

Genuine or Greenwashed? Consumer Perceptions on Deceptive Green Marketing

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Abstract—This study investigates how consumers view greenwashing and how it affects their buying decisions, their level of trust, and the legitimacy of brands. The study looks at the most prevalent deceptive marketing strategies, consumer knowledge of greenwashing, the impact of false sustainability claims on loyalty, and the effects of greenwashing on trust. Results show that many people have come across false environmental claims from businesses, even if consumer knowledge of greenwashing is very low. Although eco-friendly marketing appeals to customers, mistrust and disengagement greatly increase when consumers suspect greenwashing. Common greenwashing strategies take advantage of consumers' desire to support sustainability by using ambiguous sustainability claims, false labelling, and misleading green imagery. The study backs up the claims that misleading green marketing damages trust and company credibility and that customers are aware of greenwashing. These results demonstrate how urgently companies must implement ethical, verifiable, and transparent sustainability processes. Greenwashing may be lessened, and firms' true environmental commitments can be guaranteed by strengthening legislation and enhancing consumer education. Businesses can preserve credibility in a market that is becoming more and more concerned with sustainability and gain the long-term trust of consumers by promoting accountability and transparency. By highlighting the significance of honesty and integrity in sustainability promises, this study adds to the expanding conversation on ethical marketing.

Key words—Deceptive marketing, Environmental degradation, False labelling, and Greenwashing.

I. INTRODUCTION

Numerous companies have begun to promote environmentally friendly goods, frequently incorporating "green" elements at the last minute to draw in customers. However, not all statements are accurate since some businesses use a dishonest marketing technique called "greenwashing," in which they exaggerate environmental initiatives in an attempt to attract customers. This leads to misunderstanding and mistrust, particularly among

customers who care about ethics. This study investigates whether consumers can recognize deceptive sustainability promises and their awareness of greenwashing. Since many customers feel deceived when they come across dishonest marketing tactics, it also looks at the connection between greenwashing, consumer behaviour, and brand loyalty. The study identifies typical greenwashing strategies that can sway consumer decisions, including ambiguous statements, phony credentials, and hidden trade-offs as well. Finally, as dishonesty breeds suspicion toward corporate sustainability initiatives, the study examines how misleading green marketing affects customer trust and brand credibility. Gaining knowledge of these components can help you understand the effects of unethical marketing and corporate social responsibility.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Delmas & Burbano (2011) - The Drivers and Consequences of Greenwashing
This research examines the reasons for greenwashing by emphasizing organizational, legal, and commercial concerns. It contends that consumer trust is damaged and support for sustainability initiatives is weakened by greenwashing. ^[1]
- Aji & Sutikno (2015) - The Role of Consumer Trust in Moderating the Effects of Greenwashing
According to this study, which looks at how customer responses to greenwashing are influenced by prior trust, consumers who feel deceived by highly regarded businesses are more likely to respond negatively.
- Braga Junior et al. (2019) - Greenwashing and Purchase Intention: The Role of Consumer Scepticism
This study reveals that cautious customers are more inclined to shun items from firms accused of greenwashing, fostering suspicion in corporate sustainability claims.

- Chen & Chang (2013) - The Link Between Greenwashing and Consumer Scepticism
This study emphasizes how greenwashing discourages sustainable consumption by undermining brand credibility and raising customer distrust.
- Leonidou & Skarmeas (2017) - Ethical Consumerism and the Consequences of Greenwashing

According to this study, ethical customers are adamantly against greenwashing, which frequently results in boycotts and unfavourable word-of-mouth that harms a brand's reputation.

III. OBJECTIVES

- To assess consumer awareness and understanding of greenwashing in marketing practices.
- To examine how consumer perceptions of greenwashing influence purchasing decisions and brand loyalty.
- To identify the most common greenwashing tactics
- To analyse the impact of deceptive green marketing on consumer trust and brand credibility.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis (H_0): Consumers don't have significant awareness or understanding of greenwashing in marketing practices.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Consumers do have a significant awareness and understanding of greenwashing in marketing practices.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): Deceitful green marketing does not impact consumer trust and brand credibility.

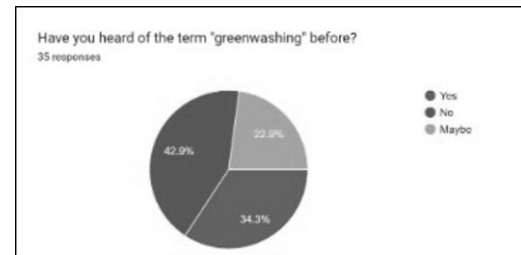
Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Deceitful green marketing impacts consumer trust and brand credibility.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Results:

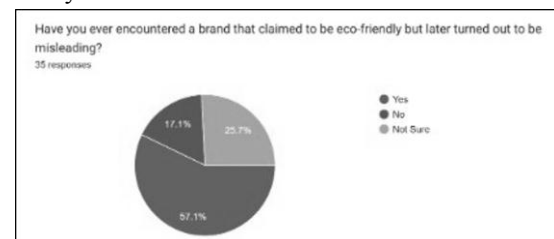
Ages 18–24 accounted for the majority of responders (51.4%), followed by 25–34 (28.6%). There were slightly more females (51.4%) than males (45.7%), with 2.9% going unreported. In terms of education, 14.3% had only completed high school, 28.6% had postgraduate degrees, and 57.1% had undergraduate degrees.

I. Awareness:



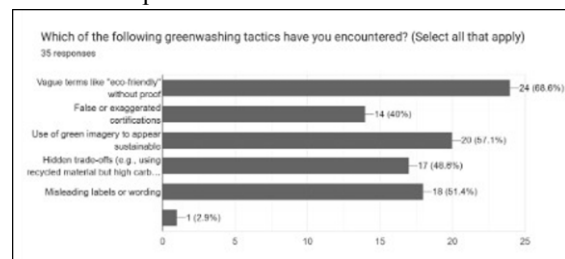
(Chart 1)

Among the participants, 34.3% of respondents have heard of the term "greenwashing," the majority of them, i.e., 42.9%, have not, and 22.9% are unsure, according to the pie chart. This shows that the respondents' awareness of "greenwashing" varied widely.



(Chart 2)

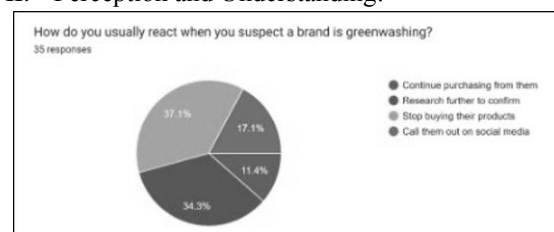
According to Chart 2, 17.1% of respondents had never come across false eco-friendly statements, 25.7% were dubious, and 57.1% had. This demonstrates how common greenwashing techniques are in brand promotion.



(Graph 1)

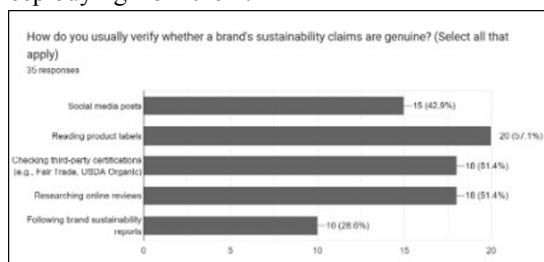
Graph 1 demonstrates that respondents frequently come across ambiguous "eco-friendly" statements (68.6%), misleading labelling (51.4%), and green images (57.1%). This implies that although consumers are aware of greenwashing practices, many are not aware that they are intentional.

II. Perception and Understanding:



(Chart 3)

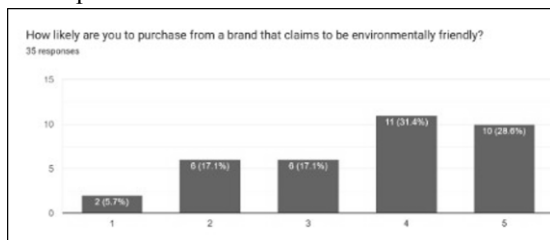
According to Chart 3, when respondents believe a brand is engaging in greenwashing, 37.1% of them quit buying their products, 34.3% do further research, 17.1% criticize them on social media, and 11.4% keep buying from them.



(Graph 2)

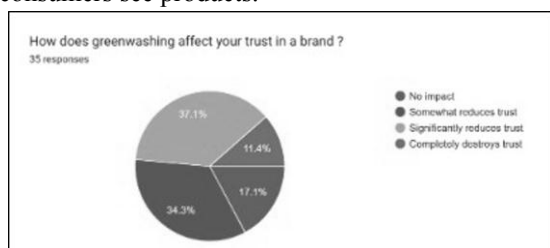
In Graph 2, 57.1% of consumers examine product labels to confirm sustainability claims, 51.4% depend on online reviews and certifications, 42.9% use social media, and 28.6% follow brand sustainability reports. This demonstrates how people evaluate a brand's reputation for being environmentally friendly in a variety of ways.

III. Impact:



(Graph 3)

In Graph 3, 60% of respondents are inclined to purchase from companies that make environmental promises, according to the bar graph, while the remaining respondents are less certain. This demonstrates how greenwashing affects how consumers see products.



(Chart 4)

According to Chart 4, 37.1% of respondents said that greenwashing somewhat undermines their trust, 34.3% said that it severely undermines it, 17.1% said that it has no effect, and 11.4% said that it destroys it. This demonstrates how greenwashing undermines consumer confidence, following our alternative hypothesis H1.

5.2 Discussions

Important findings about consumer knowledge, attitudes, and reactions to greenwashing in advertising are highlighted in the poll. The need for increased knowledge is shown by the fact that 57.1% of respondents had come across businesses making inflated environmental claims, even though only 34.3% were familiar with the phrase. Consumer behaviour is greatly impacted by greenwashing; 60% of consumers favour eco-friendly products, but 71.5% would quit buying from them if they detected dishonesty. These results highlight how crucial openness is to preserving customer confidence and brand legitimacy. Deceptive labelling (51.4%), misleading green imagery (57.1%), and ambiguous "eco-friendly" promises (68.6%) are examples of greenwashing strategies that take advantage of customer benevolence and highlight the need for stronger controls. False sustainability claims put brand credibility at risk, with 34.3% of respondents reporting a loss of confidence and 37.1% experiencing mild mistrust. Honest communication, confirmed eco-friendly initiatives, and genuine transparency are crucial for preserving customer loyalty and confidence over the long run.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Consumer knowledge of greenwashing, its influence on brand loyalty and purchase decisions, prevalent dishonest marketing tactics, and its impact on consumer trust and brand credibility were all assessed in this study. Comprehensive education campaigns should assist customers in differentiating between true sustainability activities and false promises to address poor awareness. To guarantee openness and stop companies from abusing ambiguous environmental terminology, stricter laws and uniform eco-certifications are necessary. To gain the trust of customers, businesses must use sustainability messaging that is transparent and independently validated. Stronger rules to successfully govern marketing claims can be shaped by recognizing common greenwashing techniques, such as deceptive labelling and confusing phrasing. Brands should prioritize ethical marketing, sincere corporate social responsibility, and open communication about their environmental impact to regain their reputation. Future studies should examine how digital platforms may reveal greenwashing and provide customers with trustworthy information. Resolving these issues will foster ethical marketing, sustainable consumption, and increased trust.

V. CONCLUSION

Is this research on the substantial effects of greenwashing on customer knowledge, purchasing decisions, trust, and company credibility highlighted in Customer Perceptions on Deceptive Green Marketing? Consumer awareness of greenwashing, the impact of false sustainability claims on loyalty, the most prevalent deceptive marketing strategies, and the effects of greenwashing on trust were all evaluated in this study. Given that many consumers face overstated eco-friendly claims despite having little understanding of greenwashing, the findings highlight the need for increased consumer awareness. 60% of consumers favor brands that make sustainability promises, but when dishonesty is detected, confidence wanes, and 71.5% of consumers are prepared to cease buying. Inaccurate sustainability claims, false labelling, and misleading imagery are common examples of greenwashing. The results provide credence to the idea that customers are aware of greenwashing and that false sustainability promises undermine the credibility and trustworthiness of brands. Businesses must put openness first to fight this, and regulators should impose stronger rules to guarantee a moral and sustainable marketplace.

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