preference for products that are safe for both human health and the environment. In Indonesia, this trend is reflected in the rising demand for local cosmetic products that embrace sustainability, such as those using locally sourced organic ingredients, biodegradable packaging, and marketing strategies based on ethical and social values (Putri & Wicaksono, 2022).

A report by Katadata Insight Center (2021) shows that although food products are the leading category for environmentally friendly purchases (56.7%), the health and beauty sector also recorded a significant share at 30.6%. This indicates that Indonesian consumers are expanding their sustainability concerns to include the beauty products they use.

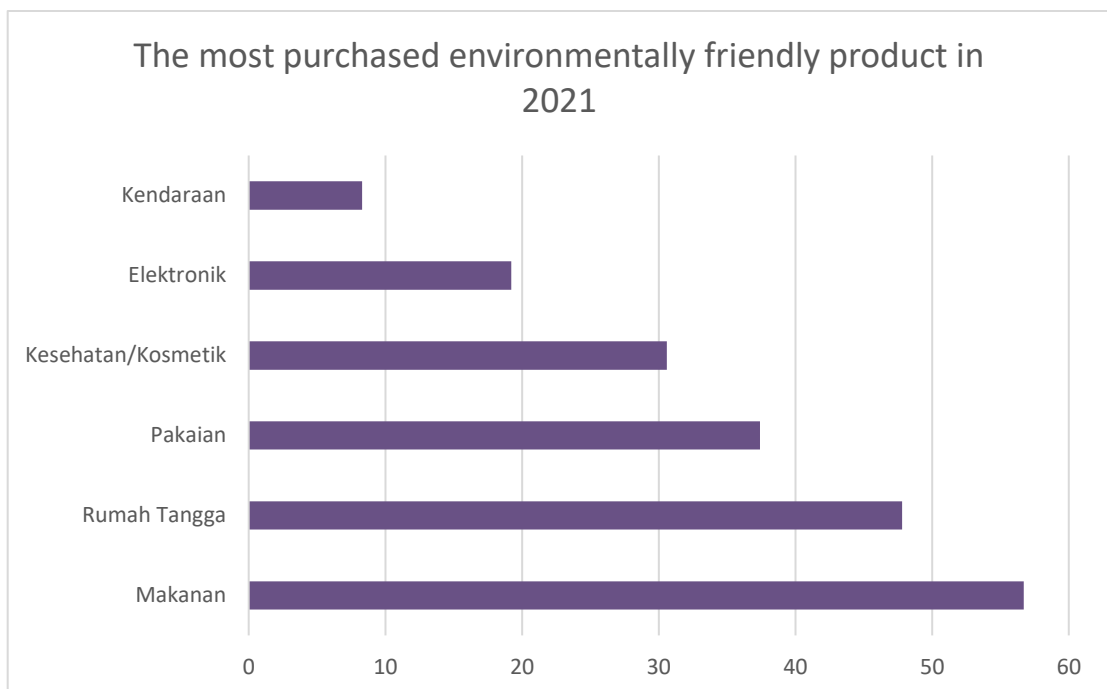


Figure 1. The most purchased environmentally friendly product in 2021

Source: Katadata (2021)

Additionally, Databoks (2021) found that the primary reasons consumers purchase sustainable products are environmental concern (60.5%) and personal satisfaction (51.1%)—both of which are highly relevant for cosmetics that are used directly on the body and reflect personal values.

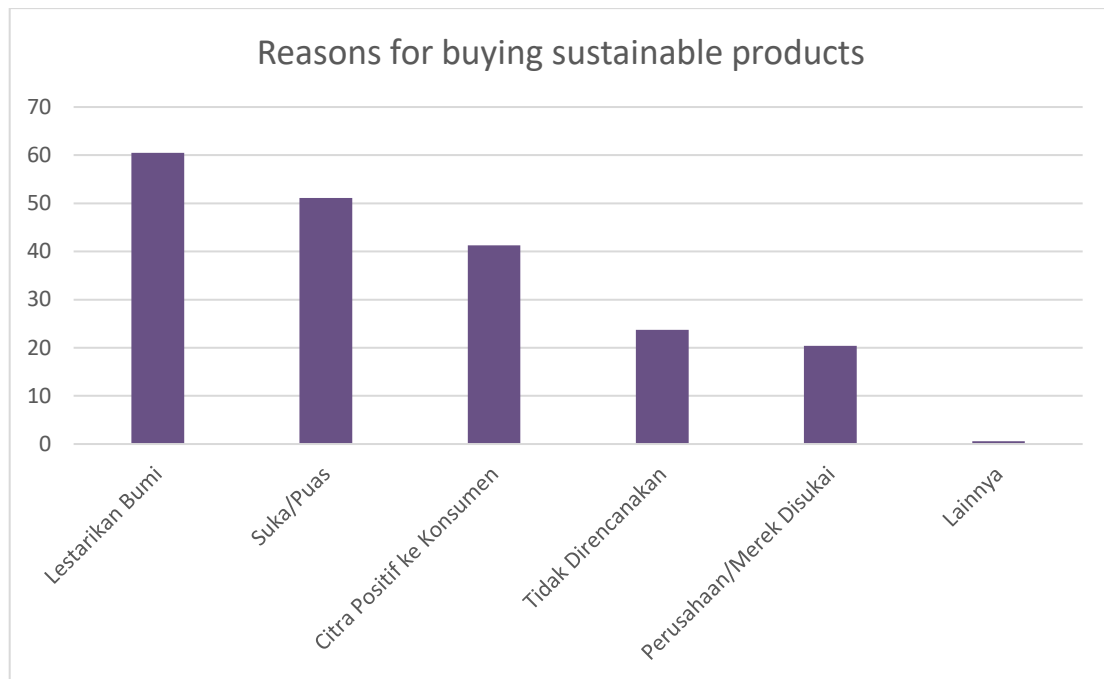


Figure 2. Reasons for buying sustainable products
Source: Katadata (2021)

Within this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a strategic tool for cosmetic companies to strengthen brand positioning among increasingly value-conscious consumers. CSR is no longer limited to philanthropy; it now represents a company's commitment to sustainable business practices, including raw material sourcing, packaging, production processes, and social campaigns that promote inclusivity and environmental preservation (Fatma & Rahman, 2021; Wang et al., 2020).

Studies have shown that positive consumer perceptions of CSR can enhance purchase intention (Tian et al., 2020; Amin & Tarun, 2020). However, this relationship is not always direct. Trust often serves as a crucial mediating variable. Consumers who believe a company genuinely implements CSR not merely as a marketing tactic are more likely to exhibit stronger purchase intentions (Pop et al., 2022; Mahmud et al., 2021).

In the context of sustainable makeup, trust plays a particularly important role, as cosmetics are inherently personal and sensitive products. Rim and Kim (2022) argue that trust in product safety, ingredient authenticity, and company ethics significantly influences purchasing decisions. Kim et al. (2023) add that consumers consider not only the functional benefits of a product but also the integrity of the brand behind it. This is supported by Shabbir et al. (2023), who found that young consumers are more likely to purchase sustainable products when they trust the brand's values.

Unfortunately, in Indonesia, studies that examine the relationship between CSR perception and purchase intention for sustainable cosmetic products particularly with trust as a mediating variable remain limited. Furthermore, few studies explicitly explore sustainable makeup that holistically integrates aesthetics, ethics, and sustainability.

Given the urgency and research gap, this study aims to develop a conceptual model that explains the influence of social responsibility on purchase intention for sustainable makeup, with trust serving as a mediating variable. This review is expected to contribute academically to the sustainable marketing literature and provide strategic insights for local cosmetic industries in building brands that are not only appealing in appearance but also socially and environmentally meaningful.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the cosmetics industry reflects a company's commitment to ethical practices, environmental sustainability, and community involvement. According to Freeman et al. (2020), CSR includes the use of environmentally friendly materials, ensuring fair labor conditions, and maintaining transparency across the supply chain. Carroll (1991) and Adrai & Perkasa (2024) categorized CSR into four key dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Although research on CSR remains limited, recent trends show increasing consumer interest in brands that build trust through responsible business practices. As a result, CSR has become an increasingly relevant topic in academic studies.

Several studies have highlighted the positive impact of CSR on trust and purchase intention. For example, Mulaessa and Wang (2017) found that CSR especially philanthropic activities has a positive effect on purchase intention. Similarly, research by Rosalin et al. (2021) confirmed a significant positive relationship between CSR and consumer purchase intention.

Beyond its direct influence on purchase intention, CSR also plays a crucial role in building consumer trust. Companies that integrate responsible practices tend to enhance their business reputation. Pivato et al. (2008) and Tarigan & Indriani (2012) emphasized that trust is a primary outcome of CSR. Likewise, Servera-Frances & Arteaga-Moreno (2015) argued that CSR directly contributes to consumer trust in a business.

Trust is a key factor in strengthening the relationship between businesses and consumers (Pivato et al., 2008; Tarigan & Indriani, 2012). Companies that prioritize CSR can leverage this trust to gain a competitive advantage. One of the main benefits of CSR is its ability to increase consumer purchase intention.

- a. **H1:** Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive impact on trust in sustainable cosmetics in Indonesia.
- b. **H3:** Corporate Social Responsibility has a positive influence on purchase intention for sustainable cosmetics in Indonesia.

Trust

Trust plays a vital role in shaping consumer decision-making. According to Nursani et al. (2023), trust refers to consumers' belief in a brand, including their expectation that the company will provide products or services that meet their needs. When consumers feel confident, they are more likely to perceive a brand as reliable and beneficial.

In the sustainable cosmetics industry, trust is built through transparency and open communication regarding the environmental and ethical impact of cosmetic products. Trust plays a significant role in shaping consumer interest and influencing purchasing decisions. A study by Hannah et al. (2021) revealed that consumer trust is a key driver of purchase intention, particularly for cosmetic brands that prioritize ethical practices and sustainable ingredients. Similarly, Oghazi et al. (2018) emphasized that trust strengthens purchase intention, as consumers with strong ethical and environmental values are more likely to trust socially responsible cosmetic companies and proceed with a purchase. Additionally, Biancone et al. (2022) highlighted that cosmetic brands that actively cultivate trust through consistent transparency and effective communication can increase purchase intention especially in the cosmetics sector, where long-term consumer confidence and personal safety play a critical role.

Previous studies also show that while CSR positively influences purchase intention, trust often serves as a mediating variable in this relationship. Swaen and Chumpitaz (2008) stated that corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts reflecting integrity and ethical commitment enhance consumer trust. Moon et al. (2015) noted that consumers trust brands for two primary reasons: product quality and the company's involvement in CSR initiatives. Likewise, Duong et al. (2022) found that consumers who support socially and environmentally responsible actions tend to develop a higher level of trust in such businesses.

Oghazi et al. (2018) further reinforced the idea that trust has a positive impact on purchase intention. When brands use environmentally friendly materials and adopt sustainable production methods, consumers tend to associate these efforts with responsibility and credibility. This increased trust ultimately leads to a stronger purchase intention (Choi & La, 2013). In general, consumers are more inclined to support brands that are committed to sustainability, as they aim to reduce their environmental footprint through responsible purchasing decisions.

When businesses implement effective CSR strategies, they strengthen consumer trust, which in turn drives purchase intention. Therefore, trust serves as a key mediating variable between CSR and purchase intention.

- a. **H2:** Trust has a positive influence on purchase intention for sustainable cosmetics in Indonesia,
- b. **H4:** Trust mediates the relationship between corporate social responsibility and purchase intention for sustainable cosmetics in Indonesia.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a consumer's interest or desire to choose and buy a product. According to Prentice, Han, Hua, and Hu (2019), purchase intention serves as the foundation for consumers' decision-making whether they decide to make a purchase or not. Several factors influence purchase intention, such as brand reputation, perceived value, and trust, as noted by Kim and Lee (2021).

In the sustainable cosmetics industry, trust is developed through transparency and open communication regarding the environmental and ethical

aspects of the products offered. Trust plays a critical role in shaping consumer interest and influencing purchasing decisions. A study by Hannah et al. (2021) found that consumer trust is a key driver of purchase intention, particularly for brands that emphasize ethical sourcing and sustainable production in their cosmetic lines. Similarly, Oghazi et al. (2018) stressed that trust strengthens purchase intention, as ethically minded consumers are more likely to trust companies with genuine sustainability commitments and are therefore more inclined to make a purchase. Moreover, Biancone et al. (2022) pointed out that brands that actively build trust through consistent transparency and effective communication can boost purchase intention, especially in industries like sustainable cosmetics, where long-term consumer loyalty and trust are essential.

Figure 3 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study, highlighting the relationships among Corporate Social Responsibility, Trust, and Purchase Intention. Within this framework, CSR is expected to have a direct effect on Trust, which in turn plays an important role in shaping Purchase Intention. Trust acts as a mediating variable that strengthens the link between CSR and consumers' willingness to make a purchase.

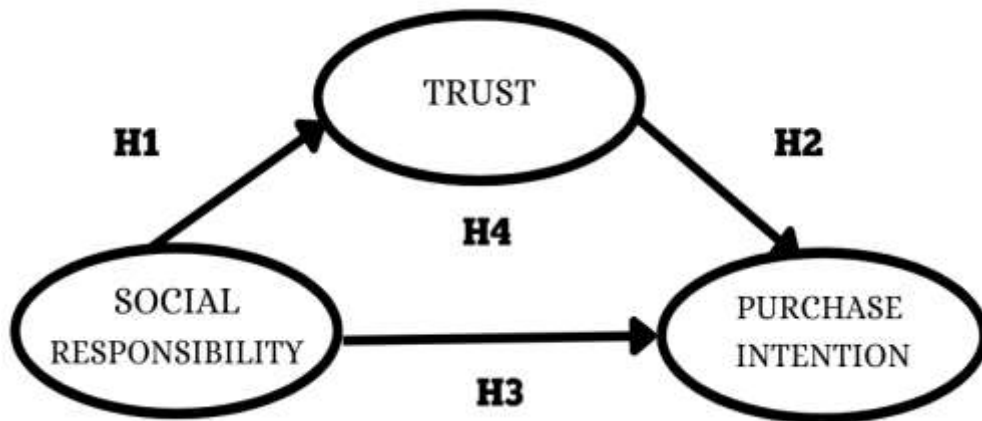


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study is conceptual research using a descriptive approach, aiming to explore the theoretical relationships among Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), consumer trust, and purchase intention in the context of sustainable cosmetic products in Indonesia. The primary focus of this research is to develop a conceptual model that explains how trust functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between CSR and consumer purchase intention, by referring to findings from previous studies and the evolving dynamics of the beauty industry.

In the proposed model, CSR is positioned as the independent variable, purchase intention as the dependent variable, and trust as the mediating variable between the two. The development of this conceptual framework was carried out through a systematic literature review, which includes both national and international academic journals, industry reports, and other relevant scholarly sources related to sustainability and consumer behavior in the cosmetics sector.

As a foundation for future empirical research, the study recommends using a quantitative method with a survey approach to test the validity of the proposed model. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) can be applied to analyze the relationships among variables and to statistically test the mediating role of trust. This study also suggests involving respondents who are consumers of environmentally friendly cosmetic products in Indonesia, with a suitable sampling technique such as purposive sampling. Variables in the survey can be measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

Through this approach, the developed conceptual model is expected to serve as a strong foundation for future empirical studies and to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of sustainability-oriented marketing.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The growing public awareness of environmental and sustainability issues in recent years has led to a shift in consumption patterns across various sectors, including the cosmetics industry. Consumers now evaluate cosmetic products not only based on their quality and visual appeal but also by considering the moral and social values reflected throughout the production and distribution processes. Within this framework, the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is seen as a strategic element that significantly influences consumers' positive perceptions of brand image.

Based on the conceptual development presented in this study, corporate social responsibility shows a strong connection with consumers' intention to purchase sustainable cosmetic products. Consumers who hold a positive perception of a company's CSR activities tend to demonstrate higher purchase intentions. However, this relationship is not entirely direct; it is influenced by a mediating factor namely, consumer trust in the company.

Trust acts as a mediating variable that strengthens the relationship between CSR and purchase intention. When a company consistently applies sustainability principles such as using natural raw materials, eco-friendly packaging, and ethical production processes consumers are more likely to trust the brand's commitment. This trust, in turn, fosters confidence that the product is not only safe to use but also aligns with the consumers' personal values, such as concern for the environment and health.

In the Indonesian market context, sustainable makeup products those made with organic ingredients, not tested on animals (cruelty-free), and packaged ecologically have gained significant attention from young consumers with higher education levels and strong environmental awareness. These findings suggest that authentic CSR practices can build strong trust in a brand, which subsequently drives higher purchase intention. This reinforces the idea that in an industry heavily influenced by consumer perceptions of ethics and values, CSR functions not merely as a marketing tool but also as a foundation for building long-term consumer trust.

Therefore, the conceptual model developed in this study highlights trust as a key element in bridging the influence of CSR on purchase intention. These findings imply that local cosmetic companies in Indonesia should not only use

sustainability as a marketing message but also implement it integratively across their entire business operations to cultivate long-term consumer loyalty.

DISCUSSION

The growing environmental and sustainability awareness among Indonesian consumers has shifted their orientation in choosing cosmetic products. Consumers today are no longer focused solely on aesthetics; they now also consider production processes that involve the use of natural ingredients, cruelty-free practices, and eco-friendly packaging. In this context, the presence of sustainable cosmetics has become increasingly important in shaping the preferences of environmentally conscious consumers.

Previous literature suggests that consumers tend to have stronger purchase intentions toward products from brands that demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical and sustainable business practices (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). The consistent and transparent implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives is believed to enhance consumer trust in a brand. This trust serves as a central factor that not only strengthens positive brand perceptions but also directly influences increased purchase intention (Pop et al., 2022; Rim & Kim, 2022).

In the cosmetics industry – where products are personal and used directly on the body trust plays a crucial mediating role. Consumers are more likely to buy products from brands they perceive to be not only safe in terms of ingredients, but also socially and environmentally responsible (Kim et al., 2023). Therefore, CSR strategies that are fully integrated into a brand's identity and operations provide companies with a competitive advantage.

This phenomenon is becoming evident in the Indonesian market, where interest in locally produced, sustainability-oriented cosmetics continues to rise. In such a setting, consumer trust acts as a bridge between positive perceptions of CSR and purchase intention. Consumers are becoming increasingly selective and critical about how consistently companies convey and uphold sustainability values (Fatma & Rahman, 2021). This is supported by Hannah (2021), who argues that brand credibility on sustainability issues can foster both loyalty and long-term purchase intention.

Thus, this discussion emphasizes the essential role of trust as a mediating variable in the relationship between CSR and purchase intention, particularly in the context of sustainable cosmetics in Indonesia. When consumers feel that a brand's values align with their personal principles, they are more likely to demonstrate stronger and longer-lasting purchase intentions. This shows that the authentic integration of sustainability values into all aspects of business operations not only enhances marketing strategies but also serves as a foundation for building consumer loyalty and long-term business sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper explores how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices contribute to the formation of consumer purchase intention toward sustainable cosmetic products in Indonesia, with a particular emphasis on the role of trust as a key mediating variable. As a conceptual study, the discussion focuses on

developing a theoretical framework that links the main variables based on previous studies and the growing trend of sustainability in the domestic cosmetics market.

The proposed conceptual model suggests that consistently and authentically implemented CSR practices can serve as a foundation for building consumer trust in a brand. This trust then acts as a bridge connecting consumers' perceptions of sustainability values with their inclination to make a purchase. In the cosmetics industry which involves personal aspects such as product safety and ethical considerations trust plays a strategic role in influencing deeper purchasing decisions.

To ensure that CSR initiatives significantly impact purchase intention, cosmetic companies especially those targeting local consumers should adopt a holistic sustainability strategy. This effort may include the use of natural ingredients, implementation of cruelty-free policies, and eco-friendly packaging. Additionally, operational transparency and open communication are considered essential to maintaining and strengthening long-term consumer trust.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

As a follow-up to the development of this conceptual model, empirical validation is needed through quantitative or qualitative research to confirm the proposed relationships between variables. Further studies are also recommended to explore additional factors such as perceptions of greenwashing, brand authenticity, or levels of consumer skepticism. Moreover, analyzing differences in perception across demographic groups for instance, between younger and older generations—regarding sustainability issues in cosmetics could provide more comprehensive insights for designing effective marketing strategies.

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