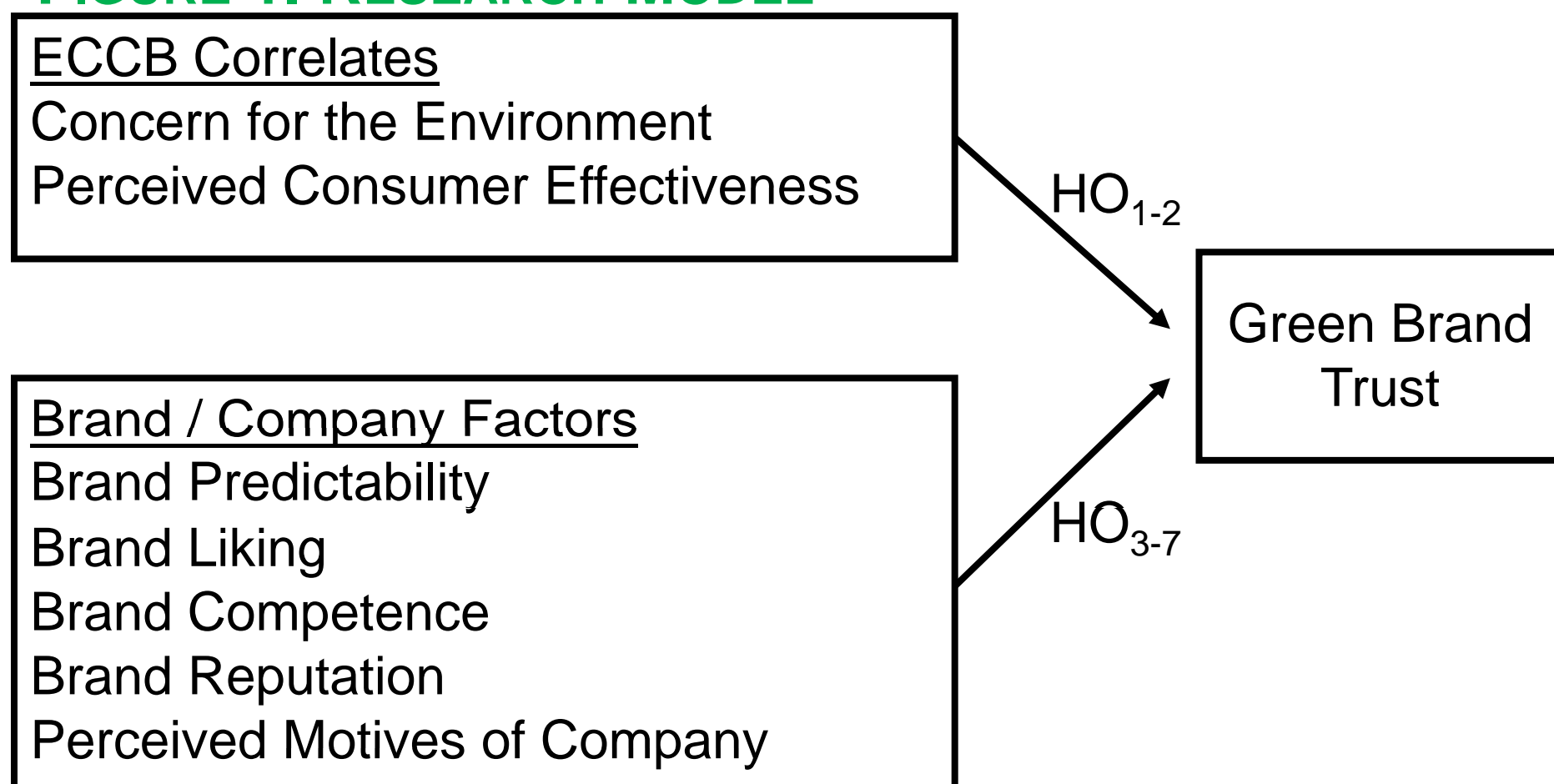# ANTECEDENTS OF CONSUMER TRUST TOWARD GREEN BRANDS

BACKGROUND / RESEARCH AGENDA

❖ Brands are strategic assets, symbols that influence consumer behavior, and serve as units of analysis and empirical investigation in marketing and consumer behavior research.
  ❖ High levels of trust toward a brand leads to long-term customer loyalty and enhances the effectiveness of all marketing communications. Trust is central to brand-consumer relationship quality and is a major long-term marketing goal.

❖ This study looked at 'green brand trust' (GBT), an important construct in the study of ecologically conscious consumer behavior (ECCB).
  ❖ A green brand (e.g., Green Works and Prius) represents a company that has product offerings with significant environmental/ecological advantages over the competitive field (e.g., bio-degradable).
  ❖ GBT is the confident expectations of the consumer to "depend on a brand based on the belief or expectation resulting from its credibility, benevolence, and ability about its environmental performance."

FIGURE 1. RESEARCH MODEL

ECCB Correlates
Concern for the Environment
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness

HO_{1-2}

Green Brand Trust

Brand / Company Factors
Brand Predictability
Brand Liking
Brand Competence
Brand Reputation
Perceived Motives of Company

HO_{3-7}

❖ Specifically, this study tested a set of proposed antecedents of GBT based on consumers' level of environmental concern (EC), perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), and brand/company factors shown to influence the brand-consumer relationship. Figure 1 shows the research model.
  ❖ Note: EC and PCE are established correlates of ECCB. PCE is one's judgment in the ability of the individual consumer to influence environmental resources.

HYPOTHESES

H1 Concern for the environment is positively related to the consumer's green brand trust

H2 Perceived consumer effectiveness is positively related to the consumer's green brand trust

H3 A consumer's perception that a brand is predictable is positively related to the consumer's green trust in that brand

H4 A consumer's liking for a brand is positively related to the consumer's trust in that brand

H5 A consumer's perception that a brand is competent is positively related to the consumer's green trust in that brand

H6 A consumer's perception that a brand has a good reputation is positively related to the consumer's green trust in that brand

H7 A consumer's perception that a company has benevolent motives is positively related to the consumer's green trust in that company's brand

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PROCEDURES

❖ Online survey of 454 adult (18-64 yo.) U.S. consumers – 60% female 38% male – household incomes averaged between 50,000 to 59,999 dollars.

❖ Respondents evaluated five green brands judged likely to be familiar to respondents in order to increase response rate: Green Works, Whole Foods, Toyota Prius, Chevrolet Volt, and Apple.

❖ Measures of each construct were from a variety of validated sources. All measures were multi-itemed Likert or semantic differential based scales.

❖ The questionnaire first gauged EC and PCE. After, respondents evaluated only familiar brands, using measures for each brand/company factor and GBT.

❖ Mean scores on each construct are the simple average of all scale items for each brand. Results were aggregated across all brands.

RESULTS

❖ Correlation coefficients (Table 1) for the corresponding variables specified in the hypotheses, show support for each proposition.
  ❖ Brand predictability (confidence in how the brand will perform on each usage occasion) had the strongest association with GBT.
  ❖ Correlations were weak between the ECCB indicators (EC and PCE) and GBT, particularly environmental concern.

TABLE 1. PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS RESULTS

Hypothesis	Relationship Hypothesized	Pearson Correlation/ Significance
H1	Concern for the environment and green trust in brand - positive	$r = 0.16, p < 0.05$
H2	Perceived consumer effectiveness and green trust in brand - positive	$r = 0.29, p < 0.01$
H3	Brand predictability and green trust in brand - positive	$r = 0.85, p < 0.01$
H4	Consumer brand liking and green trust in a brand – positive	$r = 0.76, p < 0.01$
H5	Brand competence and green trust in a brand - positive	$r = 0.72, p < 0.01$
H6	Brand reputation and green trust in a brand – positive	$r = 0.65, p < 0.01$
H7	Company benevolent motives and green trust in a brand - positive	$r = 0.58, p < 0.01$

❖ Multiple regression analysis (Table 2) with GBT as the dependent variable and all other constructs as independent variables, produced a prediction model significant at p<.01 level with an adjusted $R^2 = 0.703$. Betas indicating the explanatory power of each variable on GBT.

TABLE 2. MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS

Independent Variable	Standardized Regression Coefficients	VIF
EC	0.003**	1.81
PCE	0.048**	1.20
Brand Predictability	0.063*	8.43
Liking for the Brand	1.580*	5.32
Brand Competence	0.051**	4.44
Brand Reputation	0.048*	1.80
Company Motives	0.159**	2.34
Multiple R	0.756	
R^2	0.713	
Adjusted R^2	0.703	

$* p < .01$
$** p < .05$

FUTURE RESEARCH

❖ Future research should (1) look at additional consumer-based indicators of GBT, (2) examine the moderating role of GBT on marketing communication effectiveness, and (3) examine the influence of GBT on actual ECCB.