



The Effect of Foreign Tourists' Environmental Concern and Brand Trust on Green Purchase Intention: The Case of İstanbul

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Abstract

The research examines the impact of environmental concern and brand trust on tourist intentions to buy environmentally friendly products, and services. The research design uses quantitative methods with an explanatory survey approach to obtain data. A survey of 450 international tourists in İstanbul used a structured questionnaire and employed a non-random purposive sampling method to gather data. The research data collection took place between February 2025 and researchers handed out standardized questionnaires to visitors at Üsküdar and Hagia Sophia tourist locations. The research used established assessment tools to evaluate environmental concern and brand trust and green purchase intention. The analysis of data included confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The model demonstrated an excellent fit to the data and explained %78,5 of the total variance in green purchase intention, indicating a strong explanatory power. The SEM results supported both research hypotheses because environmental concern positively affected green purchase intention and brand trust had a stronger positive impact. International tourists visiting İstanbul show stronger sustainable purchasing behavior based on brand trust than environmental concern according to the research findings. Tourists base their green purchase decisions on environmental concerns but brand trust plays a more significant role in their purchasing behavior.

Keywords: Environmental concern, Brand trust, Green purchase intention

JEL Classification: M31, D12, Q56, L83

Yabancı Turistlerin Çevresel Duyarlılıkları ve Marka Güveninin Yeşil Satın Alma Niyeti Üzerindeki Etkisi: İstanbul Örneği

Öz

Bu araştırma, çevresel duyarlılık ve marka güveninin turistlerin çevre dostu ürün ve hizmetleri satın alma niyetleri üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Bu araştırma, anket yöntemine dayalı nicel ve açıklayıcı bir araştırma deseni benimsemektedir. İstanbul'da 450 uluslararası turist ile yürütülen bir anket çalışmasında, yapılandırılmış bir soru formu kullanılmış ve veriler olasılıksız amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle toplanmıştır. Veri toplama dönemi 2025 Şubat ayını kapsamış, yapılandırılmış anketler Üsküdar ve Ayasofya turistik alanlarında dağıtılmıştır. Çalışmada çevresel kaygı, marka güveni ve yeşil satın alma niyetini ölçmek için yerleşik ölçeklerden yararlanılmıştır. Veri analizi kapsamında doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve yapısal eşitlik modellemesi uygulanmıştır. Model, verilere mükemmel bir uyum göstermiştir ve yeşil satın alma niyetindeki toplam varyansın %78,5'ini açıklamıştır; bu da güçlü bir açıklayıcılık gücüne işaret etmektedir. SEM sonuçları her iki araştırma hipotezini de desteklemiştir; çünkü çevresel duyarlılığın yeşil satın alma niyeti üzerinde pozitif bir etkisi vardır ve marka güveninin etkisi daha güçlüdür. Araştırma sonuçları, İstanbul'u ziyaret eden uluslararası turistler arasında marka güveninin sürdürülebilir satın alma davranışı üzerinde çevresel duyarlılıktan daha güçlü bir etkisi olduğunu göstermektedir. Çevresel duyarlılık ve marka güveni, turistlerin yeşil satın alma niyetlerini etkilemektedir; ancak etkinin şiddeti bakımından marka güveni daha baskındır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevresel duyarlılık, Marka güveni, Yeşil satın alma niyeti

JEL Sınıflandırması: M31, D12, Q56, L83

Introduction

Tourism development emphasizes environmental sustainability because travelers seek to participate in activities which defend the environment. Tourists express strong environmental concern according to recent surveys and they show willingness to back hotels and services which protect the environment. The observed behavioral patterns differ from stated intentions which creates an attitude-behaviour gap (Merli, Preziosi, Acampora, and Ali, 2019; Wang et al.,2023).

The scope of this research focuses on understanding the combined influence of environmental concern and brand trust on tourists' green purchase intentions in the context of İstanbul, one of the world's largest tourist destinations. The research maintains its value because sustainable tourism operations need to verify whether tourists purchase products following their display of environmental support. Research on green

consumption has been extensive but there is limited study on tourism-related purchasing habits in emerging destinations such as Türkiye because sustainability knowledge and corporate environmental trust are not well established in this region.

Tourists show environmental values through their statements but actual implementation during travel depends on various specific factors. The research establishes a new connection between tourist moral-psychological motives (values and concern) and trust-based consumer responses (brand reliability) which previous tourism studies have not studied.

The main requirement for environmentally friendly purchasing behavior depends on environmental awareness which shows how well people understand and worry about environmental harm and their desire to protect nature (Roberts, 1996, p. 218; Stern, 2000, p. 415). People who strongly care about the environment choose to buy sustainable products (Joshi and Rahman, 2015, 130; Teng et al., 2013). Teng et al. (2013) showed how altruistic and biospheric values among tourists which stem from environmental concern led them to choose green hotels. The study by Steg and Vlek (2009, p. 312) shows that individuals who demonstrate strong environmental concern select products which have positive effects on the environment. The research base of this study uses Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory which Schwartz (1977) developed first before Stern (2000) added to it. The theory shows how people's values between altruism and biospheric values together with their beliefs about environmental effects and their moral standards about right conduct result in environmentally responsible actions. The VBN model explains why people with higher environmental concern display environmentally friendly behaviors through its systematic structure. Therefore, this theory forms the foundation of Hypothesis 1, predicting that environmental concern has a positive effect on green purchase intention.

Brand trust emerges as a crucial factor because it represents the consumer's confidence in a brand's dependability and moral integrity (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera, 2001). The element of trust minimizes perceived risks which in turn strengthens customer confidence in product quality (Moorman, Deshpande and Zaltman, 1993). The decision to purchase sustainable products depends heavily on trusting that a brand makes authentic environmental claims during sustainable consumption. Chen (2010, p. 314) establishes that authentic green branding creates substantial increases in customer purchase intention for environmentally friendly products. Green consumption in tourism becomes more likely when visitors trust the sustainability initiatives of hotels and tour operators. Ulker-Demirel and Ciftci (2020, p. 210) demonstrate that genuine eco-friendly hospitality practices create visitor trust, and Sultana, Amin, and Islam (2022, p. 238) discovered that green trust functions as an intermediary variable between environmental knowledge and green hotel visit intentions.

Tourists who plan to buy environmentally friendly products during their trip qualify as green purchase intention in this research. Brand trust functions as a psychological mechanism which confirms to tourists that hotels and restaurants and tourism service providers make genuine and trustworthy green claims. The brands'

transparent and dependable nature will help visitors develop trust which will lead them to make purchases based on their positive environmental beliefs. The theoretical framework supports Hypothesis 2 which states that brand trust leads to positive green purchase intention.

The research investigates İstanbul as a worldwide tourist hub to determine the combined effect of these elements on tourists' decisions to purchase environmentally friendly products. The study surveys 450 international tourists to gather strong evidence about the psychological drivers that matter most. The research helps bridge the gap between tourist attitudes and their actual behavior by determining which factor between environmental concern and brand trust produces more significant effects on green purchase intentions in developing nations.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Environmental Concern and Green Purchase Intention

The degree of environmental concern among people indicates their knowledge and apprehension regarding environmental matters (Dunlap and Jones, 2002, 484). Research on consumers shows that people who show higher environmental concern tend to express stronger intentions to purchase green products (Zhuang et al., 2021, 478). People who care about the environment view green products positively while believing they must act to defend nature (Zhuang et al., 2021, 478). Lee (2008) discovered that environmental concern ranked as the second most powerful factor in driving Hong Kong adolescents to make green purchasing decisions. The Value–Belief–Norm theory supports these results because it explains how ecological concerns lead people to engage in environmentally friendly buying choices (Schwartz, 1977; Lee, 2008).

Environmental concern among tourists leads them to select sustainable options during their travels. People who care about the environment tend to select environmentally friendly hotels and purchase organic local products and support conservation-based tourist attractions. Tourists with high ecological awareness tend to make eco-friendly choices. Our research predicts that environmentally concerned tourists will have higher intentions to make green purchases which include both eco-friendly and less polluting products. The findings match previous research studies (Zameer and Yasmeen, 2022, p. 624; Zhuang et al., 2021, p. 478). Zameer and Yasmeen (2022, p. 624) define green purchase intention through statements such as “I will purchase products that produce less pollution in the upcoming years” which shows that environmental awareness leads to concrete purchasing decisions.

The research by Wang et al. (2024) applied the Value–Belief–Norm framework to green hotel visitors and found that environmental concern significantly increased tourists' moral obligation and intention to choose eco-friendly accommodation. The research conducted by Gulzar et al. (2024) Tourists develop green purchasing behavior during their trips because sustainability consciousness and environmental attitude and ecotourism experience interact according to research studies. The pattern appears in both

developed and developing markets according to (Khan and Qureshi, 2025) in India shows that environmental concern and perceived consumer effectiveness together create stronger green purchase intentions through brand trust as the mediating factor.

1.2 Brand Trust and Green Purchase Intention

The belief consumers have about a brand's dependability together with its moral standards and delivery of expected advantages defines brand trust according to Morgan and Hunt (1994). The purchasing process becomes more certain because of brand trust which reduces consumer uncertainty. The green context requires trust as an essential factor because green products are typically new or unfamiliar to consumers. The understanding deficit among consumers about green products makes trust a critical factor that affects their purchase intentions according to Zhuang et al. (2021, p. 496). Chen (2010) defines green trust as the willingness to depend on eco-friendly objects which derive their credibility from their authenticity (Zhuang et al., 2021, p. 496).

Studies demonstrate that brand trust at a higher level leads to greater purchase intentions for all product categories including green products. Tourists feel more at ease when they select green options from brands they trust such as hotel chains or eco-tourism operators. Tourists who trust brands will have higher green purchase intentions according to our research hypothesis (H2). The findings align with relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, 20-38) and empirical research from Zhuang et al. (2021, 496) that trust functions as a key driver of eco-consumption.

Akram et al. (2024, 453-471) discovered that green advertising and eco-labels create positive effects on green purchase intentions because brand trust serves as their intermediate factor. Moreover, the study showed that brand trust and advertising credibility function together to connect environmental concern with green purchase intention across various countries thus confirming trust acts as a worldwide factor for eco-friendly consumer decisions.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sampling and Data Collection

This research adopts a quantitative and explanatory design based on survey method to examine the relationship between environmental concern, brand trust, and green purchase intention among international tourists in Istanbul.

The research used non-probability purposive sampling to select international tourists visiting Istanbul. The selection method guaranteed that participants possessed suitable travel experiences. The required sample size was determined through Cochran's proportion estimate formula (Cochran, 1977, 75). The population of tourists was considered infinite, and the survey used a 95% confidence level ($z = 1.96$) with a 5% margin of error, which resulted in a required sample size of 384 respondents. The research

team obtained 450 valid questionnaires with 306 female and 144 male participants to achieve reliability.

The data collection period spanned from February 2025 to March 2025 through structured questionnaires distributed at the Üsküdar and Hagia Sophia tourist sites. The survey was available in English and Turkish, and trained bilingual assistants provided assistance to respondents to guarantee their understanding of the survey. The research participants joined voluntarily without revealing their identities and received confirmation that their data would serve research purposes only.

2.2 Ethical considerations

The data for this study were collected in person through a questionnaire from Feb 6, 2025, to March 4, 2025. A total of 450 international tourists in İstanbul (306 female, 144 male), selected using a purposive, non-random sampling method, participated in the survey. The necessary approvals from the ethics committee (Cumhuriyet University Ethics Committee decision dated Jan 17, 2025, No. 23) were obtained before data collection.

2.3 Measurement Instruments

The measurement instruments consisted of multi-item scales which originated from literature sources and used five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Abstract contains no references. The scale sources receive their citations in the methodology section.

Environmental Concern (EC): Four items adapted from (Vinoth, Srivastava, and Mittal, 2024). Brand Trust (BT): Four items adapted from Khatami and Bardakçı (2023, p. 45). The items evaluate the consumer's trust in products from their preferred brand. Green Purchase Intention (GPI): Four items adapted from Zameer and Yasmeen (2022, p. 624). The items measure the willingness of customers to acquire environmentally friendly products .

The reliability and convergent validity statistics for each construct appear in Table 1. The Cronbach's α values reached 0.813 for Environmental Concern and 0.801 for Brand Trust and 0.811 for Green Purchase Intention which demonstrates high internal consistency. All constructs achieved composite reliability (CR) values higher than 0.78. The Brand Trust AVE reached 0.509 and Purchase Intention AVE reached 0.524 while Environmental Concern AVE fell below 0.50 at 0.473. The EC model achieved high CR and alpha values which confirmed that the model had reached sufficient convergence (Hair et al., 2010, p. 585). The strong CR and α for EC led to an assessment of acceptable convergent validity.

Table 1. Measurement Scales, Reliability, and Validity Results

Construct / Item	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Environmental Concern (EC)		0.813	0.782	0.473
EC1. I am concerned about the deterioration of environmental quality.	0.653			
EC2. The environment is a major concern for me.	0.653			
EC3. I am passionate about issues related to environmental protection.	0.731			
EC4. I often think about how to improve the state of the environment.	0.711			
Brand Trust (BT)		0.801	0.802	0.509
BT1. I trust the products of my preferred brand.	0.667			
BT2. The products of the brand I trust meet my expectations.	0.696			
BT3. The products of the brand I trust guarantee my satisfaction.	0.743			
BT4. The products of the brand I trust never disappoint me.	0.730			
Green Purchase Intention (GPI)		0.811	0.815	0.524
GPI1. I intend to buy green products in the future.	0.739			
GPI2. I will consider purchasing eco-friendly products for ecological reasons.	0.733			
GPI3. I may spend more for eco-friendly products than for conventional ones.	0.742			
GPI4. I will buy products that cause less pollution in the future.	0.680			

As presented in Table 2, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The analysis established that each construct measured independent elements which did not overlap with the other constructs. AVE for Environmental Concern had a square root value of 0.688 and Brand Trust had 0.713 and Green Purchase Intention had 0.724. The constructs showed inter-construct correlations ranging from 0.36 to 0.44. The results show that each construct explains more of its indicators than it does the indicators of other latent variables. The results show discriminant validity through statistical evidence which proves that model constructs keep their theoretical separation and are now ready for structural equation modeling.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

Construct	EC	BT	PI
Environmental Concern (EC)	0.688		
Brand Trust (BT)	0.411	0.713	
Green Purchase Intention (PI)	0.358	0.439	0.724

3. Results

3.1 Model Fit

The structural model demonstrated perfect alignment with the collected data (Table 3). The chi-square ($\chi^2 = 68.649$, $df = 51$) was not significant ($p > .05$), and the ratio $\chi^2/df = 1.346$ was well below the 2–3 threshold. All fit indices reached or surpassed the recommended minimum values: GFI = 0.974, AGFI = 0.961, NFI = 0.966, RFI = 0.957, IFI = 0.991, TLI = 0.988, CFI = 0.991. The RMSEA was 0.028 (90% CI 0.000–0.036), indicating close fit (RMSEA < 0.06). The results show that the proposed model provides an excellent representation of the data.

Table 3: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Common Cutoff
χ^2 (df = 51)	68.649	$p > 0.05$
χ^2/df	1.346	$< 2-3$
RMR	0.030	< 0.05
GFI	0.974	> 0.90
AGFI	0.961	> 0.90
NFI	0.966	> 0.90
RFI	0.957	> 0.90
IFI	0.991	> 0.90
TLI (NNFI)	0.988	> 0.90
CFI	0.991	> 0.95
RMSEA	0.028	< 0.06 (good fit)
90% RMSEA CI	0.000–0.036	—

As illustrated in Figure 1, the relationship between brand trust (BT) and purchase intention (PI) is strong with a coefficient of 0.81 and environmental concern (EC) has a weaker relationship with PI at 0.15. The correlation between BT and EC is 0.44. The measurement loadings for indicators range from 0.653 to 0.743 and are all statistically significant.

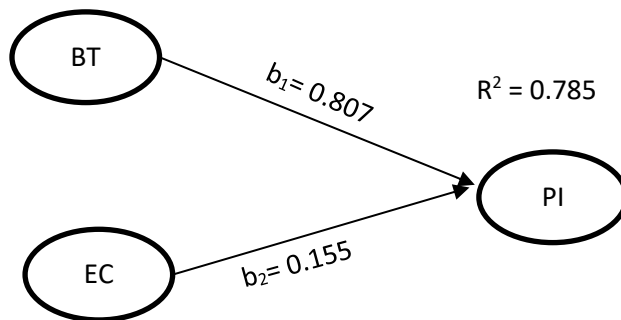


Figure 1: Structural Equation Model

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

The standardized path coefficients appear in Table 4. The study established that environmental concern directly affects green purchase intention (H1) through a statistically significant positive relationship (standardized $b_2 = 0.155$, C.R. = 3.118, $p < 0.001$). The research findings validate H1 because visitors who show greater environmental awareness tend to buy more green products. Brand trust strongly influenced green purchase intention (H2) with a b_1 value of 0.807 (C.R. = 11.841, $p < .001$). The results support H2. The large coefficient for BT shows brand trust functions as a key determinant of green purchase intention in this research sample. The paths successfully explained a significant amount of variance in the green purchase intention construct.

Table 4: Structural Path Estimates

Path	Unstd. B (SE)	C.R.	P	Std. β
PI $\leftarrow$ EC (H1)	0.197 (0.063)	3.118	< 0.001	0.155
PI $\leftarrow$ BT (H2)	0.975 (0.082)	11.841	< 0.001	0.807

Note: EC = Environmental Concern; BT = Brand Trust; PI = Green Purchase Intention.

4. Discussion

Both environmental concern and brand trust strongly affect green purchase intentions among tourists yet brand trust demonstrates the greater effect on these intentions. The results show environmental concern (H1) has a positive yet modest effect on green purchase intention. The research results match previous studies which show environmentally conscious consumers demonstrate increased intentions to purchase green products (Lee, 2008, p. 580). Tourists who worry about ecology seem to make environmentally-friendly purchase decisions. Environmental awareness stands as a vital factor because Dunlap and Jones (2002, p. 484) established that people with strong environmental concerns tend to participate in activities which resolve environmental problems. Tourists visiting Istanbul who think about environmental issues such as pollution and resource utilization will actively select sustainable products like green souvenirs or local organic food.

Brand trust (H2) emerged as the dominant predictor. The standardized coefficient (0.807) was much larger than that for environmental concern. The findings indicate that tourists who trust their preferred brands will be more likely to make green purchases. Trust acts as a solution to product uncertainty because consumers doubt the authenticity of eco-products. Relationship marketing theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 23) supports that customers find assurance through trusted brands. Zhuang et al. (2021, p. 496) show trust stands as a fundamental factor which influences green market intention. When tourists perceive a hotel or tour operator brand as trustworthy they tend to pay higher prices for

its environmentally friendly services. A highly concerned tourist will probably avoid testing an unfamiliar green product unless it has brand support.

The stronger role of brand trust has several implications. Tourism firms need to create trust by delivering consistent quality while maintaining open communication about their green practices. Tourism businesses can strengthen trust by obtaining third-party endorsements and providing transparent environmental policies and certifications. Environmental education continues to hold value because it generates the basic concern which drives green behaviour. The positive effect of environmental concern, though smaller, confirms that raising tourists' environmental awareness (e.g. through on-site information about local ecology) can nudge them toward greener choices.

The model demonstrates excellent fit indices along with strong reliability statistics as shown in Table 3 and Table 1. All scale items loaded significantly which supports using Lee's, Zameer's and Khatami's scales in a tourism context. The lower AVE for EC might be because tourist concerns were more general in nature although the reliability statistics show that the items cohered well in general.

The model successfully explained ($R^2 = 78.5$) percent of the total variance in green purchase intention. Brand trust appears to be the most influential factor because environmentally conscious tourists depend on the confidence they have in brand promises for sustainable choices. Tourism firms should develop reliable green brands through certification programs and clear communication about their environmental practices to effectively boost eco-friendly purchases. Our research shows that trust-building presents a more effective strategy to transform environmental attitudes into actual actions while environmental education and awareness campaigns remain important.

5. Conclusion

The research adds to sustainable consumer behavior knowledge in tourism because it shows environmental concern and brand trust both lead to green purchase intentions among Istanbul tourists. The SEM analysis produced strong results which showed brand trust as a key factor that affects outcomes while environmental concern also proved to be significant. Tourists who trust their preferred travel brands and show environmental concern tend to buy green products during their travels at the highest rate.

The research findings show that tourism managers and policymakers need to implement two strategies to enhance green consumption which include building brand trust and raising environmental awareness. Hotels together with tour companies and retailers need to show their brand reliability and integrity through certification programs and ongoing eco-friendly product offerings. Educational campaigns need to run parallel programs which aim to boost environmental awareness among tourists.

Public institutions together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) need to actively promote sustainable tourism practices. Public authorities need to establish incentive programs and tax benefits and recognition systems for green-certified

businesses while conducting awareness campaigns to promote sustainable tourism practices. NGOs should develop educational programs which teach sustainable consumption methods to all people who visit and live in the area. They can also collaborate with tourism enterprises to promote eco-certifications and monitor environmental performance in the tourism sector. The model should be expanded in future research through the examination of additional variables such as price sensitivity or subjective norms and actual purchase behaviors.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest in this study.

Data Availability Statement: The data for this study were collected in person through a questionnaire from Feb 6, 2025, to March 4, 2025. A total of 450 international tourists in Istanbul.

Compliance of Ethical Standard Statement: The necessary approvals from the ethics committee (Cumhuriyet University Ethics Committee decision dated August 9, 2024, No. 7) were obtained before data collection.

Contribution Statement of Researchers: The first and second authors contributed equally (50% each) to the writing of this study.

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