Green Washing and Brand Crises: Modelling Consumer Trust Repair

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study proposes an innovative approach to rebuilding consumer trust following the negative impact of greenwashing, which often leads to a conflicted relationship between corporations and consumers. Through a novel integration of previously unconnected concepts, such as trustworthiness dimensions (Integrity, benevolence, and competence), credibility, empathy, forgiveness, consumer trust repair, revived brand equity, and repurchase intention, this study offers a nuanced and enhanced understanding of the consumer trust repair process. The current research seeks to integrate disparate concepts and theories into a cohesive whole, resulting in a modified version of the consumer trust repair process. Prior studies have examined the phenomenon of consumer trust repair in a relatively narrow and parochial manner and have failed to provide a holistic process-based model. This study, however, attempts to provide a comprehensive, process-based model of consumer trust repair. Through this holistic approach, this research makes a valuable and meaningful contribution to the field of consumer trust repair, providing brand managers with a deeper understanding of the consumer trust recovery process, which has been largely ignored in previous studies. This unique and comprehensive approach will surely capture readers' attention, as it offers a fresh perspective on a crucial issue facing the business world today.

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1. Introduction

The corporate sector is bound to adopt environmentally friendly practices in response to rising concerns about environmental deterioration. The demand for environmentally friendly goods has surged as consumer awareness has increased (Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015). As a result, green marketing has emerged as a crucial strategy for reaching and retaining environmentally conscious consumers (Y.-S. Chen & Chang, 2013) while also maintaining a competitive edge (Al-Majali & Tarabieh, 2020; Y.-S. Chen, Hung, Wang, Huang, & Liao, 2017; Tarabieh, 2018). Despite being aware of the significance of green marketing, some companies engage in greenwashing, a form of misleading or deceitful advertising that claims to be environmentally friendly. Greenwashing is a negative effect of green marketing (Parguel, Benoit-Moreau, & Russell, 2015). It is characterized by the act of promoting environmentally-friendly messages while engaging in practices that are detrimental to the environment (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

This misleading marketing tactic has negative consequences for both consumers and the environment Research shows that such practices can severely damage consumer trust (Delmas & Burbano, 2011), resulting in increased skepticism and a decline in the perceived brand equity (He & Ran, 2015). This loss of trust can also lead to a decrease in purchase intent (Y.-S. Chen & Chang, 2013; C. N. Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017), and negative word-of-mouth (Al-Majali & Tarabieh, 2020). Ultimately, these consequences gravely harm a company's reputation. In the

same vein, findings of the numerous other studies concurred that greenwashing can have detrimental effects on a company long-term customer relationships. Not only can it lead to a customer dissatisfaction, but it can also result in lost revenue and a decline in the company's competitive advantage (Y.-S. Chen & Chang, 2013; C. N. Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2017). Moreover, such dishonest marketing practices can negatively impact the market value of environmentally-friendly products, leading to a decrease in their market capitalization (R. Guo, Zhang, Wang, Li, & Tao, 2018; Zhang, Li, Cao, & Huang, 2018).

1.1. Problem Statement

Despite the pressing need for effective solutions, research on regaining consumer trust after incidents of greenwashing is still in its early stages (Bolat et al., 2020; Bozic, 2017; Zameer, Wang, Yasmeen, & Mubarak, 2022). Reimbursements and donations (Brown, Buchholtz, & Dunn, 2016), commitments and justifications (Schweitzer, Hershey, & Bradlow, 2006; Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009), apologies and denials (Bansal & Zahedi, 2015), reimbursements and commitments (Brown et al., 2016; Schweitzer et al., 2006), and eco-label (S. Guo & Li, 2015). However, additional study is required to comprehend the underlying mechanisms of trust restoration (Bozic, 2017; Zameer et al., 2022). To effectively restore public trust in green products and environmental protection, it is crucial to address the green brand trust crisis, alleviate consumer reservations about purchasing green products, and establish a strong connection between consumer trust and green brands (Zameer et al., 2022).Therefore, it is essential to identify and develop appropriate strategies for restoring consumer trust following greenwashing incidents.

This study responds to recent calls for further research on rebuilding consumer trust following greenwashing incidents (Bolat et al., 2020; Bozic, 2017; Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017; Zameer et al., 2022). Firstly, Bozic (2017) has highlighted the need for identifying trust repair strategies beyond apologies and denials and suggested including other determinants such as advertisements, promises, and endorsements. Secondly, Bolat et al. (2020) and Bozic (2017) have called for developing a process-oriented and holistic model, an approach often neglected in prior studies. Thirdly, Zameer et al. (2022) and Bachmann, Gillespie, and Priem (2015) have emphasized the need to investigate the underlying mechanisms of trust repair process. Lastly, Bachmann et al. (2015) have called for research to explore the extent to which trust repair is context-specific. This study addresses these calls by focusing on green consumers, examining how greenwashing affects their trust, and identifying possible strategies to help rebuild that trust.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to enhance the current understanding of the consumer trust repair process by synthesizing and integrating key elements that have been overlooked in previous studies. Earlier studies has identified various strategies for consumer trust repair; however, these studies have often lacked coherence and cohesiveness, with little conceptual connection between their findings. The disjointed nature of consumer trust repair concepts necessitates the need for a novel, comprehensive, and overarching framework for consumer trust repair. Below are the specific research objectives of the study.

• To examine the conceptual relationship between trust repair variables (affective, informational, and functional) and consumers' perceptions of trustworthiness (integrity, benevolence, and competence).
• To investigate the conceptual associations between organizational integrity, competence, and benevolence, and their influence on organizational credibility and consumer empathy, particularly in the context of greenwashing. Additionally, to assess the impact of organizational credibility on consumer empathy following instances of greenwashing.
• To explore the conceptual connections among consumer empathy, forgiveness, and the restoration of trust following incidents of greenwashing.
• To assess the role of consumer trust in the recovery of lost brand equity and examine its theoretical relationship with consumer repurchase intention.

1.3. Significance of Study

This study holds significant implications for both academia and brand managers. Firstly, it fills a notable gap in the existing literature by offering a comprehensive and process-based model of consumer trust repair in the context of greenwashing. By integrating concepts such as trustworthiness dimensions, credibility, empathy, forgiveness, and their relationships, this study

provides a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics involved in rebuilding consumer trust. Secondly, the findings of this research offer valuable insights for brand managers, enabling them to develop more effective strategies for trust repair and brand equity revitalization. Ultimately, this study helps in the advancement of knowledge in the field of consumer trust repair, while offering practical implications for organizations grappling with the consequences of greenwashing.

2. Theoretical Background

The conceptual model proposed in this study covers how organizations can manage to repair consumer trust after green washing practices. Thus, the proposed framework covers different trust repair factors that build consumers' trust worthiness. The consumer trust worthiness subsequently repairs consumers' trust, revives lost brand equity and hence greater purchase intention for the respective brand. The framework suggest an intervening mechanism in this process which include the interplay among organizational credibility, consumers' empathy, and consumer forgiveness. The next section elaborate each of these relationships.

2.1. Greenwashing, Brand Crises, and Consumer Trust

Greenwashing is a deceptive and manipulative marketing strategy used by businesses to make false or exaggerated claims about the environmental benefits of their products and processes, despite contradicting their actual performance (Parguel et al., 2015). This practice not only puts green brands at risk but can also lead to brand crises (Munaier, Miyazaki, & Mazzon, 2022; Xiao, Wang, & Guo, 2022)Such dubious campaigns undermine the integrity of environmentally-friendly products and can damage consumer trust. There are numerous ways to engage in greenwashing. Studies, in general, have demonstrated that greenwashing not only reduces customers' intentions to buy green products but also causes them to boycott green products (M.-T. Ha, 2022). For instance, Edelman (2010) gathered information from eco-conscious customers in over 20 countries and confirmed that greenwashing substantially reduced consumer trust in green products from 30% to 13%. Resultantly, a company's competitive edge in the market, as well as its brand name and equity, will be permanently lost if it is unable to win back the trust of green consumers who have been negatively affected by greenwashing (M.-T. Ha, 2022; M. T. Ha, Ngan, & Nguyen, 2022; Li & Sun, 2022; Munaier et al., 2022; Xiao et al., 2022). Meanwhile, less focus has been placed on strategies that could be utilized to repair consumer trust and confidence in green products.

Despite the negative impact of greenwashing on customer trust, previous research suggests that a company's affirmative efforts and actions can still help mitigate the damage caused by such deceptive marketing practices (L. C. Leonidou, Kvasova, Leonidou, & Chari, 2013). Customers often seek explanations from businesses to defend their psychological investment in environmentally-friendly products, following greenwashing incidents (L. C. Leonidou et al., 2013)Therefore, it is crucial for companies to take corrective actions to address any false or exaggerated environmental claims and provide clear and transparent information about their products' actual environmental performance. Such actions can help rebuild customer trust, preserve brand reputation, and maintain the integrity of the green market. In line with this, the current study seeks to present an over-arching consumer trust repair model whereby a company earlier engaged in greenwashing can regain consumer trust back by utilizing and applying the appropriate strategies and mechanisms as suggested by this study in a well-directed and coordinated manner.

2.2. Coping with Greenwashing and Brand Crises using Trust Recovery Strategies: The Social Exchange Theory

When confronted with consumer backlash following unfavorable publicity (greenwashing) about a brand, businesses can take rapid recovery efforts to mitigate the impact of the incident and restore the brand's reputation by opening a dialogue with customers via various communication channels. According to the stakeholder theory, companies must maintain an open channel of communication with their target audiences by explaining their choices, behaviors, and actions to restore trust (Griffin, 2017; Richter & Dow, 2017; Voltan, Hervieux, & Mills, 2017). Similarly, the crisis management studies suggest three recovery methods: affective, functional, and informative to mitigate the incident's aftermath and restore the brand's reputation (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Xie & Peng, 2009).

Affective recovery refers to a public apology given by a company after a negative incident has occurred. Typically, this apology takes the form of a public statement in which the company accepts responsibility for the incident and expresses regret to affected customers (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; Xie & Peng, 2009). Many companies choose to apologize and acknowledge their mistakes to their customers because they understand that this can help to mitigate the negative effects of the incident, rebuild customer trust, and restore cooperative relationships (Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009; Kim et al., 2004).

Functional recovery is the more practical alternative, as it involves delivering monetary compensation as a remedy, free aftercare to address product-related issues, and various incentives (such as discounts, promotions, and customer awards) (Xie & Peng, 2009). Examples of functional recovery include a fashion brand's storewide sale as well as the discounting of defective products following a product crisis (Whysall, 1998). Lastly, informational recovery refers to the steps made to offset negative publicity via communication channels (Xie & Peng, 2009). These include holding a news conference or an open forum to address the situation, clarify the facts, and provide updates on the progress made in finding a solution. One example is holding a news conference in which the management team explains the problem, its effects, and the corrective steps (such as establishing a 24-hour customer service center).

According to Xie and Peng (2009), organizations must analyses the effectiveness of all three recovery strategies in order to overcome the negative publicity. Using social exchange theory, authors in the recovery literature describe how damage control and brand rehabilitation can be achieved through these trust recovery strategies (Eisingerich, Rubera, Seifert, & Bhardwaj, 2011; Prasongsukarn & Patterson, 2012; Xie & Peng, 2009). Similarly, Homans (1958) asserts that consumers assess the benefits they receive against the expenses to determine their level of satisfaction with a particular social exchange. An exchange is considered to be fair and acceptable if both parties receive an equal value (Homans, 1958).

In the same vein, researchers believe that when a brand implements suitable recovery strategies, such as offering apologies (emotional), providing refunds or discounts (practical), and engaging in effective communication (informative), consumers are more inclined to perceive that they have received appropriate restitution for the negative publicity. Consequently, they are less inclined to completely reject the brand (Eisingerich et al., 2011; Jevons & Gabbott, 2000; Kau & Wan-Yiun Loh, 2006; Mattila, 2001; Patterson, Cowley, & Prasongsukarn, 2006; Prasongsukarn & Patterson, 2012; Sierra & McQuitty, 2005). Customers may feel compelled to reciprocate after getting something from a brand, such as by explaining or justifying the latter's misconduct (Patterson et al., 2006). Based on the social exchange theory, this study postulated that trust-building actions in the wake of a greenwashing controversy would reduce consumers' anti-brand behavior.

2.3. Trustworthiness, Organizational Credibility, and Consumer Empathy

Trust is a complex and multi-faceted concept that has long captivated the attention of scholars and researchers across numerous fields (Gambetta, 1988). As noted by Morgan and Hunt (1994), trust plays a vital role in the realm of relationship marketing. It is considered to be a foundational and crucial aspect in the formation and maintenance of human connections. Without trust, relationships would be built on uncertainty and doubt, making it difficult for individuals to rely on companies. From a consumer's perspective, trust refers to the belief that a product or service will meet or exceed their expectations in terms of quality, reliability, and effectiveness.

Similarly, research has shown that trust is an all-encompassing concept that includes both the consumer's general perception of a company's trustworthiness (competence, integrity and benevolence) and their intent to maintain a trusting relationship with the company (Kim et al., 2004; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). According to Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), interpersonal trust of individual in companies is primarily determined by company's competence, benevolence, and integrity. These three components have been further studied and classified as competence-based trust, benevolence-based trust, and integrity-based trust (Kim et al., 2004). Competence refers to a company's ability to deliver on its promises, which is established by its knowledge, expertise, skills, leadership, and other relevant attributes (Kim et al., 2004). Benevolence represents a company's genuine concern for its customers and the

motivation to act in their best interests (Kim et al., 2004). Integrity, on the other hand, pertains to a company's adherence to sound principles (Kim et al., 2004).

As noted, trust is a vital resource for maintaining healthy relationships between consumers and companies. However, the theory of trust repair, as introduced by (Mayer et al., 1995) asserts that trust is a vulnerable and delicate connection that can be easily shattered when one party perceives a failure in the other party's ability to fulfill their expectations of trustworthiness. This breach of trust can result in severe repercussions for the sustainability of any relationship, and it is thus imperative that steps should be taken to repair and restore this vital bond of trust. Therefore, there is a need for research in understanding the concept of trust repair, which has been largely ignored in academia (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Mayer et al., 1995; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Extant literature suggests that there is a strong correlation between trustworthiness dimensions of company and its organizational credibility. In this regard, McGinnies and Ward (1980) found that a source's credibility and ability to influence an audience's opinion are influenced by the trustworthiness components of a company. This is also supported by Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack, and Zahid (2018), who found a connection between company's credibility and trustworthiness.

Similarly, credibility is a crucial concept in the business world, particularly in the areas of advertising and promotion. Credibility refers to the extent to which information and its sources can be trusted (Rebelo, 2017). In other words, if a party is considered credible, they are perceived as convincing and reliable. Organizations can build credibility by adhering to trustworthiness dimensions (e.g competence, integrity and benevolence). Perceived trustworthiness and knowledge are fundamental to the success of an organization's message. Credible sources of information play a significant role in shaping the ideas, attitudes, and actions of consumer's.

In addition, current study proposed that trustworthiness dimensions (integrity, competence, and benevolence) have a positive relationship with consumer empathy. This preposition is often ignored in earlier studies. To make the consumer trust repair model more rigorous, realistic, practical, and comprehensive, it is exigent to draw a relationship between trustworthiness dimensions and consumer empathy. People's propensity to show empathy for others may be significantly influenced by the degree to which they trust one another. This approach stems from the notion that showing empathy requires a personal investment of one's emotions, and trust, which by definition entails exposing one's emotions to other (Righetti & Finkenauer, 2011). It can influence people's openness to make such an investment. As said earlier, being empathetic requires some degree of emotional investment, and therefore people may not want to engage with someone who is untrustworthy and, as a result, likely to take advantage of them (Stevens et al., 2020). Similarly, Sghaier, Skandrani, and Robson (2021)postulates that consumers are more empathetic toward politicians they perceive to be trustworthy. Since organizations are considered to be an artificial persons in the modern world and many attributes of individuals are akin to organizations, therefore, we postulate that the trustworthiness dimension (integrity, competence, and benevolence) is vital to evoke consumer empathy.

2.4. Organizational Credibility and Consumer Empathy

Credibility is a vital aspect of marketing, particularly in terms of gaining consumer trust, as previously discussed. It refers to the degree to which a company's marketing efforts are believed by its target audience (Rebelo, 2017). In the context of consumer trust repair efforts, organizational credibility is a crucial construct in eliciting consumer empathy. It is important for companies to understand that consumer trust repair is a complex and nuanced process that requires proper conceptualization to fully grasp the pathways through which consumers regain trust in an organization that has previously engaged in greenwashing practices.

The current study adopts the well-established theoretical framework of the Technological Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that consumer empathy is strongly influenced by the source's credibility (Yang, 2016). Likewise, this notion is supported by the findings of Yang, Kim, and Yoo (2013) in their seminal work "The integrated mobile advertising model: The effects of technology- and emotion-based evaluations." In the context of the current study, empathy represents a consumer's ability to take the perspective of others (Davis, 1980) and to participate in a shared affective response (Feshbach, 1978). Given that source credibility positively

influences consumer empathy in decision making, the current study postulates the following hypothesis: Consumer empathy in the context of consumer trust repair efforts is positively influenced by organizational credibility.

2.5. Consumer Empathy and Forgiveness

The present study posits that consumer empathy, characterized as the consumer's ability to understand and share the emotional state of a brand is directly linked to the restoration of consumer trust via intervening effect of forgiveness. Previous research has highlighted the role of empathy in consumer forgiveness, with some scholars arguing that customers motivated by empathy actively work to reduce negative motives, such as alienation and retaliation, and to strengthen positive motives, such as tolerance and kindness, which in turn, helps in repairing the damaged relationships (McCullough et al., 1998). In the same vein, Sun and Sun (2021) have also emphasized the importance of empathy in consumers' readiness to forgive and in their response to an organization's recovery measures.

Studies, such as those conducted by Babin, Zhuang, and Borges (2021) and Bast and Barnes-Holmes (2015), have confirmed that a sense of justice and empathy, respectively, play a significant role in influencing consumer forgiveness. Attribution theory and S-O-R theory have also been used to empirically demonstrate the influence of consumer empathy on forgiveness (Sun & Sun, 2021). Thus, it can be proposed that consumer empathy plays a significant role in consumers' readiness to forgive.

2.6. Forgiveness and Consumer Trust Repair

Forgiveness, a concept steeped in philosophy and theology, has a vital role to play in modern social research. It is a multifaceted phenomenon that can be defined in different ways depending on the context in which it is being studied (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002). However, at its core, forgiveness is the willingness to let go of negative emotions and behaviors toward an individual or organization that has wronged us (Finkel et al., 2002). It is the act of pardoning and making amends with those who have caused harm or betrayal. In the context of consumer relationships, forgiveness plays a vital role in rebuilding trust after a violation.

As mentioned earlier, when a company violates the trust of its consumers, it can lead to negative consequences such as bad publicity, loss of customers, and financial losses (Al-Majali & Tarabieh, 2020). However, research has shown that forgiveness can act as a mediator between trust recovery measures and consumers (Huang & Chang, 2020). In other words, forgiveness plays a crucial role in mending trust after a violation and negative publicity. This is because forgiveness allows consumers to let go of their negative emotions toward the company and see the company's trust-recovery efforts in a more positive light (Xie & Peng, 2009).

For example, if a company violates the trust of its consumers by engaging in unethical behavior, it can take steps to regain their trust by implementing trust-recovery measures such as apologizing, offering compensation, and making changes to its policies and practices. However, these measures may not be effective if consumers are unwilling to forgive the company and let go of their negative emotions (Huang & Chang, 2020). But, if consumers are willing to forgive the company, they are more likely to view the company's trust-recovery efforts in a positive light and be more willing to trust the company again in the future. So, forgiveness of consumers is essential for rebuilding consumer trust after a violation (Xie & Peng, 2009). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that forgiveness is a vital component in the restoration of consumer trust after greenwashing.

2.7. Consumer Trust Repair, Revived Brand Equity, and Repurchase Intention

A brand's connections with consumers are tightly woven into its brand equity, a market-based asset produced through relationships (Srivastava, Shervani, & Fahey, 1998). Brand trust is essential for fostering the expansion of brand equity, according to prior studies (Delgado-Ballester & Luis Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Ganesan, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). According to (Ambler, 1997) Ambler's (1997) findings, brand equity and trust are positively correlated, which is in line with the findings of other researchers such (Jevons & Gabbott, 2000) and Kim et al (2008). Furthermore, T. B. Chen and Chai (2010) postulated and supported the idea that green brand equity is positively impacted by green brand trust in his seminal work on green marketing.

Xie and Peng (2009) also suggested that brands suffering from diminished trust due to unfavorable publicity can recover through appropriate remedial actions. Given that brand trust can be restored through suitable methods, we propose that brand equity can likewise be restored by employing an effective mechanism for rebuilding customer trust. This study introduces a hypothesis that connects the concepts of relationship marketing and a trust-based approach to brand equity.

Likewise, previous research indicates that brand equity positively influences both purchase intent and brand preference (Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995). Numerous studies have established a direct relationship between consumer inclination to purchase and brand equity (Chang and Liu, 2009). Aaker (1991), argues that brand equity affects consumers' propensity to make purchases. Similarly, Chen et al. (2014) emphasizes the importance of positive brand equity for fostering repeat purchase intentions. Consistent with this, Kotler and Keller (2013) reported that strong brand equity significantly influences customers' intention to choose one product over another. As discussed earlier, positive brand equity has a direct impact on consumers' likelihood to make purchases and encourages repeat purchase intentions. However, in the context of greenwashing, consumer trustworthiness can be compromised, resulting in a decline in brand equity and purchase intention. To rejuvenate brand equity and restore consumer trust, organizations must implement strategies for repairing trust, ultimately reviving brand equity and promoting repeat purchase intentions.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
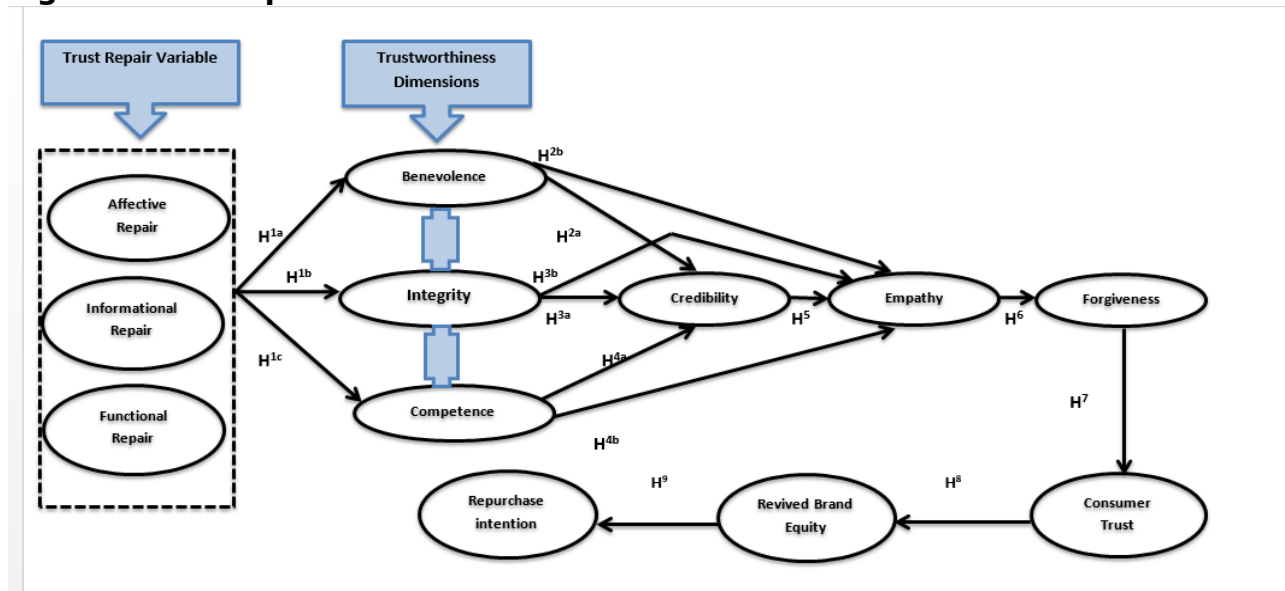
3.   Research Proposition

P1: After experiencing a decrease in consumer trust due to deceptive green marketing practices (also known as greenwashing), efforts to restore trust through affective, informational, and functional recovery measures will (a) significantly enhance perceptions of organizational integrity, (b) significantly enhance perceptions of organizational benevolence, and (c) significantly enhance perceptions of organizational competence.

- P2: Following a decline in consumer trust resulting from deceptive green marketing practices (greenwashing), the improvement in organizational integrity will (a) have a positive impact on organizational credibility and (b) foster a positive change in consumer empathy.

- P3: After experiencing a decline in consumer trust due to deceptive green marketing practices (greenwashing), the enhancement of organizational competence will (a) have a positive effect on organizational credibility and (b) positively influence consumer empathy.

- P4: Following a decline in consumer trust caused by deceptive green marketing (greenwashing), (a) the demonstration of organizational benevolence positively enhances organizational credibility, and (b) the demonstration of organizational benevolence positively fosters consumer empathy.

- P5: There is a significant positive correlation between improvements in organizational credibility and the enhancement of consumer empathy, suggesting that as organizational credibility improves, consumer empathy also increases in a substantial manner.

- P6: Following greenwashing incidents, there is a significant positive association between consumer empathy and the degree of consumer forgiveness, indicating that consumer empathy plays a substantial role in influencing the extent to which consumers are willing to forgive such incidents.

- P7: There is significant positive relationship between consumer forgiveness and the restoration of consumer trust in the aftermath of greenwashing incidents, implying that forgiveness from consumers significantly contributes to the reestablishment of trust.

- P8: Consumer trust plays a crucial role in the process of revitalizing organizational brand equity subsequent to instances of greenwashing, indicating a significant positive impact of consumer trust on the restoration and enhancement of brand equity.

- P9: There is a significant positive association between the revival of organizational brand equity and consumer repurchase intention, indicating that the improved brand equity significantly influences consumers' intention to make repeat purchases.

4.   Contribution of the Study

The findings of this study will be significantly useful for both marketing professionals working in different organizations as well as the model proposed will add significantly to the body of knowledge on consumer trust repair strategies. Both of these contributions are elaborated of below:

4.1.   Theoretical Contribution

The issue of consumer trust repair is a complex and multifaceted one that has received relatively little attention in the academic literature to date. Despite the growing concern over the phenomenon of "greenwashing" and the negative impact it can have on consumer trust, there is a dearth of studies that have sought to address this issue in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Recent research in this area has tended to be relatively narrow in scope, focusing on specific aspects of trust repair, such as communication strategies or the role of third-party intermediaries. However, as trust repair is a complex and dynamic process that involves a variety of different factors and stakeholders, it is essential to take a more holistic and process-based approach in order to fully understand and address the issue. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap in the literature by proposing an overarching and comprehensive process-based model for consumer trust repair.

This model is based on the idea that trust repair is not a one-time event but rather a continuous and iterative process that involves a variety of different steps and stages. The proposed model is designed to be both flexible and adaptable, allowing for the incorporation of a wide range of different factors and considerations depending on the specific context and situation. Additionally, it is important to note that trust repair cannot be studied from a variance-based perspective, as the complexity of trust repair is significant. In a nutshell, the aim of the current research is to provide a holistic framework for repairing consumer trust using a process-based approach. By doing so, it aims to significantly contribute to the body of knowledge on consumer trust repair and provide valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers working to address the issue of greenwashing and other forms of consumer deception.

4.2.   Managerial Contribution

The present study seeks to make a significant contribution to the field of brand management by providing a comprehensive examination of the consumer trust recovery process. Specifically, it aims to assist brand managers in understanding the nuances of rebuilding trust in the wake of a crisis, with a particular focus on green brands.

Firstly, the study will offer a thorough examination of the consumer trust recovery process, shedding light on the often overlooked aspects of this crucial process. It will provide brand managers with a clear and actionable set of guidelines for navigating the challenges of

rebuilding trust, helping them to make informed decisions and take effective steps to regain the confidence of their customers.

Secondly, the study will focus on the unique challenges faced by green brands and will provide insights into the best practices for preventing green brand crises and rebuilding trust in the aftermath. It will explore the complex web of greenwashing and its potential consequences for brand trust, brand equity, and purchase intention, offering valuable insights for green brand managers and other stakeholders in the industry.

Thirdly, the study will open new avenues of research for marketers, policymakers, and practitioners, providing a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of consumer trust and the role of greenwashing in brand crises. It will offer a valuable resource for those working to build and maintain trust in their brands.

Finally, it will provide a valuable resource for green businesses seeking to increase their market share after facing a brand trust crisis. By offering insights into the consumer trust recovery process and the best practices for rebuilding trust, it will help these businesses to make informed decisions and take effective steps to regain the confidence of their customers. Overall, this study is poised to make a significant and lasting impact on the field of brand management, offering valuable insights and practical guidelines for those working to build and maintain trust in their brands.

5.   Conclusion and Future Recommendations

In conclusion, this study sought to address the important issue of consumer trust repair following instances of deceptive green marketing or greenwashing. Through the proposed overarching and comprehensive process-based model for consumer trust repair, the study aimed to gain deeper insights into the factors that influence consumer trust and the ways in which organizations can effectively repair trust after it has been damaged.

The study is centered on the idea that trust repair efforts, specifically affective, informational, and functional recovery efforts, can significantly improve perceptions of organizational integrity, benevolence, and competence. Additionally, it was proposed that these trust repair efforts can positively impact organizational credibility and consumer empathy. Furthermore, it was proposed that consumer empathy and forgiveness can lead to improved consumer trust and ultimately result in positive effects on organizational brand equity and consumer repurchase intentions.

This study provides valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers working to address the issue of greenwashing and other forms of consumer deception. Organizations that have suffered a decline in trust due to deceptive green marketing should focus on a comprehensive and holistic approach to trust repair, including a focus on affective, informational, and functional recovery efforts. Additionally, organizations should strive to improve their organizational integrity, benevolence, and competence, as well as their organizational credibility, in order to effectively repair consumer trust.

In addition, this study also suggests that organizations should focus on increasing consumer empathy and forgiveness through transparent and honest communication, as well as a demonstration of their commitment to corporate social responsibility. The study recommends that future research should empirically test and validate the proposed model. Also, the model should be examined in different contexts, such as different sectors and cultures, to further understand the underlying mechanisms of consumer trust repair.

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