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THE IMPACT OF GREEN BRAND POSITIONING ON GUEST ATTITUDES AND PURCHASE DECISION IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY: A MEDIATED-MODERATED MODEL

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Abstract: This study investigates the influence of green brand positioning (GBP) on green brand attitude (GBA) and green purchase decision (GPD) within the tourism and hospitality sector. Drawing upon an integrated theoretical framework encompassing both signaling theory and the theory of planned behavior, the research also examines the mediating role of green brand image (GBI) and the moderating effect of green trust (GT). Data were collected from 479 customers who dealt with Egyptian green hotels and category-A travel agencies and analyzed using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The findings indicate that GBP significantly and positively impacts GBA, GPD, and GBI. Furthermore, GBI demonstrates a positive influence on both GBA and GPD, partially mediating the relationships between GBP and GBA, and GBP and GPD. Crucially, GT was found to positively moderate the relationships between GBI and GBA, and GBI and GPD. The study offers meaningful theoretical contributions by extending the application of Signaling Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior to the hospitality and tourism sector—a credence-driven service industry where green claims are often difficult for consumers to verify. The research provides a more nuanced understanding of how environmentally oriented brand signals are communicated by firms and interpreted by consumers to shape their attitudes and behavioral intentions. This dual-theoretical lens helps bridge the gap between brand-level communication and individual-level decision-making. From a practical standpoint, the findings offer valuable guidance for hospitality marketers seeking to cultivate authentic green brand positioning. Specifically, the study highlights how green brand image and consumer trust act as key psychological levers that influence purchase decisions.

Keywords: Green brand positioning, green brand attitude, green purchase decision, green brand image, green trust, hospitality and tourism industry

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability has become a vital strategic priority across industries globally, with the tourism and hospitality sector—particularly five-star hotels and travel agencies—under increasing pressure to adopt eco-friendly practices (Khatter, 2023; Alsheref et al., 2024; Khairy et al., 2025; Mahran et al., 2025). Consumers are progressively aligning their purchasing decisions with brands that demonstrate genuine environmental commitment (Kang et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2025). This shift has pushed organizations in the tourism and hospitality industry to adopt green brand positioning (GBP) as a strategic tool to communicate their environmental values and differentiate themselves in competitive markets (Wang et al., 2022; Gautam & Pokhrel, 2023). Despite its importance, empirical research on how GBP shapes consumers' attitudes and purchase decisions—especially in developing markets such as Egypt—remains limited (Gautam & Pokhrel, 2023; Ashrafi & Akhter, 2025). From a theoretical standpoint, Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973)

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provides a compelling framework to understand how GBP functions. This theory explains how organizations convey unobservable qualities—like environmental responsibility—through deliberate signals aimed at influencing consumer perceptions (Aulina & Yuliati, 2017; Wang, 2017). In industries characterized by credence attributes, where consumers cannot directly verify sustainability claims (Alyahia et al., 2024), signals such as GBP become essential for building trust and shaping consumer behavior (Alsheref et al., 2024). The consumer's interpretation of these signals forms the green brand image, which acts as a mediator between the firm's environmental positioning and downstream attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, including green brand attitude and green purchase decision.

Supporting this perspective, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) complements Signaling Theory by explaining how consumers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence their intentions and behaviors. Specifically, TPB posits that a positive green brand attitude—a consumer's favorable evaluation of a brand's environmental efforts—is a key driver of green purchase intentions and decisions. Incorporating green trust as a moderating variable further highlights the psychological and moral evaluations consumers apply, which can strengthen or weaken the effect of green brand image on attitudes and purchase decisions. Specifically, while Signaling Theory explains how brands communicate environmental claims, TPB provides insight into how these claims influence individual attitudes and behaviors.

In developing countries like Egypt, organizations face unique challenges in promoting sustainability due to weak enforcement of environmental regulations, limited financial resources, and inadequate cross-industry knowledge sharing (Chaowanapong et al., 2018). Thus, understanding the mechanisms through which GBP influences consumer behavior in this context is critical. Green purchase intentions are a strategic asset that helps build brand equity, goodwill, and a positive public reputation (Sreen et al., 2018). These intentions are particularly strong among consumers who consciously seek environmentally friendly products (Kautish & Sharma, 2019). Prior studies confirm that attitudes toward green brands significantly enhance green purchase intentions, underlining the importance of targeting consumer attitudes in green marketing efforts (Ha & Janda, 2012; Verma et al., 2019).

Despite growing interest in green marketing, most existing research focuses on observable consumer responses, with limited exploration of the internal cognitive and affective processes linking GBP to purchase behavior (Paul & Bhakar, 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Moreover, there is a lack of empirical evidence from the tourism and hospitality sector in emerging markets, where environmental awareness and regulatory pressures are evolving rapidly.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how green brand positioning affects green brand attitude and green purchase decision in five-star hotels and category-A travel agencies in Egypt. It investigates the mediating role of green brand image and the moderating influence of green trust, integrating both Signaling Theory and TPB to offer a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. By doing so, it contributes theoretically by expanding the application of these frameworks in a credence-driven service industry context and practically by offering actionable insights for marketers seeking to build authentic green brands that resonate with environmentally conscious consumers.

This study is one of the first empirical studies to investigate the green consumer behavior model—linking green brand positioning, green brand image, green brand attitude, and green purchase decision—in the context of the Egyptian hospitality and tourism sector, a setting underrepresented in green marketing literature. Importantly, this study employs a moderated mediation model, which simultaneously tests the mediating role of green brand image and the moderating role of green trust. This integrated model captures both cognitive processing and contingency effects, offering a more nuanced understanding of how green brand signals are translated into behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Underpinning Theories

This study is anchored in Signaling Theory (Spence, 1978) as its primary theoretical lens, complemented by the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985) as a supporting framework. Signaling theory offers a robust explanation for how organizations convey unobservable qualities - such as environmental responsibility—to consumers through credible cues or signals (Mavlanova et al., 2012). In the context of the tourism and hospitality industry—where sustainability claims often involve credence attributes that are difficult for consumers to verify directly—green brand positioning functions as a strategic signal of a firm's environmental commitment (Rahman et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2016). When such signals are perceived as authentic and consistent, they contribute to the formation of a green brand image—the consumer's interpretation of the brand's environmental identity (Lin & Zhou, 2022). This enhanced image can, in turn, foster positive brand attitudes and drive green purchase decisions (Napoli et al., 2015; Fritz et al., 2017).

To deepen the understanding of the behavioral outcomes resulting from signal interpretation, the study draws on the theory of planned behavior. TPB posits that behavior is a function of three components: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985). In this model, green brand attitude reflects consumers' evaluative response toward the brand's environmental orientation and serves as a central predictor of green purchase behavior (Kumar et al., 2021; Khairy et al., 2023b). The integration of TPB complements Signaling Theory by offering a psychological lens on how signal interpretation translates into actual behavioral intent.

Additionally, green trust is introduced as a moderating variable, enhancing the effectiveness of the green brand signal. Trust acts as a mechanism that reduces consumers' perceived risk and skepticism regarding environmental claims, thereby strengthening the relationship between green brand image and both attitude and purchase behavior (Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014; Waites et al., 2020). When consumers trust the brand's environmental claims, they are more likely to interpret the signal favorably and align their actions with their environmental attitudes (Yang & Zhao, 2019). To sum up, Signaling

Theory explains how firms use green brand positioning to convey credible information about their environmental responsibility, thereby reducing information asymmetry between the brand and consumers. These signals—such as eco-labels, green advertising, and sustainable practices—aim to shape consumer perceptions and build trust.

However, while Signaling Theory addresses the external, firm-driven dimension of communication, it does not explain how consumers cognitively process these signals. This is where TPB adds value. TPB focuses on the internal, consumer-driven interpretation of the environmental signals, detailing how these messages influence attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which in turn shape behavioral intentions and ultimately, purchase decisions. The integration of both theories thus allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how green brand signals influence consumer decision-making from both the sender's and receiver's perspectives.

Effects of green brand positioning

Consumers' environmental concern is positively associated with their attitude toward a brand, especially when they perceive that the brand's environmental actions align with its green brand positioning (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Huang et al., 2014). When green claims are perceived as genuine and consistent, consumers are more likely to develop favorable evaluations of the brand. Research supports this link: Aulina & Yuliati (2017) and Gautam & Pokhrel (2023) found that green brand positioning (GBP) significantly enhances consumers' positive attitudes toward environmentally responsible brands.

Effective GBP—whether communicated through eco-labels, sustainability messaging, or environmentally sound operations—shapes how consumers cognitively and emotionally engage with the brand (Hartmann et al., 2005; Xie et al., 2019). This positioning is particularly influential among environmentally conscious consumers, who value coherence between a brand's identity and their own ecological values (Alsheref et al., 2024). In the context of tourism and hospitality, where sustainability has become a key decision factor, credible green positioning strengthens both the affective and cognitive components of brand attitude (Khairy et al., 2023b; Chua et al., 2024). Prior studies similarly confirm that environmentally oriented brand strategies enhance consumer perceptions and elicit positive brand attitudes (Davari & Strutton, 2014; Punyatoya, 2015; Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Green brand positioning positively impacts green brand attitude.

Environmentally conscious consumers are increasingly inclined to purchase eco-friendly products, driven by a desire to align their consumption behavior with their environmental values (Kim & Lee, 2023). To appeal to such consumers, companies must adopt green brand positioning (GBP) as a strategic priority to ensure long-term sustainability and competitive differentiation (Suki, 2016). Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that effective GBP significantly enhances green purchase intentions (GPI), as it signals a brand's commitment to environmental responsibility and builds trust among eco-conscious consumers (Huang et al., 2014; Suki, 2016; Situmorang et al., 2021). From the perspective of Signaling Theory, GBP serves as a credible signal that helps reduce information asymmetry by reassuring consumers about a brand's environmental integrity (Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014; Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015). When these signals are perceived as trustworthy and consistent, they enhance consumers' confidence in the brand and its offerings. As a result, green brand positioning strengthens consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity, value congruence, and environmental commitment—all of which are key determinants of green purchasing behavior. Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Green brand positioning positively impacts green purchase decision.

According to Signaling Theory, the effectiveness of a signal is contingent not only on what is communicated by the firm but also on how the message is received and interpreted by consumers (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993; Kim & Xu, 2023). In the context of green marketing, green brand image represents consumers' perceptions of a brand's environmental responsibility, credibility, and distinctiveness (Chen, 2010). A consistent and authentic green brand positioning (GBP) strategy enhances this image by reinforcing the brand's environmental values through tangible and coherent signals (Huang & Guo, 2021; Maianto et al., 2024). This signaling process is particularly salient in the tourism and hospitality sectors, where services are intangible and consumers rely heavily on perceived brand cues to assess sustainability claims (Khairy et al., 2023b; Yu et al., 2024). Through transparent communication of green practices—such as using renewable energy, promoting ecotourism, or sourcing organic local products—hospitality brands can build a strong green brand image that resonates with environmentally conscious travelers (Alsheref et al., 2024; Seyfi et al., 2025). A robust green brand image not only strengthens consumer trust but also serves as a critical link between GBP and consumer loyalty. Prior studies (Mehdikhani & Valmohammadi, 2022; Wang et al., 2022) consistently support the view that green brand positioning is a primary antecedent in shaping favorable green brand image across environmentally sensitive industries. Consequently, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Green brand positioning positively impacts green brand image.

Effects of green brand image

Green brand image serves as a critical cognitive construct that influences both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

It reflects consumers' perceptions of a brand's genuine commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability (Wang et al., 2021; Ha, 2022). When consumers view a brand as environmentally credible and consistent in its green practices, they are more likely to form favorable affective and cognitive evaluations—i.e., a positive brand attitude (Khairy et al., 2023b; Mansoor et al., 2025). This association is supported by brand management literature, which identifies brand image as a powerful antecedent of brand attitude (Faircloth et al., 2001; Ahn, 2024), particularly for environmentally positioned brands (Majeed et al., 2022; Batool et al., 2023). From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), brand image also plays a role in shaping behavioral intentions. A strong green brand

image enhances consumers' attitudes toward the brand, reinforces social norms favoring sustainable consumption, and increases perceived behavioral control by reducing uncertainty about the environmental impact of the purchase (Majeed et al., 2022). This ultimately increases consumers' confidence in acting according to their green values. Empirical evidence consistently supports this connection: a credible green brand image not only strengthens brand attitudes but also fosters green purchase decisions, loyalty, and long-term customer engagement (Hameed et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Tran, 2023). Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H4: Green brand image positively impacts green brand attitude.

H5: Green brand image positively impacts green purchase decision.

Mediation effects of green brand image

Green brand image serves as a pivotal cognitive mechanism through which green brand positioning (GBP) influences consumer perceptions and behaviors. Drawing from Signaling Theory, GBP functions as a strategic signal used by firms to convey their commitment to environmental sustainability. However, the success of this signal relies heavily on consumers' interpretation, which is encapsulated in the formation of a green brand image—defined as the consumer's perception of a brand's environmental credibility, authenticity, and distinctiveness (Chen, 2010).

When a brand effectively communicates its sustainability values through eco-labels, green messaging, or operational practices, consumers begin to construct a mental image of the brand's environmental identity. If this image is coherent and consistent with the brand's positioning, it enhances green brand attitude, encompassing affective and cognitive evaluations such as admiration, trust, and emotional connection (Khairy et al., 2023b). Thus, green brand image acts as an attitudinal bridge between external brand signals and internal consumer responses. This mediating role becomes especially crucial in the tourism and hospitality sectors, where consumers often face credence uncertainty—that is, difficulty in verifying the authenticity of green claims. In such contexts, a well-formed green brand image helps mitigate skepticism and allows GBP to exert a stronger influence on consumer attitudes (Huang & Guo, 2021; Yu et al., 2024).

Beyond attitude formation, green brand image also plays a mediating role in driving actual consumer behavior, namely green purchase decisions. From the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), behavioral intentions are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. A strong green brand image supports all three components by (1) reinforcing favorable attitudes toward sustainability (Chen, 2010), (2) validating pro-environmental social norms (Culiberg & Elgaaied-Gambier, 2016), and (3) increasing consumer confidence in choosing green alternatives (Papista & Dimitriadis, 2019; Jannah et al., 2024).

A compelling green image signals environmental integrity, reduces perceived risk, and builds brand trust—all of which are critical for converting favorable attitudes into actual purchasing behavior (Wang et al., 2022). Particularly in service-intensive industries where environmental benefits are not always visible, consumers rely on brand image as a proxy for authenticity. Hence, even if GBP is well-designed, it is the consumer's internalized image of the brand that determines whether a green purchase will occur. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H6: Green brand image positively mediates the relationship between green brand positioning and green brand attitude.

H7: Green brand image positively mediates the relationship between green brand positioning and green purchase decision.

Effect of green brand attitude on purchase behavior

Consumer attitudes toward the environment play a pivotal role in shaping their willingness to engage in green purchasing behaviors. As González-Rodríguez et al. (2020) emphasized, understanding the determinants of consumers' willingness to pay a premium for eco-friendly products is essential for advancing sustainable consumption. Environmental concern, reflected in consumer evaluations, preferences, and behavioral intentions, significantly influences green purchase decisions (Chekima et al., 2016; Fauzan & Azhar, 2019). Within this framework, green brand attitude—a consumer's favorable evaluation of a brand's environmental commitment—emerges as a central predictor of green purchasing behavior.

Empirical studies consistently support this relationship. Huang et al. (2014) and Amoako et al. (2020) found that a positive attitude toward green brands directly enhances consumers' intentions to engage in green purchases. Similarly, Han et al. (2017), Jaiswal & Kant (2018), Kautish et al. (2019) provide strong evidence that green brand attitudes substantially influence consumers' purchase behaviors. Individuals who hold favorable views of environmentally sustainable practices are not only more likely to make initial green purchases but also to continue supporting eco-friendly brands over time (Sun & Wang, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). In addition, Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) posits that attitudes are key antecedents of behavioral intentions. A positive green brand attitude not only reinforces personal environmental values but also enhances consumers' motivation to make sustainable choices. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Green brand attitude positively impacts green purchase decision.

Moderating role of green trust

Trust is a critical determinant of consumers' green purchase behavior, particularly in contexts where environmental attributes are not directly observable, such as the tourism and hospitality sectors. Defined by Rousseau et al. (1998) as a psychological state involving the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations about another's intentions or actions, trust serves to reduce uncertainty and perceived risk during decision-making. In green marketing, this concept is captured by green trust, which refers to a consumer's belief that a brand's environmental claims are credible, reliable, and based on genuine sustainability commitments (Chen, 2010; Pang et al., 2022).

Garbarino & Johnson (1999) noted that trust functions as a powerful predictor of future purchase intentions, particularly when consumers face high perceived risk. In environments characterized by information asymmetry—where consumers cannot directly verify the ecological performance of products or services—green trust becomes indispensable. It reassures consumers that the brand is competent, honest, and environmentally responsible. This trust facilitates not only initial engagement but also long-term loyalty, as it builds confidence in the brand's environmental integrity (Ong et al., 2015; Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017). Empirical studies support the central role of green trust in shaping green purchase intentions. Higher levels of trust have been linked to increased willingness to buy eco-friendly products, both initially and repeatedly (Lam et al., 2016; Gil & Jacob, 2018; Wang et al., 2022). Trust not only reduces perceived uncertainty but also enhances emotional attachment to green brands, strengthening the connection between environmental values and behavioral intentions (Yang & Zhao, 2019). Consumers who are environmentally conscious are especially reliant on trust when choosing brands that align with their values and seek to minimize environmental harm (Li et al., 2021).

Trust becomes especially salient at the interpretation stage, where consumers evaluate whether the perceived green image is authentic and aligns with their own values and expectations (Al-Romeedy et al., 2025; Khairy et al., 2026). Thus, green trust moderates the relationship between green brand image and green brand attitude or purchase decisions, because it acts as a filter through which consumers interpret the credibility and consistency of environmental claims. In contrast, other pathways (e.g., green positioning → image) are more rooted in firm-driven signaling processes and less contingent on consumer-level evaluations. Therefore, we theorize that green trust is a boundary condition that strengthens the translation of a favorable green image into positive attitude and behavior when it is high, and weakens this translation when it is low.

Building on these studies, this study proposes that green trust functions as a moderator, reinforcing the strength of key relationships within the green branding framework. Specifically, green trust is expected to amplify the positive effects of green brand image on both green brand attitude and green purchase decision, by enhancing consumers' confidence in the brand's environmental claims. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H9: Green trust positively moderates the relationship between green brand image and green brand attitude.

H10: Green trust positively moderates the relationship between green brand image and green purchase decision.

Research framework

This study posits a comprehensive framework (Figure 1), asserting that GBP positively influences GBA, GPD, and GBI. Furthermore, the framework proposes that GBI plays a mediating role, positively linking GBP to both GBA and GPD. Additionally, GT is hypothesized to act as a moderator, strengthening the relationships between GBI and both GBA and GPD.

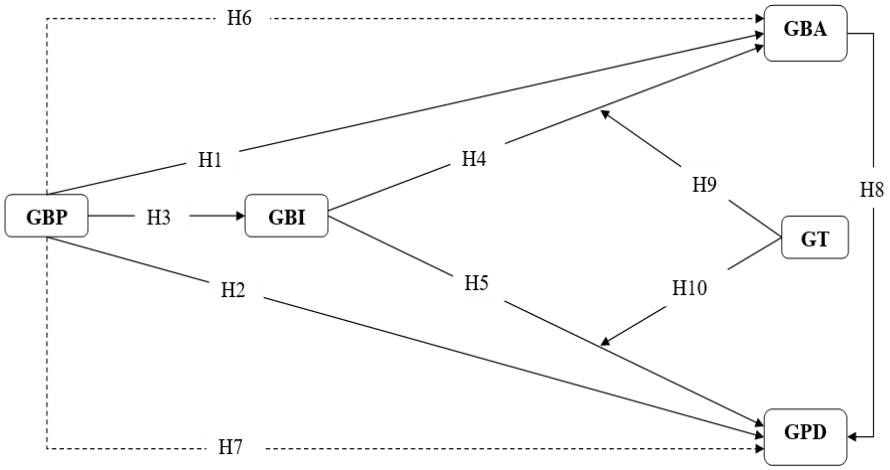

Figure 1. Research framework

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of two primary sections. The first part focused on measuring five key constructs within the research model using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Items for these constructs were adapted from previous studies. Green brand positioning (GBP): Four items from Suki (2016) were used, such as "*Green hospitality and tourism services have met my personal preferences and needs*". Green brand attitude (GBA): Three items from Chen et al. (2017) were included, for example, "*I prefer the brand because it is environmentally friendly*". Green purchase decision (GPD): A three-item scale from Kumar & Ghodeswar (2015) was employed, with items like "*I choose to buy products that are environmentally friendly*". Green brand image (GBI): Five items from Chen (2010) were utilized, featuring statements such as "*The branding is based on its emphasis on environmental protection*". Green trust (GT): Four items from Chen & Chang (2013) were assessed, including "*Green products have assurance towards environmental protection*". The second section of the questionnaire captured demographic information about respondents, including age, gender, and educational level. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Sampling and data collection

This study employed quantitative research design. Data were gathered through an online questionnaire administered to customers of green hotels and category (A) travel agencies in Egypt. These establishments were selected due to their prominence in Egypt's tourism sector and their commitment to quality and sustainability. Green hotels were chosen for their established environmental orientation and sustainability practices (Salama et al., 2022), while category (A) travel agencies were included for their comprehensive service offerings (Alsheref et al., 2024). Prior to starting the questionnaire, participants were asked screening questions to confirm their experience with green hospitality services and their concern for environmental issues. To maximize reach and cost-efficiency, an online questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Arabic using a back-translation process.

Non-probability sampling techniques combining purposive and snowball sampling were used due to the challenges of defining the exact population size. Purposive sampling involved distributing the survey link through social media platforms (Facebook travel groups, hotel websites, TripAdvisor, and LinkedIn traveler forums), while snowball sampling leveraged professional networks to disseminate the questionnaire. To be eligible for participation, respondents were required to demonstrate a concern for environmental issues and possess prior experience with green hotels or products. The questionnaire was limited to a single submission per IP address to maintain data integrity.

Table 1. Participants' profile (N=479)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	267	55.7%
	Female	212	44.3%
Age	< 25	68	14.2%
	25- < 35	121	25.3%
	35–45	187	39%
	45- < 55	103	21.5%
	>55	-	-
Educational level	High schools	-	-
	Bachelor	323	67.4%
	Postgraduate degree	156	32.6%

Data collection occurred between March and August 2024, resulting in 507 completed questionnaires. After excluding invalid responses, a final sample of 479 was obtained, exceeding the minimum sample size calculated using Cochran's formula (1977) and yielding a response rate of 94.4%. The sample comprised 479 participants, with a gender distribution of 55.7% male and 44.3% female. Regarding age, 14.2% were below 25 years old, while 39% were aged between 35 and 44. The majority (67.4%) possessed a bachelor's degree. Table 1 and Figure 2 present the demographic characteristics of the sample.

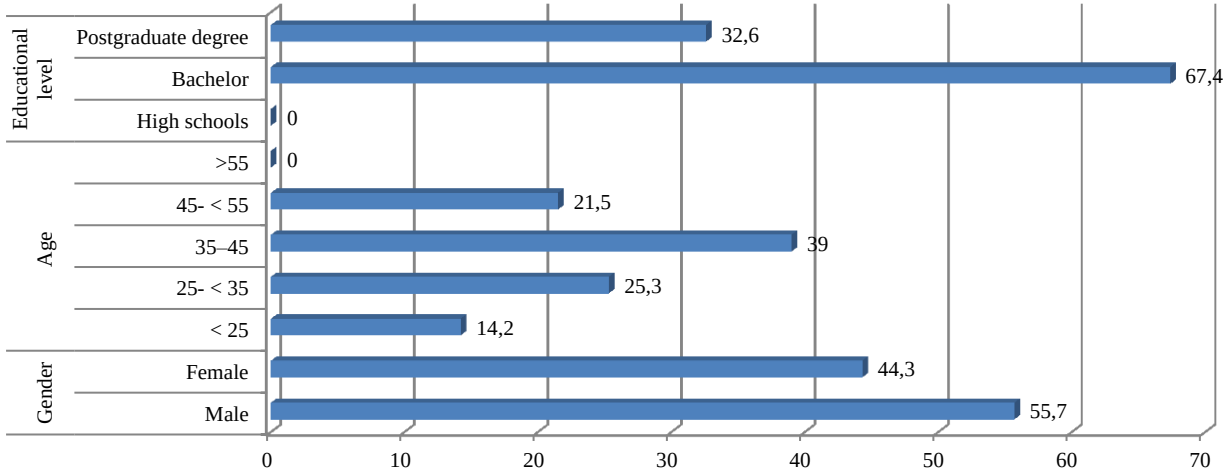

Figure 2. Participants' profile in percentage.

Data analysis

Given its suitability for analyzing complex structural models with both direct and indirect relationships among multiple variables, PLS-SEM was employed as the analytical technique for this study (Alsheref et al., 2024; Salama et al., 2025). WarpPLS 8.0 software was utilized to evaluate the proposed research hypotheses. This approach aligns with established practices in tourism and hospitality research (Khairy et al., 2023a, c; ElAdawi et al., 2024; Awad et al., 2024).

Common method biases

Before subsequent statistical analyses, a common method variance (CMV) assessment was conducted to address potential methodological biases. Employing Harman's single-factor test and full collinearity VIFs (Kock, 2021), the analysis did not reveal evidence of a dominant factor explaining over 50% of the total variance, indicating negligible CMV concerns.

Furthermore, VIF values (Table 2) remained below the critical threshold of 3 (Kock, 2022), confirming the absence of significant multicollinearity among the latent variables. All VIFs ranged from 1.034 to 1.820, below the critical value of 3.3.

RESULTS

Measurement model assessment

The results regarding the assessment of the measurement model are presented in Table 2. Individual item reliability, indicated by outer loadings ranging from 0.698 to 0.907, exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Internal consistency reliability, evaluated using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA), demonstrated satisfactory levels. CR scores ranged from 0.799 to 0.926, surpassing the 0.7 cutoff (Kock, 2022), while CA scores varied from 0.623 to 0.897. Although CA values fell below the strict 0.7 criterion in one variable, they met the more relaxed standard often applied in practice (Kock & Lynn, 2012). Convergent validity, assessed through average variance extracted (AVE) scores, was confirmed by values exceeding the 0.5 threshold (Hair et al., 2021).

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Tables 3 and 4). The square root of each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded its correlation with any other construct, meeting the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). Additionally, all HTMT ratios were below the recommended 0.85 threshold, further supporting discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Prior to testing study's hypothesis testing, a comprehensive assessment of the model's overall fit was conducted. As presented in Table 5, the model fit indices met the rigorous standards established by Kock (2022). These findings provide strong support for the model's adequacy.

To investigate potential variations in structural relationships based on participant demographics, a multi-group analysis was conducted. However, the results indicated no statistically significant differences in path coefficients across groups. This suggests that customer responses and the identified relationships were consistent regardless of demographic characteristics.

Table 2. Factor loadings, CA, CR, AVE, and VIF

	Item Loading	CR	CA	AVE	VIF
Green Brand Positioning (GBP)	-	0.865	0.790	0.616	1.820
GBP.1	0.796				
GBP.2	0.860				
GBP.3	0.751				
GBP.4	0.725				
Green Brand Attitude (GBA)	-	0.799	0.623	0.571	1.641
GBA.1	0.775				
GBA.2	0.791				
GBA.3	0.698				
Green Purchase Decision (GPD)	-	0.868	0.770	0.687	1.519
GPD.1	0.755				
GPD.2	0.875				
GPD.3	0.852				
Green Brand Image (GBI)	-	0.899	0.859	0.640	1.626
GBI.1	0.831				
GBI.2	0.778				
GBI.3	0.817				
GBI.4	0.810				
GBI.5	0.763				
Green Trust (GT)	0.850	0.926	0.894	0.758	1.034
GT.1	0.907				
GT.2	0.877				
GT.3	0.848				
GT.4	0.850				

Table 3. Discriminant validity results

	GBP	GBA	GPD	GBI	GT
GBP	***0.785***	0.474	0.431	0.525	0.083
GBA	0.474	***0.756***	0.481	0.455	0.089
GPD	0.431	0.481	***0.829***	0.493	0.027
GBI	0.525	0.455	0.493	***0.800***	0.036
GT	0.083	0.089	0.027	0.036	***0.871***

Table 4. HTMT ratios

(good if < 0.90, best if < 0.85)	GBP	GBA	GPD	GBI	GT
GBP					
GBA	0.637				
GPD	0.522	0.703			
GBI	0.600	0.625	0.610		
GT	0.103	0.148	0.059	0.060	

Table 5. Model fit and quality indices results

	Assessment	Criterion	Supported/Rejected
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.286, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.381, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.374, P<0.001	P<0.05	Supported
Average block VIF (AVIF)	1.913	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3	Supported
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	1.433	acceptable if <= 5, ideally <= 3.3	Supported
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.524	small >= 0.1, medium >= 0.25, large >= 0.36	Supported
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	0.875	acceptable if >= 0.7, ideally = 1	Supported
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	0.968	acceptable if >= 0.9, ideally = 1	Supported
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable if >= 0.7	Supported
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	acceptable if >= 0.7	Supported

Structural model assessment and hypotheses testing

Following confirmation of the measurement model, the significance of path coefficients was determined through standard bootstrapping procedures. Results from hypothesis testing (Figure 3, Table 6) revealed significant positive relationships between GBP and several key consumer-related variables. Specifically, the results indicated a statistically significant positive association between GBP and both GBA (β= 0.29, p< 0.01), GPD (β= 0.22, p< 0.01), and GBI (β= 0.58, p< 0.01), respectively, which supports H1, H2, and H3. Furthermore, GBI exhibited positive and significant relationships with GPA (β= 0.52, p< 0.01) and GPD (β= 0.47, p< 0.01), thereby supporting H4 and H5.

Table 6. Mediation analysis results

H	Path a GBP→GBI	Path b GBI→GBA GBI→GPD	Indirect Effect	SE	t-value	95% LL	95% UL	Decision
H6. GBP→GBI→GBA	0.586	0.527	0.309	0.043	7.182	0.225	0.393	Mediation
H7. GBP→GBI→GPD	0.586	0.475	0.278	0.043	6.473	0.194	0.363	Mediation

Moreover, a positive and significant relationship between GBA and GPD (β= 0.36, p< 0.01) was found, supporting H8. To examine proposed mediation effects, the Preacher & Hayes (2008) approach was employed. Results indicated significant mediation of GBP's impact on GBA and GPD by GBI (β= 0.309, p< 0.01 and β= 0.278, p< 0.01, respectively). Bootstrapped confidence intervals for the indirect effects did not include zero, further supporting the mediation hypothesis. Consequently, H6 and H7 were supported. Regarding the moderating role of GT, results indicated that GT significantly moderates the relationships between GBI and GBA (β= 0.18, p< 0.01) and GBI and GPD (β= 0.12, p< 0.01), supporting H9 and H10.

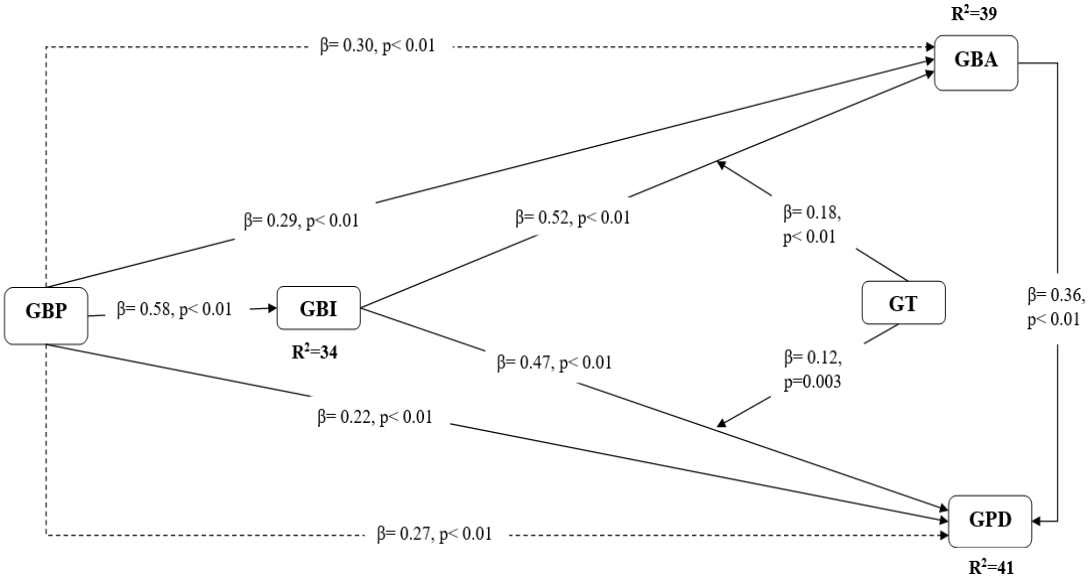

Figure 3. The study's final model

Explanatory power of the model

The explanatory power of the model was assessed using the R^2 coefficient calculated via the PLS algorithm in WarpPLS. The obtained R^2 values surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.19 (Chin, 1998). As illustrated in Figure 2, GBP accounted for 34% of the variance in GBI (R^2= 0.34). Furthermore, GBP and GBI together explained 39% of the variance in GBA (R^2= 0.39), while GBP, GBI, and GBA collectively accounted for 41% of the variance in GPD (R^2= 0.41). These R^2 values indicate that GBP significantly predicted GBI, GBA, and GPD.

Predictive relevance of the model

The predictive relevance of the inner model was assessed using the Stone-Geisser Q^2 statistic. This metric evaluates the model's capacity to predict dependent latent variables. The obtained Q^2 values, derived from the blindfolding technique (Table 7), indicate a moderate to strong predictive power of the reflective measurement model (Kock, 2022).

Table 8. Predictive relevance Q^2 of the model

Constructs	Q^2	Predictive Relevance
GBI	0.345	Medium
GBA	0.394	Medium
GPD	0.413	Strong

DISCUSSION

This study underscores the crucial role of GBP in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors towards environmentally friendly brands. Our findings confirm a significant positive correlation between GBP and GBA (H1), GPD (H2), and the development of a strong GBI (H3). These results align with existing literature emphasizing that when green claims are perceived as authentic and consistent, consumers are more likely to form favorable evaluations of the brand. Previous research consistently supports the link between GBP and enhanced consumer attitudes.

For instance, studies by Aulina & Yuliati (2017), Gautam & Pokhrel (2023), Khairy et al. (2023b), and Chua et al. (2024) all found that robust green brand positioning significantly fosters positive consumer attitudes towards environmentally responsible brands. Moreover, effective green brand positioning has been repeatedly shown to boost green purchase intentions. This is because it signals a brand's genuine commitment to environmental responsibility, thereby building crucial trust among eco-conscious consumers (Huang et al., 2014; Suki, 2016; Situmorang et al., 2021).

Moreover, the functional attributes (e.g., product performance, quality) and emotional benefits (e.g., feelings, associations) inherent in GBP serve as vital nodes in forming brand associations and ultimately shaping the green brand image (Hartmann et al., 2005). The elaboration likelihood model (Keller, 1993) further validates the importance of both cognitive and affective factors in this process. When consumers perceive a congruence between their desired attributes and a product's utilitarian benefits, a central processing route is activated, leading to a more thoughtful and deliberate formation of GBI. Conversely, when emotional benefits are more prominent, a peripheral processing route is engaged, resulting in a more impulsive and emotionally driven green brand image (Alwi & Kitchen, 2014).

This theoretical framework supports the hypothesis by Lin & Zhou (2022) that a stronger emphasis on both the functional and emotional benefits of GBP can significantly enhance GBI.

The study revealed a positive relationship between GBI and consumers' GBA, and GBI positively mediates the relationship between GBP and GBA (H4 and H6 supported). GBP leverages communication and differentiation to emphasize a brand's environmental commitment and shape customers' GBA. It also clarifies the brand's connection to environmental concerns by highlighting eco-friendly products and brand attributes (Rios et al., 2006).

As marketing communication builds a brand image (Seitz et al., 2010), successful green positioning can foster a positive attitude toward the brand. GBI acts as a bridge, allowing organizations to utilize GBP strategies to shape customers' positive attitudes toward their brand (Aulina & Yuliati, 2017). The finding resonates with Ogba & Tan (2009), who reported that brand image and perceived quality have a positive impact on customers' attitudes toward the brand. Namkung & Jang (2013) further support this by demonstrating that customers focusing on environmentally friendly brands have a better attitude towards these brands. Chen (2010) and Jeong et al. (2014) both reported a positive and significant impact of GBI on GBA, suggesting that GBI can change consumers' perceptions and attitudes. Additionally, Salehzadeh et al. (2023) also noted a positive relationship between GBI and GBA, having a positive view of an environmentally friendly brand leads to a positive attitude toward the brand.

Moreover, the study indicated that GBI has a significant positive impact on GPD; and GBI significantly and positively mediates the GBP-GPD relationship (H5 and H7 supported). GBP plays a pivotal role in influencing consumers' GPD. Through strategic communication campaigns that highlight a brand's eco-friendly attributes, GBP can cultivate a positive perception of green brands (Hartmann et al., 2005; Suki, 2016). Customers often perceive a portion of their spending on green products as contributing to environmental causes (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022).

GBP stimulates customers' GPD through strong GBI. Consumers are more likely to choose environmentally friendly products, even if they come at a higher cost (Majeed et al., 2022). This aligns with Bukhari's et al. (2017) findings, which demonstrate that GBI positively influences customers' GPD. Kotler & Keller (2016) emphasize that brand image is a crucial component in the decision-making process. Customers are more likely to choose products that not only benefit them but also have a positive image concerning the environment. Dwipamurti et al. (2018) also observed that a positive GBI gives organizations a competitive advantage, making them a priority for customers when making GPD. Similarly, Fatmawati & Alikhwan (2021) found that a GBI positively affects GPD, with a stronger brand image leading to higher purchase rates. A favorable brand image thus plays a key role in shaping customers' purchasing decisions.

The results of the current study also demonstrated a positive correlation between customers' GBA and their GPD (H8 supported). This suggests that customers with positive attitudes toward green brands are more likely to make GPD. This result is in accordance with previous research showing that customers' purchasing decisions are often influenced by their environmental attitudes (Felix & Braunsberger, 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Consumers with a positive GBA display a

strong environmental consciousness and regularly favor using eco-friendly brands. They may even perceive these brands as integral to their identity (Suki, 2016; Aulina & Yuliati, 2017). Similarly, Prakash & Pathak (2017) found a direct correlation between customers' positive attitudes toward green packaging and their tendency to purchase such products. Recent research by Mehraj & Qureshi (2022) further supports this connection, revealing a significant and positive relationship between consumers' GBA and their green purchase intentions. The study's findings suggest that as consumers develop more positive GBA, their likelihood of purchasing green brands increases. However, Ramayah et al. (2010) did not find a significant association between customers' eco-friendly attitudes and their green purchase decisions.

Finally, our study showed that GT significantly and positively moderates the relationships between GBI-GBA and GBI-GPD (H9 and H10 supported). This indicates that GT strengthens the relationship between customers' perception of GBI and their GBA. In addition, GT also amplifies the impact of customers' perception of GBI on their GPD. According to Pang et al. (2022), green trust driven by its reliability, friendliness, and competence, can foster customers' positive attitudes toward green brands. Joji (2011) emphasized the importance of trust in building positive attitudes towards stores and brands. Trust can instill a sense of confidence and assurance in customers, leading to the formation of strong positive beliefs about the brand. similarly, Yang & Zhao (2019) emphasized the role of GT in fostering positive green brand attitudes and promoting green product purchases. Lee (2020) further supported these findings by demonstrating that GT can mitigate perceived risk while concurrently increasing customers' positive attitudes and purchase likelihood during a transaction. Our findings are consistent with previous research by Li et al. (2021) and Almoussawi et al. (2022), which demonstrated that GT could amplify the positive impact of various factors on green purchase intentions. These studies collectively highlight the importance of green trust in fostering environmentally conscious consumer behavior.

Theoretical implications

This study makes several significant theoretical contributions by employing signaling theory (Spence, 1978) as its primary lens, supported by the TPB (Ajzen, 1985), to investigate the intricate dynamics of green brand positioning in the tourism and hospitality industry. Firstly, this research proposes and empirically validates a novel model that elucidates how green brand positioning enhances consumers' green brand attitude and influences their green purchase decisions through the mediation of green brand image and the moderation of green trust. This comprehensive model significantly contributes to the existing body of literature on green brand positioning and green marketing. By corroborating earlier research while offering new insights into the effectiveness of green brand positioning strategies, our findings deepen the understanding of how organizations can effectively signal their environmental responsibility to consumers, particularly given that environmental claims often represent credence attributes difficult for consumers to verify directly.

This theoretical advancement provides a robust framework for understanding the signaling process and its subsequent impact on consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions. Secondly, the study extends existing knowledge by rigorously examining the mediating role of green brand image in the relationship between green brand positioning and both green brand attitude and green purchase decision. Drawing on signaling theory, which posits that green brand positioning functions as a strategic signal of a firm’s environmental commitment that contributes to the formation of a green brand image, this research empirically demonstrates how this enhanced image, in turn, fosters positive brand attitudes and drives green purchase decisions. This mediation analysis, particularly within the context of the hospitality and tourism industry, offers a novel contribution by detailing the specific pathway through which effective green signals are interpreted and integrated into consumers' brand perceptions, ultimately influencing their behavioral predispositions.

Thirdly, this study is among the first to systematically investigate the moderating role of green trust in the relationship between green brand image and customers' green brand attitude and green purchase decision. Integrating green trust into the theoretical framework derived from signaling theory and the TPB provides valuable insights into how this crucial factor can enhance the effectiveness of green brand signals. Trust acts as a mechanism that reduces consumers' perceived risk and skepticism regarding environmental claims, thereby strengthening the relationship between the interpreted signal (green brand image) and subsequent behavioral outcomes. By demonstrating that when consumers trust a brand’s environmental claims, they are more likely to interpret the signal favorably and align their actions with their environmental attitudes, this analysis offers a critical refinement to both signaling theory and the TPB, providing a basis for further research into the nuanced interplay of trust in consumer response to green marketing efforts.

Practical implications

The study’s findings offer several strategic implications for hospitality and tourism organizations seeking to position themselves effectively in an increasingly sustainability-driven marketplace.

First, the results underscore the importance of green brand positioning (GBP) as a long-term strategic asset rather than a short-term promotional tool. Organizations should integrate sustainability values into their core brand identity, aligning environmental messaging with broader positioning strategies to build lasting differentiation in a competitive service environment. Second, to maximize the impact of GBP on green brand image (GBI), customer attitudes, and purchase decisions, managers should adopt a cohesive and strategic communication approach. This involves moving beyond surface-level tactics such as green packaging or energy-efficient operations, and instead crafting consistent narratives across all brand touchpoints - from digital platforms and service environments to employee interactions. Messaging should emphasize authenticity, transparency, and long-term commitment to environmental goals. Third, the

findings highlight the strategic role of GBI in influencing attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Firms should therefore actively cultivate a strong green brand image by showcasing their contributions to sustainable tourism, leveraging this image to appeal to environmentally conscious customer segments such as eco-travelers and value-based consumers.

These segments are not only more loyal but are also more likely to serve as advocates for the brand. Fourth, green trust (GT) emerges as a key moderating factor that strengthens the impact of GBI on customer attitudes and behaviors.

In high-uncertainty service contexts, trust functions as a critical filter through which customers assess the credibility of environmental claims. Therefore, organizations must invest in building and maintaining trust through verifiable environmental certifications, transparent reporting, and consistent delivery on green promises. Finally, these strategies should be framed as long-term investments that yield both reputational and financial returns. By aligning brand positioning with sustainability trends and consumer values, hospitality firms can justify investments in sustainability branding as drivers of brand equity, competitive resilience, and market relevance. Ultimately, integrating GBP, GBI, and GT into a unified strategic framework can support both environmental stewardship and sustained business growth.

Limitations and further research

This research provides valuable insights into the relationships between GBP, GBI, GBT, and GPD within the context of Egyptian green hotels and category (A) travel agencies. However, certain limitations should be considered for future research. First, the focus on Egypt's green hotels and category (A) travel agencies limits the direct applicability of the findings. Future studies should explore these relationships in diverse organizational contexts, such as restaurants, airlines, and other Middle Eastern and African countries, to enhance generalizability.

Second, while the study investigated the mediating and moderating roles of GBI and GT, other factors like green equity, green brand knowledge, and green identification may also influence these relationships. Future research could explore the mediating or moderating effects of these variables. Third, the cross-sectional study of this research makes it challenging to establish definitive cause-and-effect relationships. Future research could use longitudinal studies to provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between the investigated constructs.

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