



International Conference on Reimagining Management: Sustainability and Innovation in the AI Era

Organised By: Dnyan Ganga Education Trust's,
Degree College of Arts, Commerce & Science, Thane

Green Marketing And Sustainable Brand Equity: The Role of Authenticity, Transparency and Ethical Communication

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Abstract

Growing awareness of sustainable practices has reshaped both consumer behaviour and corporate strategy. As environmental consciousness increases, organizations are revisiting traditional marketing approaches and integrating eco-friendly strategies into core branding. This study examines how environmentally responsible marketing practices contribute to sustainable brand equity using secondary data from existing research, corporate reports, and industry analyses. It explores how authentic communication, transparency, and genuine environmental commitment influence consumer trust, brand perception, and purchase decisions. The study also highlights the challenges of greenwashing, demonstrating that misleading sustainability claims can harm corporate reputation and undermine long-term loyalty. By evaluating the alignment between sustainability messaging and actual corporate actions, the research emphasizes the importance of ethical marketing practices. Findings indicate that enduring brand value is achieved not merely through environmental messaging, but through consistent, measurable sustainability initiatives communicated transparently. Authenticity and strategic coherence emerge as essential determinants of long-term relationships with environmentally conscious consumers.

Keywords: Green marketing, Sustainable brand equity, Consumer trust, Transparency, Greenwashing, Ethical marketing, Brand image, Environmental sustainability.

1. Introduction

The global business environment has increasingly recognized the importance of environmental sustainability, driven by climate change concerns, resource depletion, and rising consumer awareness. Modern consumers prefer brands that demonstrate genuine responsibility toward the environment, prompting businesses to adopt green marketing practices. Green marketing extends beyond product promotion to encompass sustainable product design, eco-friendly packaging, energy-efficient production processes, and transparent communication of environmental initiatives. The strategic adoption of green marketing has shown positive effects on consumer perception, brand loyalty, and market competitiveness (Peattie & Crane, 2005).

However, with the rise of sustainability-focused marketing, greenwashing has emerged as a significant threat. Greenwashing refers to the practice of communicating misleading or exaggerated environmental claims to attract consumers, without implementing meaningful sustainability measures (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). The practice can erode consumer trust, damage brand reputation, and reduce long-term loyalty.

This paper examines the relationship between green marketing practices and sustainable brand equity, emphasizing the roles of authenticity and transparency. Using secondary data from scholarly articles, corporate sustainability reports, and industry analyses, the study provides insights into effective green marketing strategies and the consequences of greenwashing in contemporary markets.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Green Marketing

Green marketing is defined as the development and promotion of products and services with minimal environmental impact (Peattie, 1995). It encompasses eco-friendly production, sustainable packaging, energy efficiency, recycling programs, and the communication of these initiatives to consumers. Research shows that when green marketing is implemented strategically, it can improve consumer perception and create competitive differentiation (Ottman, 2011).

2.2. Sustainable Brand Equity

Brand equity represents the value associated with a brand, including consumer loyalty, awareness, and perceived quality. Sustainable brand equity refers to the brand value derived from responsible environmental practices, emphasizing trust, transparency, and ethical behaviour (Chabowski, Mena, & Gonzalez-Pardon, 2011). Brands that integrate sustainability into their identity gain long-term consumer commitment and improved reputation.

2.3. Consumer Trust and Transparency

Consumer trust is critical in sustainable marketing. Studies suggest that transparency, including open reporting of sustainability goals and achievements, significantly strengthens credibility and reduces scepticism (Fornell et al., 2010). Companies that provide verifiable data on

environmental performance build stronger emotional bonds with consumers.

2.4. Greenwashing

Greenwashing has emerged as a major concern in green marketing. Companies may use eco-labels, vague messaging, or selective disclosure to exaggerate their environmental performance (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Research indicates that exposure to greenwashing can reduce brand trust, negatively influence purchase intentions, and damage overall brand equity (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015).

2.5. Research Gap

While extensive research exists on green marketing, limited studies integrate authenticity, transparency, greenwashing, and sustainable brand equity into a single framework. This paper addresses this gap by analysing secondary evidence from existing studies, corporate reports, and market analyses.

3. Research Objectives

1. To analyse the impact of green marketing on sustainable brand equity using secondary data.
2. To examine the role of transparency and authenticity in enhancing consumer trust.
3. To evaluate the negative consequences of greenwashing on brand image and loyalty.
4. To identify best practices in aligning sustainability messaging with corporate actions.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a **secondary research methodology**, analysing data from:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles on green marketing, sustainable brand equity, and consumer behaviour.
- Industry reports and white papers on eco-friendly marketing trends.
- Case studies demonstrating the impact of green marketing and greenwashing.

Data was collected to identify patterns, best practices, and consequences related to green marketing strategies. This approach allows for a comprehensive review without primary data collection while ensuring reliability through credible, published sources

5. Analysis

Green marketing has become important as consumers are more aware of environmental issues. Studies show that it has grown rapidly and is now a key part of business strategy (Bhardwaj et al., 2023).

Digital platforms have helped companies promote green products, but they have also increased the chances of misleading claims (Alkhatib et al., 2023).

One major issue is greenwashing, where companies make false or exaggerated environmental claims. Research shows that greenwashing reduces consumer trust and damages brand image (Zhang & Ismail, 2024; Tu et al., 2024). It also lowers consumers' willingness to buy products (Hazarika

et al., 2025). Overall, it affects the credibility of green marketing (Pendse et al., 2025).

On the other hand, genuine and transparent practices help build trust. Studies show that when companies are honest about their environmental efforts, it improves brand image and customer loyalty (Kumar et al., 2024). Consumers today, especially in India, are more aware and skeptical, so they expect real actions, not just claims (2025 study). Authentic brands also benefit from positive word-of-mouth (Xu et al., 2021).

In conclusion, green marketing can influence consumer behavior positively, but only when it is honest and transparent. Greenwashing remains a major problem, so companies need to focus on authenticity to gain consumer trust.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Green Marketing and Brand Equity

Evidence suggests that green marketing positively affects brand equity when supported by genuine environmental practices. For example, companies such as **Patagonia** and **Unilever** have successfully leveraged sustainability initiatives to strengthen brand reputation and consumer loyalty. Their marketing campaigns clearly communicate measurable environmental actions, which enhances brand perception.

5.2. Transparency and Consumer Trust

Transparency is a critical factor in establishing trust. Secondary studies show that brands that openly report environmental metrics, such as energy consumption, waste reduction, and carbon footprint, gain higher credibility (Fornell et al., 2010). This reduces consumer scepticism and positively influences purchase decisions.

5.3. Impact of Greenwashing

Greenwashing has been linked to negative consumer responses. For instance, the **Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal** highlighted how misleading environmental claims can severely damage brand credibility and trust. Literature indicates that perceived greenwashing reduces purchase intention and can result in long-term brand equity loss (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

5.4. Alignment of Sustainability Communication and Actions

Analysis of corporate sustainability reports reveals that successful brands align marketing messages with actual environmental practices. Authenticity ensures that promotional claims are supported by verifiable actions, reducing the risk of greenwashing and enhancing consumer loyalty. Companies that consistently integrate sustainability into their operations and communication strategies are more likely to achieve long-term brand equity.

6. Managerial Implications

1. Organizations should integrate sustainability into corporate strategy rather than treating it as a marketing tactic.
2. Transparent reporting of environmental performance builds consumer trust and loyalty.

3. Avoiding exaggerated sustainability claims is essential to prevent reputational damage.
4. Measurable environmental initiatives, aligned with clear communication, are critical for long-term brand value.
5. Managers should use sustainability as a differentiator, not just a promotional tool, to strengthen competitive advantage.

7. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to sustainable marketing literature by:

- Integrating green marketing, transparency, authenticity, and greenwashing into a unified framework.
- Highlighting the central role of consumer trust in mediating the relationship between sustainability practices and brand equity.
- Providing insights into secondary evidence on best practices in environmental communication.

8. Scope for Future Research

1. Conducting surveys or interviews to empirically test the relationship between green marketing, transparency, and brand equity.
2. Comparative studies across industries to explore differences in consumer perceptions.
3. Longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of green marketing on brand loyalty.
4. Cross-cultural research to examine how sustainability communication strategies differ globally.

9. Conclusion

Green marketing is no longer an optional strategy; it is a necessity in an era of heightened environmental awareness. Secondary evidence shows that sustainable brand equity depends not on promotional messaging alone but on authentic, transparent, and measurable environmental actions. Transparency strengthens consumer trust, while greenwashing has been shown to erode reputation and loyalty. Companies that align their marketing communication with genuine sustainability initiatives are better positioned to build long-term brand value and retain eco-conscious customers. Ultimately, authenticity, accountability, and strategic consistency are key determinants of success in the evolving green marketplace.

10. Limitations

1. Reliance on secondary data limits the ability to capture current consumer sentiment first hand.
2. Findings may vary across industries and cultural contexts.

3. The study does not include primary quantitative validation of hypotheses.

11. References

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