

## Beyond Doubt: Indonesia and Vietnam's Country Image Inspiring the Shift to Green Footwear

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**Introduction.** The apparel industry contributes significantly to environmental problems (McNeill & Venter, 2019). The environmental problems may be mitigated by moving away from fast fashion towards green products. Following the trends, green footwear producers have attempted to measure the environmental impact of production (Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America, 2022). On the other hand, consumers are prone to doubt whether environmental claims could improve the environment (Yoon & Chen, 2017).

Research on green consumer behavior has relied primarily on green apparel products (Dhir et al., 2021) (Dhir et al., 2021). However, as one of the essential products for everyone in general, footwear has not had sufficient focus, especially green footwear (Aseri & Ansari, 2023)(Aseri & Ansari, 2023). As of the time this study was conducted, little research has been made in examining the effect of country of origin and environmental knowledge on green footwear switching intentions associated with green skepticism. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the influence of the country-of-origin image on green skepticism toward green footwear switching intention.

**Literature Review.** The Cognitive-Affect-Behavior (CAB) Model (Holbrook & Batra, 1987) is utilized as the foundation of this study. The order of CAB, cognition as first, effective in the middle, and last behavior, is one of the most common orders used in standard learning hierarchy (Liu et al., 2017). Recent studies have used CAB to examine the relationship between Greenwashing and green skepticism with green purchase intention (Nguyen et al., 2019)(Nguyen et al., 2019). In this study, cognition (perception, perceptions, or attitudes about a given issue or subject) is represented by a country-of-origin image and environmental knowledge, followed by the affect (an emotion that is represented by green skepticism), which leads to the switching intention (behavioral intention). Therefore, in this study, cognition precedes the effect that, in turn, affects behavioral intentions.

In terms of country of origin, although China (42.3%) is currently the largest supplier of footwear exporters to the U.S., Vietnam (31.5%) and Indonesia (6.6%) are following the lead, with both having increased their shares in 2020 (United States International Trade Commission, 2020)(United States International Trade Commission, 2020). Thus, we focused on Indonesia and Vietnam as the two countries selected for the study, as they are projected to increase their shares substantially in the next decade. Previous studies found that the country of origin's image affected green purchasing. A study conducted by (Dekhili & Achabou, 2014)Dekhili & Achabou (2014) has found that mentioning a country of origin with a positive reputation for sustainable development had a neutral effect on evaluating an eco-labeled product. However, when mentioning a country with a negative image, it has been found to negatively influences the evaluation of the product. Previous research found that the level of individual knowledge has a high correlation between purchasing green products and individual pro-environmental behavior (Shah et al., 2021)(Shah et al., 2021), as well as can result in green skepticism as a negative outcome

(Yoon & Chen, 2017)(Yoon & Chen, 2017). Green skepticism adversely affected intentions to purchase organic green products (Lavuri, 2022)(Lavuri, 2022).

Indonesia (IDN):

H1a. Country-of-origin image (Indonesia) directly influences green skepticism.

H2a. Environmental knowledge directly influences attitudes toward green skepticism.

H3a. Green skepticism directly influences green footwear switching intentions.

Vietnam (VTM):

H1b. Country-of-origin image (Vietnam) directly influences green skepticism.

H2b. Environmental knowledge directly influences attitudes toward green skepticism.

H3b. Green skepticism directly influences green footwear switching intentions.

**Method.** Scale items were developed and adapted from previous research using a five-point Likert scale (Hanzaee & Khosrozadeh, 2011; Hartmann et al., 2005; MOHR et al., 1998; Mohsan et al., 2011; Mostafa, 2007; Pagiaslis & Krontalis, 2014). A total of 510 usable consumer surveys were collected by Amazon MTurk. A total of 56.1% of the respondents were females, and 43.9% were males, with a range of ages between 18 and 42 years old (81.7%). The majority of participants were Caucasian (87.3%), employed part-time (79%), and college graduates (70.6%).

**Results.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis (IDN) (CFI=.908,TLI=.822,RMSEA=.064,SRMR=.044, $\chi^2=217.96$ ,df=71,p<.001) and SEM analysis (CFI=.906,TLI=.883,RMSEA=.064,SRMR=.045, $\chi^2=223.21$ ,df=73,p<.001) whereas, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (VTM) (CFI=.922,TLI=.900,RMSEA=.058,SRMR=.043, $\chi^2=194.25$ ,df=71,p<.001) and SEM analysis (CFI=.919,TLI=.899,RMSEA=.059,SRMR=.044, $\chi^2=201.79$ ,df=73,p<.001). The result from the models shows that country of origin (IDN and VTM) has a significant direct influence to green skepticism (H1a: $\beta=.829$ ,p<.001 and H1b:  $\beta=.929$ ,p<.001) and green skepticism has significant direct influence to green footwear switching intention (H3a: $\beta=.977$ ,p<.001 and H3b:  $\beta=.957$ ,p<.001), hence, H1a, H1b, H3a, and H3b were supported. However, environmental knowledge has no direct significant influence on green skepticism (H2a: $\beta=.137$ ,p<.001 and H2b:  $\beta=.087$ ,p<.001); hence H2a and H2b were not supported.

**Discussion and Implications.** This study examines the influence of environmental knowledge and country of origin on green footwear skepticism and switching intention. The results show that environmental knowledge does not significantly influence green footwear skepticism. Instead, country-of-origin significantly impacts skepticism, indicating that consumers' perception of the country's image plays a crucial role. This skepticism, in turn, affects their intention to switch to green footwear. Interestingly, the country-of-origin image of Vietnam has a stronger effect on skepticism and switching intention than Indonesia. This could be attributed to Vietnam's higher recognition as a footwear exporter. To enhance consumers' recognition and perception, both countries should focus on improving their country's image through various means. Additionally, this study contributes to the existing CAB framework by expanding it to incorporate environmental knowledge and country-of-origin variables.

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