

# Green Marketing and Ethical Branding Combined with Responsible Advertising: Based on Contemporary Practices, Challenges and Global Case Studies

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**Abstract**—Marketing methods are changing since climate change, digital transparency and stakeholder scrutiny are reshaping the marketing field. Responsible advertising, ethical branding and green marketing are the most effective methods for organizations to communicate and meet their environment, social and corporate governance (ESG) obligations. Between 2020 and 2025, this chapter analyses theory and global industry practice. It focuses on the most recent corporate practices, legislation and worldwide examples. It looks at the ways that the meanings of sustainability and ethics have transformed from simple, symbolic meanings to strategically fundamental meanings. The meanings are focused on, consumer trust, brand equity and the authenticity of the brand. The author analyses the implications of such marketing phenomena as greenwashing, ethical inadequacy of digital advertising, sustainability claims and the inadequate measurement of sustainability. The chapter develops the case for responsible marketing using both global and emerging market examples and provides scholarly practitioners and policymakers clear usable contributions as they work in markets that are increasingly transparent and demand accountability.

**Index Terms**—*Green marketing; ethical branding; responsible advertising; sustainability; ESG; consumer trust; greenwashing; digital ethics*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing as a process has shifted from transactional or persuasion functions to a more value added and responsible process. Today's consumers are digitally empowered, socially aware and will not stand for false advertising and unethical corporate behaviour. The combination of corporate scandals, data privacy issues, climate change, and social equity has affected the expectation of brands across industries and the

world. In green marketing, the organization demonstrates environmental concern through product design and marketing communications. In ethical branding, the organization's value reflects the values of the organization. In socially responsible advertising, the organization demonstrates transparency and concern for the society. Together these present a shift to a greater focus on purpose and stakeholder in marketing which at the same time we see growth in long term social value as well as profit. Also, it is reported that the companies which put sustainability and ethics in as a base of their strategy instead of as a side issue do better in terms of trust, advocacy, and weathering crises (Bhattacharya et al., 2023; WEF, 2024). At the same time though this has brought forward issues of green washing, ethical double standards and reputation damage which seen in digital and social media.

### Objectives of the Chapter

The objectives of the chapter include

1. To put forth green marketing, ethical branding and responsible advertising in today's terms.
2. Analyse key forces behind these practices from 2020 to 2025.
3. Analyse global and emerging markets' case studies.
4. Identify issues, regulatory actions and implement them

## II. CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

### 2.1 Green Marketing

All elements of pricing, promotion, design and distribution should incorporate green marketing, which aims to minimise environmental damage. Unlike previous eco-marketing methods which were

more superficial i.e., using symbols with little meaning. Today's greener marketing methods incorporate life cycle analysis, carbon accounting and some metrics that can be quantified.

Key elements of greener marketing are

- Using sustainable and renewable sources
- Represent principles of eco design and the circular economy
- Carbon foot printing
- Obtaining third party certifications and reporting on ESG compliance.

## 2.2 Ethical Branding

There is an indication of a shift to evidence based green marketing (Lyon and Montgomery, 2023) resulting from a combination of consumer scepticism and the agencies regulating marketing practices. Ethical branding is the additional alignment of brand identity, values and behaviour with ethics of fairness, transparency, inclusion and accountability.

Ethical brands are internally consistent across the following aspects

- Supply chain governance
- Labour and human rights practices
- Environmental stewardship
- Corporate communication

Trust, authenticity and moral authenticity form the core outcomes of ethical branding. In digital environments, where inconsistencies are rapidly exposed, ethical branding functions as a reputational risk management mechanism as well as a source of differentiation.

## 2.3 Responsible Advertising

It is truthful messages from one part of ethical promotion done for customers. What matters now includes where information comes from, who sees it and why they see it. Modern campaigns shape culture whether intended or not. Rules exist but choices behind screens carry weight too. Digital tools change speed and scale and so does accountability. Fairness appears in design, delivery methods and accessibility. Transparency means that when we talk about transparency, we should also include process as well as the results. Social consciousness is fixed in how we create plans, not simply something we add to plans

when they are finished. While algorithms may predict behaviour, people are still making the decisions that guide the algorithms. Compliance with laws is a minimum standard and not the only way to define success. How people handle their client's personal information is one of the important aspects of honest advertising. With more businesses using automated advertisements and tracking devices have become smarter.

They now can monitor their users more than they ever had before. Good companies will be sure to ask permission, use less invasive methods and protect the data they collect. For example, Microsoft and Salesforce have both stated that they consider how privacy will impact their advertising systems, which leads them to be less aggressive with their ad targeting, while giving their customers a voice regarding how their information will be used. Because these companies are aligning their advertising practices with the laws (like GDPR) and with the expected changes in privacy around the world. With this they will be able to create an environment of trust with their users. One of the best examples of transparency in online advertising is when companies work with online creators. Because of the increase in online influencers, many businesses are uncomfortable failing to disclose paid advertising.

This lack of transparency in advertising leads to misleading impressions for the user. Brands such as LEGO and Decathlon both require the use of terms such as "paid partnership" in their posts regardless of the laws in their respective countries. It is this kind of transparency that builds the level of trust with the customers. As the target audience becomes aware of advertising that properly represents them, advertisers will complete the cycle by creating clearer advertising. Advertisers must consider the way they represent the life experiences of different genders, skin colours, religions, body types and everything else. In the end, they can be led to think beyond their expectations and preconceptions as to what is valuable, marketable and acceptable in advertising. Dove India was an example of a brand that showed its audience what bodies look like, not how they fit into society's norms of the past, but Nike continued to expand that concept by providing stories that did not associate being a man or able bodied. When they analyse and evaluate how brands share their societal value with the public, using

advertising and media is important to consumers. It will continue to become increasingly more relevant to the consumer as we develop our relationship with brands.

While fair advertising practices will continue to protect the vulnerable groups of society, we should take the time to identify how many products are aggressively or invisibly marketed to a vulnerable group and the ways those advertisements are marketed to that vulnerable group. For example, LEGO is one company that has embraced a non-aggressive advertisement approach to children by focusing on building skills rather than convincing them to buy. Likewise, most alcohol and snack makers have voluntarily agreed not to aggressively market their products to children.

With the advent of algorithm powered ad systems, the need for clearly defined and established guidelines has never been more important. An algorithm is a computer program that identifies certain patterns within data.

It does not make any judgment about whether those patterns are right or wrong. These tools often learn patterns without understanding their impact and sometimes deepening unfair assumptions. Companies can ensure that the code they create is not only built for success but that the intent behind it will benefit users over the long term. Rather than measuring success based solely on the number of clicks on an ad, companies are now asking themselves what the ad experience feels like for the consumer who will ultimately see it.

Understanding why a company has created a product provides users with clarity. Although ads that are personalised to users can be effective, if users are not aware of these techniques. They may feel deceived when they come to learn that these ads were not disclosed to them upfront. Users feel empowered when they can review how an advertiser's decision was made.

Companies who cannot provide this level of trust will damage their ability to create a more trusting relationship with the consumers they are trying to attract. People want advertisements to be free of exploitation through hidden agenda and unclear motives.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING ETHICAL MARKETING

This chapter draws upon multiple theoretical lenses which are explained as

- Stakeholder Theory: Firms must balance the interests of consumers, employees, communities, investors and the environment.
- Signalling Theory: Sustainability claims act as signals and credibility depends on verifiability.
- Institutional Theory: Regulatory norms and societal expectations shape ethical marketing adoption.
- Trust Based Relationship Marketing: Ethical conduct strengthens long-term relational value.

### IV. DRIVERS OF GREEN AND ETHICAL MARKETING (2020–2025)

#### 4.1 Heightened Consumer Awareness

Consumers increasingly evaluate brands based on ESG performance, ethical conduct and transparency which does not merely depend on price or quality.

#### 4.2 Regulatory and Policy Pressure

Governments and worldwide bodies have introduced stricter rules on

- Green claims substantiation
- Sustainability disclosures
- Data protection and advertising ethics

The EU's Green Claims Directive (2024) exemplifies this shift.

#### 4.3 Digital Transparency and Activism

Social media enables rapid exposure of unethical behaviour and amplifying reputational risks.

#### 4.4 Investor and Financial Market Expectations

ESG performance increasingly influences capital access, valuation and shareholder activism.

### V. Global Case Studies in Green Marketing Practice

#### 5.1. Interface Inc.: Carbon Neutral and Climate Positive Branding

Many businesses have moved away from only talking about eco friendliness on paper and are now creating concrete programs combining innovative solutions and measurable results. All over the globe, companies

are creating environmental values into their corporate culture without throwing around empty words. Some have instituted major shifts in their product design that allow them to reduce waste immediately. Others have opened their doors for everyone to see what they always do. Actions speak louder than words across the globe and trust is built when people see real, tangible evidence of companies' claims when they say they are committed to preserving the environment. Each of the following examples demonstrates a different way forward quietly and steadily. How can a carpet manufacturer give back to nature is a big question to be answered? Interface Inc. is a worldwide manufacturer of floor tiles, but they operate far from conventional manufacturing practices. Their value base is about more than generating profits rather they focus on reversing the negative ecological impact of their operations, rather than simply reducing it. They are recycling used carpets into new ones using "intelligent" recycling loops. Solar and wind energy now power much of their production. They use materials that come from waste products or plants and not fossil fuels. Their goal is something greater than just being in balance rather they plan to give back more to nature than they take away. The demonstrated results of Interface's method support the premise that eco-friendly messages can differentiate a company from its competition and especially when additional supplier selection criteria include social and environmental best practices, alongside the more traditional supply chain metrics of price and durability.

### 5.2. Schneider Electric: Sustainability Led Value Proposition

Schneider Electric differentiates itself in a different manner. Their corporate messaging includes quantifiable data as part of their overall sustainability focus. While many technology companies profess to be eco-friendly, Schneider provides customers a tangible representation of their production process through the results achieved by providing lower energy bills and reduced greenhouse gases with more efficient processes. These quantifiable results are derived directly from the installation of Schneider's hardware or software, the operation of the hardware/software. This is further associated with cost and energy savings. Business purchasers typically consider the factors driving performance and therefore their messaging emphasizes metrics for measuring

success. Energy savings and greenhouse gas emissions are documented and referenced in case studies as examples of Schneider's approach. Schneider Electric has established credibility through sustained quantitative evidence and the results it has produced for its clients through using the same tools. Clients can see real data from real projects reflecting improved uptime and reduced waste directly related to projects using Schneider's data. This way of presenting information helps clients turn vague concepts such as "green" into actual and tangible business benefits.

Schneider Electric has made a strong assurance to use significant results from real examples of emissions reductions and increased power savings in its green marketing initiatives. This approach is a clear source of evidence for a business wanting to reach its sustainability goals without sacrificing profits. By establishing credibility with clients by using quantitative results, Schneider Electric has created a reputation that is built over time. The company's marketing efforts has supported the results that is produced by the company from so many years. By consistently meeting expectations of clients through actual results and not just marketing claims, Schneider Electric has developed trustworthy relationships with clients and consistent performances that go far beyond just marketing slogans.

### 5.3. Tata Group: Sustainability and Nation Building Narratives

The Tata Group, which is India's most successful group of business, contributes to the economic development and wellbeing of others, illustrates the way that businesses in growing regions are developing their approaches to sustainability. Their strategy incorporates the wellbeing of people and the environment in their daily business activities. Both, Tata Power and Tata Motors are shifting to using renewable energy (solar) to power their businesses and use environmentally friendly products. Tata uses action-oriented messages rather than marketing slogans, promoting their commitment to serve local communities and create cleaner cities as they grow. Their long-term strategies provide opportunities to build connections between Tata and its customers by creating trust through the consistent application of values. Tata's unique way of connecting with customers through environmentally friendly initiatives can be attributed to the context of its operations. Tata

provides electric transportation and renewable power as part of its development agenda. The company develops, implements and operates a long-term commitment to providing affordable and reliable energy options that promote sustainable economic opportunities in developing countries. Tata's commitment to greening the environment is based on identifying and meeting the economic challenges that face local communities. By telling a story that combines these various issues creates greater synergy for the people of a developing country because sustainability will always be intertwined with poverty and basic needs for communities. While corporations can demonstrate an ability to respect the planet without directly copying business models created by wealthier nations environmental conditions may differ significantly between geographic regions. Therefore, adapting a company's operational practices to the ground environment to globally adapted strategies results in improved sustainability. A good example of this is how companies implement green initiatives based on community specific issues. When the values and community need of a company align with the environmental conditions within its operations, sustainable actions tend to last. Similarly, sustainable strategies that work successfully in one location may not necessarily be successful in another; thus, adjusting based on your unique community is necessary, but simply copying a global model does not work.

## VI. ETHICAL BRANDING IN TODAY'S DIGITAL WORLD

Customers spot all move brands make, turning honest conduct into the backbone of believability. When words and deeds clash, digital spaces light up with proof forcing realness and responsibility to rise in value. A reason to exist shows through when a company lives its values every day, not just talks about them. When choices at the top reflect fairness or care for nature, it becomes real.

### 6.1 Purpose Driven Brand Identity

Patagonia operates in numerous countries worldwide and has similar success with Mahindra Group (an Indian company). Both companies provide evidence that creating a clear mission statement models your entire company and can enhance not only your

company's strategic direction but also your company's product line, the materials used to create the products and who makes those products. Developing a strong and consistent core reason for existing establishes a more profound connection with consumers and encourages a sense of emotional ownership over the products they have purchased. At the same time having a mission statement provides guidance when faced with difficult moral dilemmas in unpredictable circumstances in the business world.

Transparency is a competitive advantage when brands are open about how they produce their products, what kind of environmental damage they cause, who owns and operates the company and how they protect the privacy of their customers. They build a trust relationship with their consumers that will ultimately result in higher sales revenues for the company. In addition, the online marketplace enables consumers to conduct their research and therefore, attempting to hide parts of the business process may result in greater risk than before. Many companies now provide sustainability dashboard information via their websites as an example of transparency. Because of this openness, green claims move away from just words and become something people can check. When companies do this, their reputation grows stronger over time. Consumers want to see the human side of a brand when a message is delivered. Listening to consumers and providing proper representation leads to the level of respect that brands build with consumers over time. Listening allows brands to better understand the expression of words locally. Respect comes from both the way consumers see a brand and how the brand engages with the consumer with respect to what consumers are saying. Listening is a key part of building the initial level of respect and trust.

Taking a bottom-up approach through diverse geographic areas requires brands to establish consistent brand identity while still connecting with individual communities through their messaging. A positive relationship with each community will develop organically over a period, provided that brands are providing messaging that accurately reflects how their communities live and what is important to their communities. The reverse is also true, brands that fail to engage their communities or treat them uniformly will experience a much longer engagement and negative impact from the mistakes made.

## VII. ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND REGULATORY RESPONSES OF GREEN WASHING

### 7.1. Greenwashing: Its Forms and Consequences

Some businesses like to proclaim they care about the Earth while masking their true motivations with carefully worded labels. These businesses often stretch the truth when stating the planet-friendliness of their products or services by using vague language such as "natural" or "eco". Many of these labels hide more than show. Leaf icons adorn packaging despite causing far worse environmental harm than good. By showing only their positives, companies ignore many problems associated with their product or service offerings. False certificates often seen on these businesses appear impressive but have never undergone serious examination by anyone reputable. The truth is so twisted and seems to be broken. Consumers are led to believe that their businesses are making substantial changes daily when in fact very little change occurs at all.

Trust is slowly lost because of each misrepresentation. It is possible for a consumer's opinion to arise based on the glittery surfaces of products rather than actual hard work and investment since the actual policies and other actions taken towards protecting the environment are irrelevant in comparison to misleading promotions. Therefore, people may have less confidence in their choices because most of the words being touted are often of little or no value.

### 7.2. Regulatory and Self-Regulatory Mechanisms

Consumers who purchase products from businesses that falsely advertise being "green" not only fall victim to the business's deceiving tactics but can also be left with a bad opinion of the business after the business receives disciplinary action in the form of fines, lawsuits, loss of trust, and possibly inflicting long term damage on the company's reputation. In addition, when false claims made by environmentally conscious companies become rampant, other businesses that have an environmentally friendly policy now appear somewhat untrustworthy, which damages the reputation of other environmentally responsible businesses.

### 7.3. Ethical Challenges in Digital Advertising

As a result, organizations are now being forced to present proof that verifies their eco-friendly claims. In addition to being able to prove how they are contributing to an environment; these companies must also disclose their method(s) for achieving eco-friendly results via clear definitions. Trade associations will create acceptable standards and procedures to provide an avenue for companies to produce positive environmental change. Oversight will continue to increase as companies create eco-friendly promises faster than they can fulfil their promises.

In Europe specifically, the need for companies to back up their green promises is being closely evaluated, and as existing regulations tighten around the world, businesses must now present evidence that supports their claims. Proof of sustainability is more important than at any other time in history because consumers hold businesses accountable for their statements about green products. Because consumers have previously relied on the honesty of businesses, there is now a need for greater oversight.

The issue of digital marketing raises several ethical dilemmas for businesses. Along with the ethics of digital marketing, the challenges of potentially biased algorithms will also present ethical problems in the future. Consumers will be subjected to marketing tactics that appear invasive, but in fact, they are based on surveillance of consumers' behaviour. The existence of dark patterns common in digital marketing tactics will modify how companies create their target audiences and develop products. The actions that consumers take by browsing a company's website may be biased based on their unique characteristics, preferences and online behaviour. The frequent occurrence of an increasing level of personalisation will lead to an erosion of consumers' ability to make independent decisions and choose products or services. All these issues will have a compound effect on a consumer's ability to make informed decisions. The way in which software selects its audiences needs to be closely monitored to prevent any bias against any group. There should be tight security over personal data and throughout the process that data goes through. It should be very clear what the algorithm is doing to determine which advertisement a user will see, not buried in an obscure piece of code that users cannot access. A quick return on results is

irrelevant if the user does not trust the system that provided that quick return on results. Personalization adds value to an advertisement only when it is done in a way that does not violate privacy. Rules are established so someone can be accountable when something goes wrong.

#### VIII. GLOBAL EXAMPLES OF RESPONSIBLE ADVERTISING ON THE RISE

With a recent Microsoft announcement, sustainability is front and center that is linked to the truth, rather than just the guesswork of how good it is being sustainable. For example, we can see the sustainable progress that we are making, step by step. When we choose to make ethical decisions about AI, this shapes our development of tools. By communicating honestly, we earn people's trust through time. As they continue to grow in their development, and as they are building, LEGO, for example, isn't hollering about their accomplishments they simply show steps to move forward each step is taken with caution, to reflect their responsibility about the changes they are making.

- Avoiding ethics washing and symbolic compliance
- Adapting to evolving consumer expectations
- Integrating AI and blockchain for transparency

#### IX. CONCLUSION

Educators need to teach marketing ethics and build marketing literacy in schools. Unfortunately, without ethics and integrity behind the marketing message itself, most people will not take any green claims seriously. The reality is that businesses that consistently practice what they preach, consistently demonstrate their commitment to ethical practices and ultimately develop strong and loyal customer bases. Therefore, when consumers can see right through the hollow, insincere marketing messages, only those businesses matching their marketing hype with their actions will thrive. In a market that is constantly changing, it is likely that only those businesses who "walk the talk" will survive.

#### Author Contribution Statement

There has been one primary author behind this research work and development. This same person compiled a collection of information and findings

from previous studies. All real-life examples have been created completely by him/her. This individual also wrote the entire report and created every single section of the research document. All sections were reviewed from beginning to end and it was the responsibility of this author to write the report and ensure its accuracy.

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