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Driving Green Purchase Intentions Among Indonesian Generation Z Skincare Consumers: The Mediating Role of Green Brand Trust

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ABSTRACT

The research examines the mediating role of green brand trust in the relationship between perceived green product innovation and green marketing communication on green purchase intention among Generation Z skincare consumers in Indonesia. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework and Signaling theory, this explanatory quantitative study collects empirical data from 562 respondents using purposive sampling. It analyzes the structural model using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The empirical results indicate that perceived green product innovation positively and significantly affects green purchase intention, both directly and indirectly via green brand trust, demonstrating a complementary partial mediation. Conversely, green marketing communication does not significantly affect green purchase intention directly but operates exclusively through green brand trust as a full mediator. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that product-based and communication-based sustainability signals operate through distinct pathways in shaping green purchase intention. Furthermore, green brand trust emerges as the strongest predictor of green purchase intention among Generation Z consumers. The research extends green marketing literature by explaining how different sustainability signals, including tangible product innovation and communication-based sustainability claims, influence sustainable consumption decisions through trust formation. The findings highlight that credible green product innovation is more influential than promotional communication alone in shaping purchase intention. Therefore, brands should develop transparent, verifiable, and trustworthy sustainability practices to strengthen consumer confidence and encourage green purchasing behavior.

Keywords: green purchase intention, green brand trust, perceived green product innovation, green marketing communication

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become one of the world's primary concerns in modern business strategy (Park et al., 2022). Increasing global pressure has forced companies to integrate environmental and social impacts into sustainable business activities (Sanchez-Planelles et al., 2022). These changes have also influenced consumer behavior, particularly increased attention to the environmental impact of the products they consume (Barbu et al., 2022). Data show that products with sustainability claims are growing 2.7 times faster than conventional products, indicating that sustainability has become

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a key consideration in global consumer purchasing decisions (NielsenIQ, 2023). Furthermore, data from an International Business Machines (IBM) global survey have indicated that 57% of consumers are willing to change their purchasing habits to reduce negative environmental impacts (Haller et al., 2022). These conditions have driven the growth of green consumption behavior while also requiring companies to develop sustainability strategies through product innovation and environmentally responsible marketing communications (Kar & Harichandan, 2022). Recent research has also highlighted the relationship between sustainable finance and product responsibility, emphasizing the role of corporate sustainability practices in promoting responsible products (Gyamfi et al., 2026). In this context, green branding and green marketing serve not only as communication tools but also as strategic assets in building positive perceptions and long-term relationships with consumers (Sarwar & Loureiro, 2026).

The shift in consumer preferences toward sustainable products is increasingly evident among Generation Z (Theocharis & Tsekouropoulos, 2025). Generation Z is a group of consumers characterized as digital natives with high access to information and a strong concern for environmental issues (Brand et al., 2022). They hold a strategic position in the development of the green market because they consider not only a product's functional benefits but also the values, identity, and commitment to sustainability a brand offers. The cosmetics and skincare sector is one of the industries most scrutinized by Generation Z regarding issues of plastic packaging waste, microplastics, and eco-friendly claims (Akram et al., 2026). According to global Generation Z report from Deloitte (2023), environmental concerns significantly influence how young people evaluate the products they consume. Additionally, green marketing activities and awareness of green brands play a role in shaping young consumers' purchase intentions (Alhomaid, 2025). Advances in digital technology reinforce this evaluation process through social media mechanisms, which serve as the primary source of information for young consumers regarding corporate sustainability practices (Tiwari et al., 2025).

Although concern for environmental issues has increased (Zhang et al., 2022), the shift from green awareness to actual purchasing behavior remains an unresolved issue (Kim & Lee, 2023). Environmentally conscious consumers do not always consistently choose green products when making purchases (Majeed et al., 2022). One main cause is growing consumer skepticism toward companies' sustainability claims because of greenwashing practices (Kovac et al., 2025). In the skincare industry, consumers often encounter vague claims such as "all-natural" without clear certification (Gopakumar & Dananjayan, 2025). A report by the European Commission (2021) has shown that 53% of environmental claims on products in the European market are unclear, misleading, or lack sufficient supporting evidence. The prevalence of these dubious claims fuels skepticism, erodes brand credibility, and hinders the development of consumer trust (Lopes et al., 2023). Therefore, the credibility of a company's sustainability communications is a key factor in building brand authenticity and consumer trust (Poulis et al., 2026).

From a consumer behavior perspective, green brand trust serves as a key mechanism linking perceptions of sustainability to consumers' purchasing behavior. Trust in green brands forms not only through communication of sustainability claims but also through consumers' evaluation of tangible evidence provided by companies (Riva et al., 2024). One form of this evidence comes from green product innovations, such as eco-friendly materials and sustainable production processes. Sustainability-oriented product innovations have been shown to strengthen relationships with consumers, enhance brand trust, and drive purchase intention. Green marketing communication also plays a key role in building consumer trust. Companies must communicate sustainability information transparently so consumers can evaluate the credibility of their environmental commitments (Jung et al., 2024). However, communication effectiveness depends heavily on aligning marketing messages with the company's actual practices to prevent consumers from perceiving products as greenwashed (Li et al., 2025). It has been confirmed by Tan et al. (2022) that green marketing activities influence purchase intent, supported by the crucial role of brand trust. Furthermore, corporate social responsibility communication and acceptance of green advertising contribute to the formation of green trust, which in turn influences consumer behavior (Nguyen-Viet & Thanh Tran, 2024).

Although research on green consumption has expanded significantly (Huang et al., 2022), the psychological mechanisms that explain how corporate sustainability strategies shape brand tr ust and drive consumer purchase intentions are not yet fully understood (De Sio et al., 2022). Previous research indicates that green marketing activities contribute to green purchase intention through the formation of a green brand image and green brand trust (Tan et al., 2022). Most research still treats sustainability as an aggregate construct (Baltaci et al., 2024) and does not explain how consumers evaluate various forms of sustainability signals with different characteristics. In fact, a company's environmental commitment can be communicated through both product-based and communication-based signaling mechanisms. Green product innovations provide tangible evidence (Liu et al., 2025), while green marketing communications serve as informational signals to validate those claims (Nguyen-Viet & Thanh Tran, 2024); both require simultaneous alignment to avoid triggering consumer skepticism (Kumar et al., 2026). Thus, a gap remains in the empirical literature on how these two forms of sustainability stimuli are evaluated simultaneously in shaping green brand trust as a mediating mechanism that drives purchase intention toward green brands.

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These limitations are particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia's Generation Z as an emerging market. Indonesia has a Generation Z population of approximately 74.93 million, or about 27.94% of the total population (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2026). This large youth population makes them a potential market for sustainable products, particularly in the skincare industry, which is growing rapidly in Indonesia as awareness of skin health and appearance increases (Nurrosyidah et al., 2026). However, greater access to digital information has also made young consumers more critical of companies' sustainability claims. A survey from Katadata Media Network (2021) confirms that while Indonesian consumers consider environmental issues in skincare products, they still face information gaps and skepticism regarding the credibility of such claims. Therefore, understanding how Indonesian Generation Z forms trust in green skincare brands is crucial to explaining how sustainability perceptions translate into purchase intention.

The research develops an integrative model based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory (Eroglu et al., 2003) to test the mediating role of green brand trust in the relationship between perceived green product innovation and green marketing communication and green purchase intention. Within this framework, green product innovation and green marketing communication are positioned as external stimuli (S), green brand trust as the organism's internal evaluation (O), and green purchase intention as the behavioral response (R). The research aims to analyze the direct and indirect contributions of these two sustainability signals among Generation Z consumers of skincare products in Indonesia. Theoretically, the research expands the literature on green consumer behavior by elaborating on the mechanisms of brand trust formation in the context of emerging markets. Practically, these findings provide strategic guidance for skincare marketers on aligning tangible product innovations with transparent sustainability communications to reduce skepticism and drive purchase intention. The research model is shown in Figure 1.

Perceived green product innovation refers to consumers' assessments of updates to ingredients, formulations, and packaging designs that are perceived to reduce environmental impact (Taylor et al., 2024). In the skincare industry, such innovations may include reducing microplastics, using materials with a lower environmental impact, and using recyclable packaging (Haykal et al., 2025). Actual innovation refers to the technical changes implemented by companies, whereas perceived innovation emphasizes the extent to which consumers recognize and evaluate the benefits of those changes (Laukkanen & Tura, 2022). Therefore, consumer responses are influenced not only by innovations designed by companies, but also by their visibility and relevance to consumers. A product's functional and ecological value increases when packaging formulations perceived as more sustainable offer added value not found in conventional products (Aini & Aini, 2025). Thus, this innovation creates symbolic value regarding environmental concern as well as a perception of tangible benefits, thereby driving consumer purchasing decisions (Handriana et al., 2024). Hence, the first proposed hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Perceived green product innovation positively influences green purchase intention.

Green marketing communication involves disseminating information about a company's environmental benefits and ecological commitments through advertising, eco-labels, certifications, and digital media (Chen & Chang, 2012; Polonsky, 1994). As an informational signal, transparent communication

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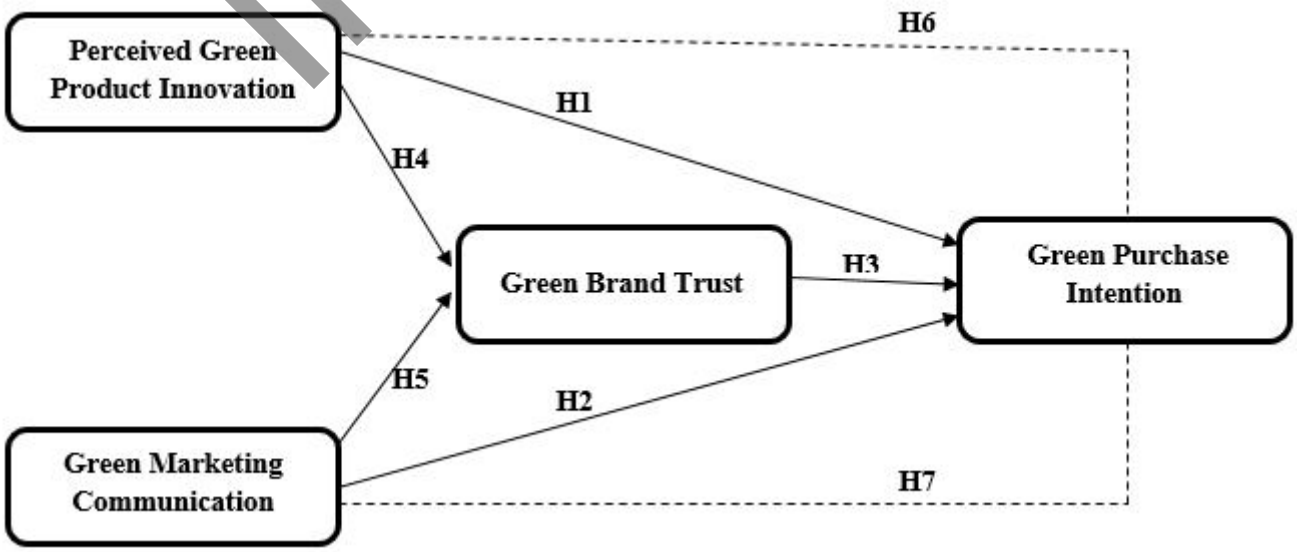


Figure 1 Research Model

reduces information asymmetry about the sustainability attributes of skincare products, which are difficult for consumers to assess directly (Kumar et al., 2024). Furthermore, clear supporting evidence, such as independent certification logos, helps consumers understand a product's environmental value while alleviating doubts about company claims. Transparent and relevant green marketing communication drives consumer decisions, thereby directly strengthening green purchase intention (Choubey & Sharma, 2026). The second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H2: Green marketing communication positively influences green purchase intention.

Green brand trust is consumers' belief that a brand is truly capable of and committed to fulfilling its environmental promises (Chen, 2010; Davari & Strutton, 2014). This trust reflects consumers' willingness to rely on a brand's ecological credibility amid a proliferation of uncertain eco-friendly claims. From the S-O-R perspective, green brand trust functions as an internal psychological condition that reduces consumers' concerns about the risk of financial, functional, or emotional loss. When this trust is established, consumers feel more confident that their purchasing decisions align with the promised environmental value (Rizomyliotis, 2026), thereby directly fostering the formation of green purchase intention (Klabi & Binzafrah, 2022). The third hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Green brand trust positively influences green purchase intention.

Perceived green product innovation serves as tangible, product-based evidence (a tangible signal), showing how a company translates its environmental promises into physical form, such as using safer materials (Zameer & Yasmeen, 2022). The credibility of these signals depends on the extent to which these innovations are perceived as beneficial and consistent with the claims made. When skincare product updates positively impact the environment, consumers will perceive the company as having technical expertise and a serious commitment to environmental protection (Handriana et al., 2025). This positive assessment directly enhances consumer trust in the brand's ecological reputation (Liu et al., 2025). The fourth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H4: Perceived green product innovation positively influences green brand trust.

Green marketing communication provides consumers with the information needed to assess a brand's honesty and good intentions (Mansour et al., 2024; Rathee & Milfeld, 2024). According to the Signaling theory by Connelly et al. (2025), a message is considered credible when its content aligns with the company's actual actions in the field and is supported by third-party evidence. This significantly affects Generation Z consumers, who are accustomed to verifying a company's claims through other users' reviews and information on social media. When the message conveyed is consistent with reality and easily verifiable, consumer skepticism decreases, thereby fostering strong green brand trust (Li et al., 2022). As a result, the sixth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H5: Green marketing communication positively influences green brand trust.

The integration of S-O-R and Signaling theory explains that external signals not only drive action directly but also operate through psychological evaluations within the consumer. In this process, green brand trust serves as a mechanism to mitigate uncertainty, bridging the influence of the external environment on behavioral responses (Baltaci et al., 2024). Although physical product innovations and marketing communications can directly attract purchasing interest, both stimuli require psychological validation. As a result, consumers feel confident that the brand's sustainability commitment is genuine, not merely a greenwashing tactic (Rahman et al., 2026). The physical attributes of product innovations serve as a foundation for consumers to assess a company's ecological competence. When these innovations are perceived as tangible, they enhance green brand trust. This established trust subsequently erodes consumer doubts, thereby channeling positive evaluations of the product's physical form (S) into a tangible incentive to make a purchase (R) (Kumar et al., 2024).

On the other hand, green marketing communication provides informational cues to clarify the ecological advantages of skincare products (Sivan & Balakrishnan, 2026). However, the mere presentation of information does not necessarily lead to purchase intention, as consumers tend to be skeptical of one-sided claims. Transparent, consistent marketing messages backed by verifiable evidence will reinforce consumers' belief in a brand's honesty. This trust acts as an internal evaluation filter that dispels skepticism (Norris, 2022) while also bridging the reception of credible information (S) and the intention to make a purchase (R) (Setiawati & Rani, 2025; Li & Shan, 2025). Hence, the sixth and seventh hypotheses are as follows:

H6: Perceived green product innovation has a positive indirect effect on green purchase intention through green brand trust,

H7: Green marketing communication has a positive indirect effect on green purchase intention through green brand trust.

METHODS

The research employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory design through a cross-sectional

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survey (Skinner et al., 2024). This design is chosen to test the structural relationships and mediating effects among perceived green product innovation, green marketing communication, green brand trust, and green purchase intention using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The population consists of Generation Z consumers in Indonesia, with the following criteria: 1) born between 1997 and 2010, 2) residing in Indonesia, and 3) having experience purchasing eco-friendly skincare products. Sampling is conducted using a non-probability technique with purposive sampling through an online questionnaire (Stratton, 2023). The minimum sample size is determined using G*Power 3.1.9.7 (Kang, 2021), with an F-test significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), statistical power 1-β= 0.80, and a moderate effect size (f^2) of 0.15, resulting in a minimum sample size threshold of 77 respondents (Nasim et al., 2026). After undergoing a data screening stage to eliminate incomplete responses, a total valid sample of 562 respondents is obtained, exceeding the PLS-SEM Ten-Times Rule criteria (Hair, 2014). The entire data collection process strictly adheres to research ethics through voluntary participation and full assurance of respondent data confidentiality (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021).

All latent constructs are measured using a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire, with ratings ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) (McLeod, 2026). All constructs are adapted and developed from previous literature. Perceived green product innovation is defined as consumers' cognitive evaluation of green product innovations, measured through PGPI1 = technological innovation, PGPI2 = material innovation, PGPI3 = resource efficiency, and PGPI4 = innovative superiority (Kumar et al., 2026). Green marketing communication is the transparent communication of sustainability messages, with GMC1 = the intensity of environmental promotion, GMC2 = transparent digital communication, GMC3 = public relations, and GMC4 = non-deceptive claims (Choubey & Sharma, 2026). Furthermore, green brand trust refers to consumers' confidence in a brand's ecological commitment. It is measured through GBT1 = the reliability of environmental standards, GBT2 = the reliability of ecological promises, GBT3 = the honesty of the commitment, and GBT4 = the fulfillment of performance expectations (Handriana et al., 2024). Green purchase intention is defined as the motivation to purchase green products, with GPI1 = future purchase intention, GPI2 = prioritization of green products while shopping, GPI3 = willingness to repurchase, and GPI4 = motivation to preserve the earth (Aini & Aini, 2025).

The research uses PLS-SEM for data analysis with SmartPLS-4 (Hair, 2014). The measurement model (outer model) is evaluated to test instrument validity and reliability using outer loadings ($\lambda > 0.70$), internal consistency via Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability (> 0.70) (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity is assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE > 0.50), and discriminant validity is assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT < 0.85) (Hair et al., 2024).

The structural model (inner model) tests the research hypotheses using non-parametric bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples and a two-tailed significance level ($p < 0.05$) (Legate et al., 2023). This evaluation includes assessing path coefficients (β), the model's explanatory power via the coefficient of determination (R^2), and the relative impact of predictor variables via effect size (f^2) (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The mediating effect of green brand trust is analyzed using the specific indirect effect by classifying the type of mediation based on the formulated hypotheses (Jie et al., 2014; Mallinckrodt et al., 2006). To anticipate the potential for Common Method Bias (CMB), this research simultaneously integrates procedural controls and statistical testing (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Procedural controls include ensuring respondent anonymity and using neutral questionnaire instructions that do not prompt specific answers, thereby avoiding sequential perception bias. Meanwhile, statistical controls are evaluated using the Variance Inflation Factor (< 5.0) (Kock, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 562 valid respondents, providing a comprehensive overview of the profile of Generation Z skincare consumers in Indonesia. The sample shows a predominance of female participants (68.51%; n = 385) compared with male participants (31.49%; n = 177). This proportional imbalance reflects the reality of the personal care product market. Female consumers

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics of Generation Z Skincare Consumers

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	177	31.49
Female	385	68.51
18–24 years	253	45.02
25–29 years	309	54.98
Student	194	34.52
Employees	342	60.85
Others	26	4.63

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consistently constitute the primary user segment that is more responsive to product formulations and sustainability attributes. In terms of age structure, the sample is evenly distributed between the mature Generation Z group aged 25–29 years (54.98%, n = 309) and the younger Generation Z group aged 18–24 years (45.02%, n = 253). In terms of respondents' background, most are professionals or employees (60.85%, n = 342), followed by students (34.52%, n = 194) and those in other occupational categories (4.63%, n = 26). This demographic composition confirms that most respondents not only have the cognitive capacity to evaluate product sustainability information but also sufficient financial independence to translate their green consumption preferences into purchase intentions in the skincare industry.

The reflective measurement model is evaluated based on outer loading values, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. Table 2 shows that all indicators have outer loading values ranging from 0.859 to 0.935 (> 0.70). The internal consistency of the instrument is met by achieving composite reliability values ranging from 0.941 to 0.955 across all latent constructs (> 0.70). Furthermore, the convergent validity, as measured by AVE specifically for perceived green product innovation (0.814), green marketing communication (0.841), green brand trust (0.798), and green purchase intention (0.814), exceeds the minimum criterion of 0.50. Furthermore, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values at the indicator level range from 2.434 to 4.456 (< 5.0), confirming the absence of lateral multicollinearity among the indicators.

Discriminant validity is tested using the HTMT criterion. The HTMT ratios between variables in Table 3 range from 0.084 to 0.620. The lowest ratio is found in the relationship between perceived green product innovation and green marketing communication (0.084). Meanwhile, the highest ratio is between green brand trust and green purchase intention (0.620). All HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of 0.85, confirming that each construct meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

In Table 4, the structural model is tested using a non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for green brand trust is 0.307 (Adjusted R^2 = 0.304). Meanwhile, green purchase intention yields an R^2 value of 0.387 (Adjusted R^2 = 0.383). The effect size evaluation (f^2) indicates that green marketing communication has a moderate effect on green brand trust (f^2 = 0.273), while perceived green product innovation has a small effect (f^2 = 0.136). In predicting green purchase intention, green brand trust has a moderate effect size (f^2 = 0.248), followed by perceived green product innovation with a small effect (f^2 = 0.097), and green marketing communication with a negligible effect size (f^2 = 0.001).

In Table 5, the hypothesis test results for direct effects show that Perceived Green Product Innovation has a positive and statistically significant effect on Green Purchase Intention (β = 0.261; t = 7.266; p < 0.001), supporting H1. Conversely, green marketing communication does not have a significant direct effect on green purchase intention (β= 0.03; t = 0.800; p =

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Table 2 Results of Outer Loading, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), Construct Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicator	Loading	VIF	Composite Reliability	AVE	Description
Perceived Green Product Innovation	PGPI1	0.909	2.983	0.946	0.814	Valid and Reliable
	PGPI2	0.859	3.523			
	PGPI3	0.900	3.395			
	PGPI4	0.906	2.765			
Green Marketing Communication	GMC1	0.910	3.435	0.955	0.841	
	GMC2	0.935	4.456			
	GMC3	0.922	3.903			
	GMC4	0.901	3.373			
Green Brand Trust	GBT1	0.909	3.202	0.941	0.798	
	GBT2	0.859	2.434			
	GBT3	0.900	3.097			
	GBT4	0.906	3.124			
Green Purchase Intention	GPI1	0.895	3.202	0.946	0.814	
	GPI2	0.919	3.024			
	GPI3	0.912	3.210			
	GPI4	0.883	3.380			

Note: Outer loading ≥ 0.70; Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70; Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.50; and VIF < 5.

0.424). Hence, H2 is not supported. Green brand trust is found to have a positive and statistically significant effect on green purchase intention (β = 0.468; t =12.406; p< 0.001), supporting H3. Furthermore, perceived green product innovation has a positive and significant effect on green brand trust (β = 0.308; t = 9.217; p < 0.001), thus supporting H4. Similarly, green marketing communication also has a positive and significant effect on green brand trust (β = 0.436; t = 12.467; p < 0.001). It supports H5.

The test of the specific indirect effect in Table 6 confirms that green brand trust significantly mediates the relationship between perceived green product innovation and green purchase intention (β = 0.144; t = 7.002; p < 0.001), thus supporting H6. Because the direct path from perceived green product innovation to green purchase intention remains significant, the mediation is categorized as partial (complementary). Furthermore, green brand trust is also found to significantly mediate the relationship between green marketing communication and green purchase intention (β = 0.204; t = 8.762; p < 0.001), thus supporting H7. Because the direct path from green marketing communication to green purchase intention is not significant, the mediation is categorized as full mediation.

Table 3 Results of Discriminant Validity Assessment Using Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	PGPI	GMC	GBT	GPI
PGPI	—			
GMC	0.084	—		
GBT	0.371	0.496	—	
GPI	0.457	0.286	0.620	—

Note: An HTMT value < 0.90 indicates that discriminant validity has been met. The table includes Perceived Green Product Innovation (PGPI), Green Marketing Communication (GMC), Green Brand Trust (GBT), and Green Purchase Intention (GPI).

Table 4 Structural Model Results: Coefficients of Determination (R^2) and Effect Sizes (f^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Relationship	f^2	Interpretation
GBT	0.307	0.304	PGPI → GBT	0.136	Small
GMC → GBT	0.273	Medium			
GPI	0.387	0.383	PGPI → GPI	0.097	Small
			GMC → GPI	0.001	Negligible
			GBT → GPI	0.248	Medium

Note: f^2 = 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large). The table includes Perceived Green Product Innovation (PGPI), Green Marketing Communication (GMC), Green Brand Trust (GBT), and Green Purchase Intention (GPI).

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing Results for Direct Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	T-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
H1	PGPI → GPI	0.261	7.266	< 0.001	Supported
H2	GMC → GPI	0.031	0.800	0.424	Not Supported
H3	GBT → GPI	0.468	12.406	< 0.001	Supported
H4	PGPI → GBT	0.308	9.217	< 0.001	Supported
H5	GMC → GBT	0.436	12.467	< 0.001	Supported

Note: β = standardized path coefficient; p < 0.05 indicates a statistically significant effect. The table includes Perceived Green Product Innovation (PGPI), Green Marketing Communication (GMC), Green Brand Trust (GBT), and Green Purchase Intention (GPI).

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Perceived green product innovation has been shown to increase green purchase intention, indicating that Generation Z consumers prioritize tangible evidence of sustainability over mere environmental claims. In the context of skincare products as credence goods, innovations in formulation and packaging serve as costly signals that enhance ecological credibility while reducing perceived quality risks. These findings align with Aini and Aini (2025) and Handriana et al. (2024) that product-based signals have stronger direct persuasive power than sustainability communications in driving purchase intention. In addition, this direct approach underscores the fact that a product's physical attributes serve as tangible proof of the company's commitment, allowing young consumers to immediately overcome the cognitive barriers and skepticism typically associated with verbal communication. Conversely, green marketing communication does not have a direct effect on green purchase intention. These results indicate that Generation Z consumers no longer evaluate sustainability based solely on promotional messages but rely more on verifiable information before making purchasing decisions. Within the S-O-R framework, marketing communication as a stimulus cannot directly elicit a behavioral response before fostering a positive psychological evaluation. In the digital age, where young consumers are inundated with information due to massive corporate claims, purely informational stimuli often trigger "default skepticism." As a result, promotional efforts are structurally incapable of triggering immediate purchases unless they successfully pass through the consumer's internal cognitive filtering process. These findings differ from those of Polonsky (1994) and Choubey and Sharma (2026), but support Kumar et al. (2024) who have asserted that the effectiveness of sustainability communication depends on how information is processed and translated into consumer trust.

Green brand trust emerges as the strongest predictor of green purchase intention. Within the S-O-R framework, brand trust functions as an organismic state that reduces perceived risk regarding greenwashing practices while simultaneously reinforcing consumers' belief in the brand's ecological integrity. These findings align with Chen (2010) and Klabi and Binzafrah (2022), who have identified green brand trust as a primary determinant of sustainable consumption behavior. These results confirm that brand trust is the primary psychological mechanism linking marketing stimuli to consumer behavioral responses. Perceived green product innovation is also found to increase green brand trust. Innovations in formulation and packaging are perceived as tangible evidence of a company's environmental commitment, strengthening the brand's credibility in consumers' eyes. These findings support Zameer and Yasmeen (2022) and Liu et al. (2025) that green product innovation not only creates functional value but also builds ecological legitimacy as a foundation for consumer trust. Concurrently, green marketing communication has a positive effect on green brand trust, although it does not directly influence purchase intention. Transparency regarding raw materials, production processes, and environmental certifications is more effective at building brand credibility than directly driving purchase decisions. These findings support Li et al. (2022) and Mansour et al. (2024) that credible sustainability communication is the primary foundation for building green brand trust.

The mediation test results indicate that green brand trust partially mediates the relationship between perceived green product innovation and green purchase intention. These findings suggest that product innovation operates through two mechanisms: directly increasing purchase intention through perceived product value and indirectly through developing brand trust. These results are consistent with Kumar et al. (2024) that the effectiveness of green product innovation is further strengthened when accompanied by the development of green brand trust.

The most significant finding is that green brand trust fully mediates the relationship between green marketing communication and green purchase intention. Unlike product-based signals, which can influence purchase intention both directly and indirectly, communication-based signals are effective only after being translated into consumer trust (S → O → R). From the perspective of Signaling theory, green product innovations act as "costly signals" that require companies to sacrifice real resources. At the same time, marketing communications are often viewed as "cheap signals" that are easy to imitate. This fundamental difference leads Generation Z consumers to demand physical proof rather than mere verbal promises. These findings support Tan et al. (2022), while also enriching Signaling theory by demonstrating that product-based signals and communication-based signals operate through distinct mechanisms in shaping green purchase intention. These findings also enrich the literature

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Table 6 Specific Indirect Effects and Mediation Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	β	T-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
H6	PGPI → GBT → GPI	0.144	7.002	<0.001	Supported
H7	GMC → GBT → GPI	0.204	8.762	<0.001	Supported

Note: β = standardized path coefficient; $p < 0.05$ indicates a significant mediating effect.
The table includes Perceived Green Product Innovation (PGPI), Green Marketing Communication (GMC), Green Brand Trust (GBT), and Green Purchase Intention (GPI).

by highlighting the context of Indonesia's emerging market, where regulatory standards for green labeling, which are not yet as stringent as those in developed countries, lead consumers to rely far more on brand reputation and empirical product evidence than on advertising claims alone (Rosari, 2025).

The research makes three major theoretical contributions to the green marketing literature. First, the research expands the application of S-O-R theory by showing that green marketing communication cannot directly influence behavioral responses. Amid growing skepticism toward greenwashing, green brand trust serves as a psychological mechanism that bridges marketing stimuli and consumer behavioral responses. Second, the research addresses the limitations of previous research that views sustainability strategies as a single construct by distinguishing environmental commitment into product-based signals (tangible signals) and communication-based signals (informational signals). The results show that product signals influence purchase intent both directly and indirectly through green brand trust, whereas communication signals operate solely through this mediating mechanism. Third, the research expands the empirical evidence on Generation Z's green consumption behavior in emerging markets by demonstrating that consumers with high digital literacy no longer readily accept sustainability claims but instead require concrete and verifiable evidence before forming trust or purchase intentions. These findings provide a deeper explanation of the psychological mechanisms underlying the green attitude-behavior gap in the context of eco-friendly skincare products.

The findings have strategic implications for the skincare industry, emphasizing the need to shift from persuasive promotion to building trust through transparency and tangible evidence of sustainability. Companies need to prioritize investments in green product innovations, such as refillable packaging, eco-friendly formulations, and the reduction of microplastic waste, as these have been shown to increase purchase intent while strengthening green brand trust. Furthermore, sustainability communications must be supported by transparent, verified, and easily accessible information, for example, through third-party certifications or the provision of product information via QR codes. This strategy is crucial for reducing Generation Z's skepticism toward environmental claims while strengthening brand credibility in the market.

To operationalize these strategies effectively, brand managers should adopt a "trust-first, promote-second" communication framework. This involves ensuring that marketing campaigns are strictly backed by verifiable Life-Cycle Assessments (LCAs) or authentic eco-labels before public release, mitigating consumer skepticism. In addition, companies can collaborate with digital-native influencers who specialize in sustainability education to bridge the information gap for Generation Z, ensuring that digital channels serve as platforms for transparent proof rather than mere promotional hype.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that Indonesian Generation Z's intention to purchase green skincare products is determined by the presence of concrete physical evidence and green brand trust. Green product innovation is the strongest stimulus, directly affecting purchase intention while also strengthening brand trust. Conversely, green marketing communications are unable to directly influence purchase intention but instead rely entirely on green brand trust as an absolute mediator. These findings underscore a paradigm shift in green marketing within emerging markets: one-sided verbal claims are no longer effective without support from tangible product innovation and brand credibility. Therefore, synergy between the physical merits of the product and transparency in communication is a key strategy for the skincare industry to dispel skepticism and consistently drive Generation Z's purchase intention.

Although the research offers meaningful theoretical and practical contributions, it is not without several limitations that open opportunities for future research. The cross-sectional approach used in the research only captures consumer perceptions at a single point in time. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ a longitudinal or experimental design to observe the gradual dynamics of trust changes and to test the actual transition from purchase intent to actual purchasing behavior. Additionally, using non-probability sampling via an online survey may limit the generalizability of the results across the full demographic and geographic spectrum of Generation Z in Indonesia.

Another limitation lies in the industry scope, which focuses specifically on skincare products. Skincare products, which involve high engagement and directly affect physical health, may lead to decision-making patterns that differ from other Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) categories. Future studies can replicate this structural model in different industrial sectors, such as the fashion industry, eco-friendly food, and beverage products. Furthermore, this research model remains limited to relationships among the main variables and does not include moderating factors. Future research can expand the analytical framework by integrating relevant moderating variables such as the level of greenwashing perception, environmental literacy, or price sensitivity to explore the conditions under which green marketing signals and product innovations can function optimally.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceived and designed the analysis, Y. S. A. and S.S.; Collected the data, S.S.; Contributed data or analysis tools, Y. S. A., W., S.S., and A. Z. L.; Performed the analysis, Y. S. A., and A. Z. L.; and wrote the paper, Y. S. A., W., S.S., and A. Z. L.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of the research are available from the corresponding author, Yandri Samuel Augusteyn, due to participants' privacy and ethical considerations.

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