
BRAND APPEAL, EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT, AND RESPONSIBLE CONSUMERISM: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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Received: 15 Oct 2025

Revised: 4 Mar 2026

Accepted: 13 Mar 2026

Published: 31 Mar 2026

Abstract: Growing awareness of environmental and social issues has encouraged consumers to adopt more responsible consumption practices. However, empirical evidence explaining how brand-related factors influence responsible consumerism remains limited, particularly in emerging markets. This study examines the influence of brand appeal and emotional brand attachment on responsible consumerism, with consumer behavior serving as a mediating variable. Data were collected from 238 consumers of eco-friendly products in urban areas of Indonesia using an online questionnaire with purposive sampling. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to analyze the relationships among the constructs. The results show that brand appeal and emotional brand attachment significantly influence consumer behavior, which subsequently promotes responsible consumerism. In addition, consumer behavior plays a significant mediating role in translating brand perceptions and emotional connections into responsible consumption practices. These findings contribute to the literature by integrating emotional branding and consumer engagement perspectives in explaining responsible consumerism and provide strategic insights for developing sustainability-oriented branding strategies.

Keywords: brand appeal, consumer behavior, emotional brand attachment, responsible consumer, sustainable consumption

Abstrak: Meningkatnya kesadaran terhadap isu lingkungan dan sosial mendorong konsumen untuk menerapkan pola konsumsi yang lebih bertanggung jawab. Namun, bukti empiris yang menjelaskan bagaimana faktor-faktor yang terkait dengan merek mempengaruhi responsible consumerism masih terbatas, khususnya di pasar negara berkembang. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh brand appeal dan emotional brand attachment terhadap responsible consumerism dengan consumer behavior

sebagai variabel mediasi. Data dikumpulkan dari 238 konsumen produk ramah lingkungan di wilayah perkotaan Indonesia melalui kuesioner daring dengan teknik purposive sampling. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa brand appeal dan emotional brand attachment berpengaruh signifikan terhadap consumer behavior, yang selanjutnya mendorong terbentuknya responsible consumerism. Selain itu, consumer behavior terbukti berperan sebagai mediator yang signifikan dalam menerjemahkan persepsi merek dan keterikatan emosional menjadi praktik konsumsi yang lebih bertanggung jawab. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan mengintegrasikan perspektif emotional branding dan consumer engagement dalam menjelaskan perilaku konsumsi berkelanjutan, sekaligus memberikan implikasi strategis bagi pengembangan strategi branding berbasis nilai keberlanjutan.

Kata Kunci: daya tarik merek, keterikatan emosional merek, konsumen bertanggung jawab, konsumsi berkelanjutan, perilaku konsumen

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public awareness of environmental and social issues has increased significantly, leading to the rise of responsible consumerism. Consumers are progressively evaluating the environmental and social implications of the products they purchase. A global study by Nielsen (2020) revealed that over 70% of consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable and ethically produced goods (Jaffari et al., 2025). This marks a significant shift from impulsive and hedonic consumption patterns to a more conscious and value-driven approach, reinforcing the urgency to understand the psychological and behavioral factors influencing this transformation (White et al., 2019).

Among the most influential factors shaping responsible consumer behavior are brand appeal and emotional brand attachment. Brands today serve not only as indicators of quality but also as carriers of identity, meaning, and value alignment (Balmer, 2012). Emotional branding, as emphasized by Thomson et al. (2005), fosters affective ties between consumers and brands, which in turn shape consumer attitudes and actions—particularly in the context of sustainability (Malär et al., 2011). Contemporary consumers are

increasingly seeking authenticity and alignment between their values and brand values, urging firms to strengthen emotional connections that encourage long-term, responsible consumption (Alhouti et al., 2016).

However, empirical studies that explore the link between brand appeal, emotional brand attachment, and responsible consumption—especially through the mediating role of consumer behavior—remain limited. While existing literature often emphasizes conceptual discussions or qualitative approaches (Vazifehdoost & Hamedani, 2016; White et al., 2019), there is a need for integrative and data-driven models that can validate the causal mechanisms at play.

Despite the growing body of literature on sustainable consumption and emotional branding, several gaps remain. First, many previous studies have examined responsible consumption primarily from the perspective of environmental awareness or ethical values, while the role of brand-related factors such as brand appeal and emotional attachment remains relatively underexplored. Second, prior research often treats consumer behavior merely as an outcome rather than as a mediating mechanism that translates brand perceptions into responsible consumption practices. Third, empirical studies integrating emotional branding and responsible consumerism within a unified structural model are still limited, particularly in the context of emerging markets such as Indonesia. Therefore, this study attempts to bridge these gaps by examining how brand appeal and emotional brand attachment influence responsible consumerism through the mediating role of consumer behavior.

This study aims to address that gap by quantitatively investigating the effect of brand appeal and emotional brand attachment on responsible consumerism, with consumer behavior serving as a mediating variable. Using a structural equation modeling (SEM) and path analysis approach, this

research seeks to deepen the understanding of how brand-related perceptions translate into sustainable consumption practices.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the emotional branding and sustainability literature by offering a comprehensive empirical model that integrates emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Practically, the results are expected to provide strategic insights for marketers and brand managers aiming to build emotional resonance and ethical value alignment, thereby fostering responsible consumer engagement.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach aimed at analyzing the influence of brand appeal and emotional brand attachment on responsible consumerism, with consumer behavior as a mediating variable. The quantitative method was chosen for its ability to explain causal relationships among variables through statistical techniques, and to produce objective, testable numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data were collected from 238 respondents who are consumers of eco-friendly products. Data collection was conducted using a Likert-scale questionnaire with five response levels to measure four main constructs: brand appeal, emotional brand attachment, consumer behavior, and responsible consumerism (Figure 1). Each construct was measured using items adapted from previous validated studies to ensure content validity and instrument reliability (DeVellis, 2017).

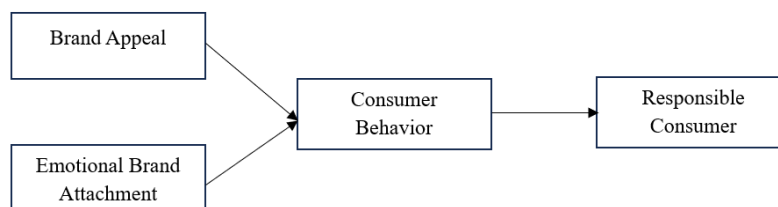


Figure 1. Research Framework
Source: Personal Documentation (2025)

The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling, which involved selecting respondents who had prior experience with or preferences for eco-friendly products specifically green skincare and body care product. Inclusion criteria likely included specific age groups, prior green purchase experience, and willingness to participate in the survey. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) individuals who have purchased eco-friendly products at least once in the past six months, (2) aged 17 years or older, and (3) willing to participate voluntarily in the survey. This technique is commonly applied in consumer behavior research because it focuses on characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Etikan, 2016).

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), as it enables the testing of both direct and indirect relationships among latent variables while simultaneously measuring complex constructs. The SEM analysis was conducted using AMOS 24 software to estimate the measurement model and structural relationships among variables. SEM was considered appropriate for this study because it allows not only for causal inference but also for holistic evaluation of the theoretical model (Hair et al., 2010). The measurement and structural models were tested using convergent validity, discriminant validity, and goodness-of-fit indices. SEM also enhances both internal and external validity by allowing broader generalizability and reducing model bias. Through systematic analytical procedures, this study aims to produce empirical findings that are valid, reliable, and supportive of theoretical models related to branding and responsible consumer behavior (Kline, 2007).

The dimensions used to measure brand appeal include emotional appeal, with indicators such as "the brand makes me feel happy," "I feel emotionally connected to this brand," and "this brand boosts my confidence."

The second dimension is functional appeal, which refers to the practical or quality-based attributes of the product (Dix & Marchegiani, 2013; Muadzin & Lenggogeni, 2021; Shen & Morris, 2016). The third is value-expressive appeal, which represents the alignment between brand values and the personal values of consumers (Malär et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2022). Lastly, ethical appeal—particularly relevant in eco-friendly product contexts—represents the brand’s concern for environmental or social issues (Sun & Yoon, 2022).

The variable emotional brand attachment is measured through five key dimensions frequently adopted in prior conceptual and empirical studies. The first is affection, which captures emotional closeness and fondness toward the brand (Schmitt, 2012; Thomson et al., 2005), with indicators such as “I feel affectionate toward this brand” and “I love this brand.” The second is passion, reflecting intense emotional involvement and enthusiasm, adapted from Thomson et al. (2005) and Albert & Merunka (2013), using statements such as “I feel excited about this brand” or “this brand makes me enthusiastic.” The third is connection, referring to a personal bond or sense of connection to the brand (Thomson et al., 2005; Malär et al., 2011), with indicators like “this brand is part of my life.” The fourth dimension is self-brand congruence, which indicates the extent to which the brand’s image reflects the consumer’s self-image (Japutra et al., 2014; K L & Babu M, 2024). The final dimension is brand trust, capturing the emotional trust consumers place in the brand, especially relevant in sustainability contexts (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2016; Thomson et al., 2005), with indicators such as “I believe this brand is honest and reliable.” Collectively, these five dimensions are considered comprehensive in representing emotional attachment, particularly in relation to responsible consumption.

Consumer behavior in this study is measured through a classification of brand-related consumer activities, especially in digital and sustainability

contexts. Drawing from Muntinga et al. (2011) and Schivinski et al. (2016), consumer behavior is divided into three core dimensions: consumption (passively viewing or following brand content), contribution (actively engaging by commenting or sharing), and creation (generating brand-related content such as personal posts or reviews). Additional dimensions—action and share—as proposed by Rindha Purba and Paramita (2021), further enrich the model by capturing actual purchasing behavior and word-of-mouth advocacy. These dimensions provide a holistic view of consumer engagement, from passive involvement to proactive participation, in shaping responsible consumption patterns.

The variable responsible consumerism is measured through four main dimensions reflecting sustainable consumption behavior. The first is environmental responsibility, which indicates the consumer's awareness of the environmental impact of their purchases (Roberts, 1996). The second is social responsibility, reflecting concern for social aspects such as labor fairness and welfare (Webb et al., 2008). The third dimension is ethical consumption, referring to purchase decisions guided by personal ethics and moral values (Shaw & Shiu, 2003). Lastly, sustainable consumption behavior includes mindful, resource-conserving, and eco-friendly habits that support long-term sustainability (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). These four dimensions comprehensively represent consumer responsibility in supporting ethical and sustainable consumption practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initially this research targeted 300 respondents but in its implementation there were only 238 respondents as the final number of sample size. This number has met the total number of sample size of 100 to

150 respondents. The descriptive profile of the respondents is summarized in Table 1.

Tabel 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Frequency (n=238)	Percentage (%)
Age		
15-25 years	128	53.8%
26-35 years	80	33.6%
36-45 years	10	4.2%
46-55 years	14	5.9%
>55 years	5	2.1%
Gender		
Male	82	34.5%
Female	156	65.5%
Education Background		
Highschool	92	38.7%
Diploma	18	7.6%
Undergraduate	76	31.9%
Master's Degree	46	19.3%
Doctoral Degree	4	1.7%
Lainnya	2	0.8%
Occupation		
Medical Doctor	2	0.8%
Lecturer	40	16.8%
Housewife	10	4.2%
Private Sector Employee	52	21.8%
Entrepreneur	6	2.5%
Civil Servant	2	0.8%
Professional	6	2.5%
Others	120	50.4%
Monthly Income		
>5 million	154	64.7%
5 - 10 million	64	26.9%
11 - 15 million	8	3.4%
16 - 20 million	4	1.7%
21- 30 million	8	3.4%

Source: Personal Documentation (2025)

Descriptive analysis of the demographic data revealed that 128 respondents (53,8) were between the ages of 15 to 25 followed by the ages of 26 to 35 (33.6%). In addition, there were 156 female respondents (65.5%) participated in this study. Regarding respondents' latest education, 92 respondents (38.7%) were from high school (38.7%) and 76 respondents

(31.9%) were from undergraduate. Based on job characteristics, respondents were dominated by private sector employees, lecturers, housewives and other jobs. Meanwhile, based on the characteristics of the respondents' monthly income, there were 154 respondents (64.7%) answered > 5 million and 26.9% respondents were 5 to 10 million.

The measurement model was tested for validity and reliability and is presented in Table 2. The results confirm that all latent constructs meet the required criteria.

Table 2 Measurement model

Latent Variables	Indicator	λ	λ^2	e	VE	CR
Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA)	EBA1	0.832	0.692	0.130	0.634	0.896
	EBA2	0.783	0.613	0.180		
	EBA3	0.675	0.456	0.410		
	EBA4	0.646	0.417	0.410		
	EBA5	0.733	0.537	0.440		
Brand Appeal (BA)	BA1	0.751	0.564	0.130	0.711	0.923
	BA2	0.946	0.895	0.180		
	BA3	0.809	0.654	0.410		
	BA4	0.537	0.288	0.410		
Consumer Behavior (CB)	CB1	0.742	0.551	0.130	0.722	0.886
	CB2	0.840	0.706	0.180		
	CB3	0.784	0.615	0.410		
Responsible Consumer (RC)	RC1	0.753	0.567	0.130	0.716	0.883
	RC2	0.785	0.616	0.180		
	RC3	0.797	0.635	0.410		
	RC4	0.780	0.608	0.410		

Source: Personal Documentation (2025)

The Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) construct, measured by five indicators—affection (EBA1), passion (EBA2), connection (EBA3), self-brand congruence (EBA4), and brand trust (EBA5)—demonstrated acceptable standardized factor loadings ranging from 0.646 to 0.832. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.634 and Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.896 indicate good convergent validity and high internal consistency.

Similarly, the Brand Appeal (BA) construct, measured through emotional appeal (BA1), functional appeal (BA2), value-expressive appeal (BA3), and ethical appeal (BA4), showed strong measurement indicators. The highest loading was for BA2 (0.946), while BA4 had the lowest (0.537). Despite the low value of BA4, the AVE for BA reached 0.711, and the CR was 0.923, indicating the overall construct is still acceptable and reliable.

The Consumer Behavior (CB) construct, composed of consumption (CB1), contribution (CB2), and creation (CB3), demonstrated satisfactory factor loadings ranging from 0.742 to 0.840. With an AVE of 0.722 and a CR of 0.886, this construct reflects strong convergent validity and internal reliability.

Finally, the Responsible Consumer (RC) construct, comprising environmental responsibility (RC1), social responsibility (RC2), ethical consumption (RC3), and sustainable consumption behavior (RC4), had factor loadings between 0.753 and 0.797. The construct achieved an AVE of 0.716 and a CR of 0.883, confirming the soundness of the measurement model. In sum, all constructs demonstrated sufficient convergent validity and composite reliability, which supports the integrity of the measurement model and confirms its suitability for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 3 Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Variables	Path Coefficient	t-Count > 1.96	Conclusion
H1	BA → CB	0.517	6.817	Accepted
H3	EBA → CB	0.265	4.378	Accepted
The Mediation Hypothesis				
H8	BA → CB -> RC		5.179	Accepted
H10	EBA → CB -> RC		3.836	Accepted

Source: Personal Documentation (2025)

The hypothesis testing results from the structural model are presented in Table 3. The findings indicate that all proposed hypotheses in this study are supported with high statistical significance. The first hypothesis (H1) tested the direct effect of Brand Appeal (BA) on Consumer Behavior (CB) and yielded

a path coefficient of 0.517 with a t-value of 6.817, confirming a positive and statistically significant relationship. This suggests that the stronger the perceived brand appeal, the higher the level of consumer behavioral engagement.

Hypothesis three (H3), which examined the direct influence of Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA) on Consumer Behavior, also demonstrated a significant effect, with a path coefficient of 0.265 and a t-value of 4.378. These results indicate that a strong emotional bond with a brand positively influences consumer behavior.

In addition to the direct effects, the study tested two mediation hypotheses. Hypothesis eight (H8) assessed whether Consumer Behavior mediates the relationship between Brand Appeal and Responsible Consumer behavior (RC). The result showed a t-value of 5.179, indicating a significant mediating effect. Similarly, hypothesis ten (H10) tested the mediating role of Consumer Behavior in the relationship between Emotional Brand Attachment and Responsible Consumer behavior, with a t-value of 3.836, which was also statistically significant.

These findings confirm that Consumer Behavior serves as a critical intervening variable that bridges the influence of brand perception—both in terms of appeal and emotional attachment—on the development of responsible consumption. In this context, Consumer Behavior not only reflects the outcome of strong brand appeal and attachment but also plays a pivotal role in shaping more ethical and sustainable consumption patterns.

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the relationship between brand appeal and emotional brand attachment with consumer behavior, as well as their indirect effects on responsible consumerism through the mediating role of consumer behavior. These results reinforce arguments in the literature that brand strength and emotional

bonds are critical factors in promoting shifts in consumer behavior toward more sustainable practices (Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005).

First, the positive and significant influence of brand appeal on consumer behavior suggests that consumers actively respond to brand elements that resonate emotionally, functionally, morally, and personally. This finding is consistent with studies by Dix and Marchegiani (2013) and Wang et al (2022), which highlight that brands with authentic, ethical, and value-aligned appeal are more effective in fostering consumer engagement. In the context of eco-friendly products, ethical appeal becomes particularly crucial, as moral values and social responsibility increasingly shape consumers' purchasing decisions.

Second, emotional brand attachment was also found to significantly influence consumer behavior. This demonstrates that emotional dimensions such as affection, passion, connection, and trust encourage consumers not only to purchase products but also to engage with the brand in meaningful ways, co-creating value through interaction. This aligns with Schmitt (2012) and Albert and Merunka (2013), who argue that emotional attachment is not merely a passive psychological construct, but an active motivational force that drives intentional and responsible consumption behavior.

Third, the mediating role of consumer behavior in bridging the influence of both brand appeal and emotional brand attachment on responsible consumerism contributes an important theoretical insight. The results indicate that consumer behavior acts as an actualization mechanism through which perceptions and emotions toward a brand are translated into ethical and sustainable consumption. In other words, brand perceptions alone are insufficient to promote responsible actions without the active engagement of consumers in the form of conscious consumption, content sharing, or sustainability-driven interaction. This finding is in line with the

consumer engagement framework proposed by Muntinga et al. (2011) and Schivinski et al. (2016), which positions consumer behavior as a central component in the co-creation of brand value.

The implications of these findings extend beyond academic relevance and offer strategic insights for marketing practitioners. Brands that aim to foster responsible consumer behavior must build appeal that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also reflective of sustainability values and social sensitivity. More importantly, companies should design emotional branding strategies that create personal connections between consumers and brands, making individuals feel emotionally invested and morally accountable in their consumption decisions. This approach can foster deeper loyalty rooted not only in satisfaction but in shared values and social consciousness.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to observe behavioral change over time, and the focus on consumers of environmentally friendly products may constrain the generalizability of the findings to other product categories that lack strong ethical or environmental dimensions. Future research should consider extending this framework across different industries and employing longitudinal methods to better capture the dynamics of the brand–behavior–responsibility relationship.

From a design communication perspective, brand appeal and emotional attachment are closely linked to how brands visually and narratively communicate sustainability values. Elements such as eco-friendly packaging design, visual storytelling, and sustainability-oriented brand narratives play an important role in shaping consumers' emotional perceptions. Design communication strategies that emphasize authenticity, transparency, and environmental symbolism can strengthen emotional

attachment and encourage consumers to engage more actively with sustainable brands.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of integrating emotional and behavioral dimensions into branding strategies to promote responsible consumption. By developing ethically grounded brand appeal and cultivating strong emotional attachment—while simultaneously empowering consumer behavior—organizations can build more sustainable and meaningful consumption ecosystems for the modern consumer.

CONCLUSION

The findings highlight that emotional attachment to a brand alone is not sufficient to generate responsible consumerism. Instead, emotional connections must be translated into active consumer engagement behaviors that mediate the relationship between brand perception and responsible consumption practices.

This study demonstrates that brand appeal and emotional brand attachment significantly influence consumer behavior, which in turn mediates their relationship with responsible consumerism. The findings suggest that consumers' perceptions of brand attractiveness and emotional connection play a pivotal role in shaping more conscious, active, and responsible consumption behavior. The proposed model contributes theoretically by integrating emotional and behavioral dimensions in the understanding of sustainable consumption, and offers a strategic foundation for companies aiming to build brands that are both value-aligned and emotionally resonant.

From a practical perspective, companies are advised to develop branding strategies that are not only visually appealing but also convey ethical values, sustainability principles, and emotional proximity with consumers. The

limitations of this study include its use of cross-sectional data and its focus on consumers of eco-friendly products, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to broaden the scope across diverse industries and adopt longitudinal approaches to capture the evolving dynamics of consumer engagement over time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge the Research and Community Service Board (BPPM) of Universitas Informatika dan Bisnis Indonesia (UNIBI) for their generous support in enabling the research team to participate in the 2025 Bandung Creative Movement International Conference. This support has significantly contributed to the development and dissemination of the research findings within a global academic forum.

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