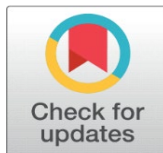


CONSUMER VALUATION OF GREEN PRODUCTS: INTERPLAY BETWEEN MARKETING CLAIMS, CERTIFICATION, AND BUYING INTENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In the age of the rising environmental awareness, green products have been a subject of much attention of the consumer as well as marketing globally. The given research paper examines the role of both marketing claims and third-party certifications and their effect on consumer buy-intentions related to green products. Although environmental marketing and eco-labels have been common tools used to transform consumer behaviors, they are highly functional based on how consumers perceive them, validity of advertisement/claims and trustworthiness of certifications. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the spread of the consumers value of green products due to the faithfulness of environmental suggestions and availability of officially recognized affirmations. The proposed study will measure the impacts of these elements on the willingness to pay, purchase intentions, and general trust in the green brands with the help of systematic questionnaire and the following analysis based on statistical methods. The results have shown that marketing claims are capable of increasing knowledge but their importance on purchasing behavior is extremely reinforced in case they are accompanied by credible certifications. In addition, by the presence of emotional appeal and fact credibility, consumers exhibit an elevated level of valuation of the green products. The paper identifies the need to be transparent, have regulatory authority, as well as having uniform brand messaging to practice sustainable consumption. Marketers, policymakers and certification bodies can use this knowledge to make informed recommendations of ways to enhance genuine green marketing activities and uptake of products/ services that protect the environment.

Keywords: Green Products, Consumer Valuation, Marketing Claims, Third-Party Certification, Eco-Labels, Buying Intentions, Environmental Marketing, Consumer Trust, Sustainable Consumption, Green Branding

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the emergence of the environmental concerns placing the climate change, loss of resources, environmental pollution, and biodiversity reduction in the center of attention has substantially influenced consumption patterns and business approaches. Customers are progressively more ethical regarding the ecological impact of their products of consumption and having a tendency towards selecting environmentally friendly products namely so-called green products. These products are sold on the fact that they are less harmful to the environment, during their life cycle i.e. either in extraction of raw materials, production, distribution usage or disposal. Consequently, green marketing has come out as one such strategy in which firms discuss the environmental nature of their products and services to appeal to environmentally-conscience members of the marketplace. But in a marketplace sensitive to environmental statements, consumers experience the difficulty in assessing the authentic green product among the others that just make spurious or false environmental assertions, sometimes called greenwashing. This issue highlights

the prime importance of marketing statements, external certification and the consumer trust in the buying intentions and valuation of products.

Marketing statements concerning the green performance of a product serve to educate and convince individuals. Such claims can emphasize different characteristics, e.g. energy efficiency, recycled materials, biodegradability or lower carbon footprint. Such claims can cause demand and distinguish the products, but they can be really worthwhile only when they are perceived as genuine or credible to the consumers. With a clutter of unregulated and unclear claims, the consumers have grown to be considerably cynical. The differences between the claims of companies and the real delivery may result in some lack of confidence and less consumer confidence to utilize green products. As a result of this distrust most organizations have introduced third party certification or eco-labels to bring some credibility and reliability in their marketing campaigns. These labels are certifications that are issued by independent organizations and target the environmental impact of the product against established standards thus giving an objective point of reference to consumers in assessing the environmental credentials of the product.

The third-party certifications are important in mediating the gap in trust between marketers and the consumers. Well-known certifications include Energy Star, USDA Organic, Fair Trade, FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), and these may be found in the labels of products. Such labels when written on product packaging may positively affect the perception of consumers because they act as credible and verifiable representation of sustainability. Knowing and believing that they are trustworthy, consumers tend to believe in the environment-friendliness of the brand, which will enhance their purchase intention, as well. Nevertheless, certification schemes do not equally work in every consumer segment. This, however, differs based on other variables like previous knowledge of the environment, customer understanding of a particular brand, the sensitivity of the user towards price, and social-demographic differences. In addition, the existence of high-quality certification is more important in influencing consumer behavior in markets where green marketing is poorly or irregularly governed.

Of all parameters involved in the green product valuation, is the buying intention of the consumer, which is the psychological disposition or willingness to think, prefer and eventually buy a green product. Cognitive and emotional assessments of the product determine the buying intention, which includes its quality, fair pricing, product image and reputation, the consideration of the environment and social pressure. There have been research findings of favorable attitude towards sustainability, with consumers expressing a positive view about sustainability, but later shows a discontinuity between the positivity expressed and their corresponding behaviour in terms of real purchase patterns, dubbed as the green attitude-behavior gap. This difference could be occasioned by several obstacles including lack of information, astronomical costs, poor accessibility or lack of confidence in the green claims. That is why, the marketing aimed at decreasing this gap should not only be oriented on persuasive message but also on trust issues implementation creating the third-party validation and transparency.

The purpose of the research paper is to analyze the interaction of marketing claims, third-party certifications, and consumer buying intentions among other things focusing on the effect of the interactions of the three aspects of the perceived value of green products. The questions aimed at answering in the study are as follows: (1) How consumers understand and assess the environmental marketing messages? 2. What is the role of the certifications in assuring all these assertions and increasing consumer trust? The third question is (3) How does the availability of marketing claims and their certification affect consumer willingness to pay and the intention to pen green products? In answering these questions, the study helps in gaining a better comprehension of more psychological and behavioural mechanisms behind green consumerism.

The study employs the quantitative design and gathers information by means of structured questionnaires distributed among consumers well and low environmental awareness. It examines the correlations of various variable including probable credibility of marketing position, awareness of certification labels, belief in brand communications, and purchase intentions. The findings of this research will be of practical concern to the marketers who want to strengthen their green value proposition, the policymakers that will have to regulate green marketing, and the certification authorities that will strive to promote their eco-labels to a wider range of customers. With this, not only is the study adding value to the scholarly discussion of green marketing and consumer behavior but it also offers a blueprint in developing a sustainable form of consumption behavior through a credible, efficacious and consumer oriented marketing strategy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With sustainability becoming one of the issues that define the 21st century, consumers are more and more adding the ecological awareness to their purchasing process. The culture of buying green products under the tag of environmental friendliness is on the rise in various sectors such as luxurious, fashion, food and consumer products. Interaction of marketing activities, third-party certification and purchase intentions have become the core to the decision process of how in the end the consumer is likely going to purchase green products.

According to Winston (2016), the luxury brands can no longer afford to brush aside sustainability since consumers no longer get to seek brand prestige but seek value alignment and responsible manufacture. This is supported in Athwal et al. (2019) who conducted a synthesis of sustainable luxury marketing and a suggested research agenda including transparency, authenticity and long-term brand equity. The two articles capture the shift that marketing stories must make towards being purpose driven, rather than product focused to emphasize the validity of sustainable claims.

Based on this, Kang and Sung (2022) determined the effect of message appeals (emotional, rational) and objectivity on consumer attitude towards green corporate social responsibility (CSR) among luxury branding. Their findings revealed that trust and brand attitudes could be increased through objective and fact-based message accompanied with certification. In a similar manner, De Angelis et al. (2017) found out that design resemblance between conventional and green products has a significant influence on consumer judgment of novel sustainable products, particularly in high-end fashion industry. Consumers prefer green product that do not make any compromise in quality and status since they have not been affected by design.

Lin and Chang (2012) extend further this aspect of psychological basis of green product consumption with their study of concept of the green usage of the double standard concept. They discovered that persons with high level of environmental consciousness tend to over rate their green behavior thus exhibiting a disjunction between intention and action. This is why there is a need of effective marketing communication and certification processes to translate attitudes into actual buying behavior.

Marketing communications are crucial in the crafting of green value in the eyes of the consumers. According to Olsen et al. (2014), brand attitudes can also be strongly moved by informing that green innovation has benefits or consequences, which can be defined as message framing. The combination of such messages with credible green claims results in the more positive assessment of the product and brand. Nekmahmud et al. (2022) decided to move this discussion to the digital space where the authors presented the impact of social media on green purchasing behavior. The evidence accumulated in the study clearly indicates that the positive transformation of consumer intention to buy green products using peer influence, storytelling by the brand, and involvement green content through Instagram and Facebook construction is possible.

The other point worth mentioning is the importance of the green perceived value and trust. Chen and Chang (2012) designed a model, which relates green perceived value, green trust, and green perceived risk to the green purchase intentions. According to them, the conclusion is that trust is a mediator-when consumers view high value and low risk green products, more likely to buy them, not to mention consumers are more inclined to buy the green product, when it comes with a third-party endorsement brand or product. Confente et al. (2020) went further to mention that self-identification as green and self-congruity with green values also predict perceived value, with privately identifying as green increasing the value of the eco-friendly innovations including bioplastics.

The dimension of loyalty of green branding is involved in the work of Jalu et al. (2023), which was devoted to investigating the role of green brand innovation and green perceived value in green brand loyalty and its moderating task (green knowledge in the consumer). In their findings, they report that trusted innovations and valid marketing statements are major sources of continuous consumer interest. Similarly, Riva et al. (2022) examined millennial intentions to revisit sustainable restaurants and identified green perceived value and quality as factors playing an influential role in repeat behaviour, once again supporting transparency and strategic use of consistent environmental messages.

Roh et al. (2022) developed a multi-dimensional model that uses green perceived knowledge, subjective norm, attitude, and trust, which affect the purchase of organic products. Their study revealed multiple factors that trust and knowledge are inter-twined; more informed consumers will require certification, in addition to the response they go all

out on when they trust the integrity of the green brand in their opinion. Lastly, Salehzadeh and Pool (2017) analyzed how brand attitude and perceived value impact the purchase intention of global luxury brands and indicated that sustainability stories, in fact, increase brand values instead of blurring it.

Finally, all literature is aligned to the conclusion that the consumer-driven green marketing strategies must be integrated, transparent, and consumer-focused. It would be better to not just have signatory gestures and turn away to make sure that what marketers say their sustainability levels should be rooted in definite actions and able to find reflection in some well-known certifications. As consumers get to be well informed and value-seeking, they will only increase their demands on accountability, transparency and authenticity, which will significantly redefine the standards of successful practice of green marketing in the future.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To examine the influence of marketing claims on consumer valuation of green products.
- 2) To assess the role of third-party certification in shaping consumer trust and buying intentions.
- 3) To analyze the combined effect of marketing claims and certifications on perceived green product value.

4. HYPOTHESIS

- **Null Hypothesis (H_0):** Marketing claims and certifications do not have a significant combined effect on perceived green product value.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):** Marketing claims and certifications have a significant combined effect on perceived green product value.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used in this study is quantitative in researching the overall influence of shared marketing claims and third-party certification affect perceived green product value. The research instrument developed is structured questionnaire which employed use of Likert scale questions to quantify the perceptions of consumers towards the green marketing claims, awareness towards eco-certifications as well as the perceived value of green products. Environmentally conscious consumers were used as the target survey, and the purposive sampling will be used to select population residing in the urban areas who will be considered relevant and informed respondents. 300 responses should be obtained so as to bleed it with enough statistical power of analysis. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis was used in order to test the relationship between variables, as well as the overall effect of the independent variables (marketing claims and certifications) on the dependent variable (perceived green product value). The hypotheses were tested with the help of SPSS software after the processing of the data. Such the methodological strategy allowed the study to measure levels of consumer attitude and consumer behavior pattern and provide strong results regarding how consumer attitude are influenced by marketing communication and external certification in separate and combined influence on consumer valuation of green products.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

| Variable | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Marketing Claims | 300 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.02 | 0.71 |
| Certifications | 300 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 3.96 | 0.76 |
| Perceived Green Product Value | 300 | 2.00 | 5.00 | 4.08 | 0.68 |

6. ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The descriptive statistics give the initial insights into consumer perceptions in relation to the marketing claims, third-party certification and the value of perceived green products. Mean score of marketing claims is 4.02 showing that majority of the respondents argues that marketing messages reminding on environmental features positively shift their perception in regard to green products. In a similar way, they gave mean score 3.96 to certifications, which implies that the consumers are broadly aware and appreciate the existence element of third-party eco-labels marking the

authenticity and environmental friendliness of a product. Perceived green product value has the maximum mean of 4.08, which demonstrates that consumers are strongly convinced that green products can have valuable contribution, especially with reliable marketing schemes and reliable certifications.

These standard deviations with the values between 0.68 and 0.76 indicate that there is a rather uniform pattern of responses among the sample but with the minimum variability. This stability shows that the attitudes towards green marketing, certification and product worth are held widely by the respondents. These low/high (2-5) values indicate that although some responses can be described as moderate or neutral, most of the respondents tend to incline towards the agreement or strong agreement.

All in all, these descriptive findings indicate that marketing claims, as well as certification, are both positive and a probable factor towards perceived value of green products. This validates why it is important to test the alternative hypothesis that the combined effect of these two factors are significant in influencing consumer valuation of green products.

Table 2 Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .723 | .523 | .519 | .473 |

Table 3 ANOVA Table

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|----------|
| Regression | 87.465 | 2 | 43.732 | 195.33 | .000 *** |
| Residual | 79.008 | 297 | 0.266 | | |
| Total | 166.473 | 299 | | | |

Table 4 Coefficients Table

| Predictor Variables | Unstandardized B | Std. Error | Standardized Beta (β) | t | Sig. |
|---------------------|------------------|------------|-------------------------------|-------|----------|
| (Constant) | 1.072 | 0.157 | – | 6.826 | .000 |
| Marketing Claims | 0.452 | 0.057 | 0.481 | 7.930 | .000 *** |
| Certifications | 0.379 | 0.049 | 0.416 | 7.735 | .000 *** |

7. ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Multiple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis testing by first establishing the joint effect of the active variables: marketing claims and certifications on the attitude of perceived green product value. The regression model turned out significant statistically which is shown by ANOVA F-value = 195.33 and a p-value lower than 0.001 confirming overall model explicates significant proportion of the variance in outcome variable. R point 2 = 0.523 implies that about 52.3 percent of the variance in perceived value of green products by consumers can be determined by the two exogenous variables, namely, the use of marketing claims and third-party certifications.

Moreover, the table of the coefficients shows that marketing claims (0.481, $p < 0.001$) and certifications (0.416, $p < 0.001$) have proved to be a statistically significant predictor of the perceived value. This implies that the two factors are (individually) beneficial (performing positively) towards constructing consumer perceptions. The standardised values of the beta indicate that marketing claims are a bit more significant, but also certifications are significant. The null hypothesis can be rejected since the two predictors are very significant with positive correlation to the dependent variable and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is therefore accepted.

In conclusion, the findings are strong to end up that the persuasive marketing claims and credible third-party certifications combination increase substantially the perceived value on customers, hence supporting the value of trust and transparency in green marketing campaigns.

8. DISCUSSION

The results of this research act as strong evidence that the promotional arguments and third party certification impact considerably on the perceived value of green products amongst the consumers. The statistical findings of multiple

linear regression indicate clearly that the two variables together with the perceived product value explain more than 50 percent of the variation in the perceived product value. This is highly significant in terms of credible and well-publicized environmental information invoked in the consumer behavior. Brands are no longer able to get by on questionable or unproven green claims in a time when consumers are understanding the full ramifications of what they buy and the environmental consequences of their actions. Rather, marketing activities should be accompanied by certifiable certificates that would help achieve and retain the confidence of the consumers.

The fact that the correlation between the marketing claims and the perceived green product value is significant and positive implies that the consumers react positively to sustainability message that is clear, engaging, and relevant. These results match the ones of previous research (e.g., Olsen et al., 2014; Kang & Sung, 2022), according to which appealing marketing messages that are more emotional and rational were found to be more useful in determining consumer attitudes. Nonetheless, as awareness regarding the issue of greenwashing increases, people tend to be less trusting to environmental claims that are not backed by third-party verification. In this, certifications are essential. Eco-labels are external indicators of the responsibility of a brand in ensuring sustainability and to assure consumers of purchasing products that have been produced based on clear environment behaviors.

In this study, interestingly though both the predictors were significant, marketing claims were seen to affect the outcome slightly more than certifications. This indicates that the manner of presenting green information (advertisement, packaging or brand message) is very instrumental in forming the first impressions. However, such perceptions lack certifications to support them and are thus superficial or short-term. The effect of certifications is that they enhance brand trust by making up the length of time and perceived risk worth it. All this reminds that green marketing should be a strategic combination of compelling communication and good environmental performance.

It is also worth noting that the responses of consumers have been similar as represented by the relatively small standard deviations in the descriptive statistics. This homogeneity implies that there is a common agreement in different demographic groups that credible green marketing- particularly certification activities- increase the values of products. The findings are more so to the businesses that have to operate in competitive markets where differentiation in the natural environment is emerging as a core strategic source. Instead of buying a product, consumers are going to purchase a brand that has a certain environmental story and responsible position.

As a manager, one can point out the insights given by the results that brands should do more than superficial green positioning. Companies ought to spend resources on third-party verification and their sustainability news must be precise, quantifiable, and clear. At the same time, the marketing experts ought to concentrate on the aspect of storytelling that would appeal emotionally to the consumers, and the transmission of verifiable gain. The key players in this process also include policymakers and the organizations providing certification, which should enhance regulatory structures that will standardize the green claims and the enhancement of people awareness about authentic schemes of certifications.

In sum, the research supports the fact the marketing credibility and environmental certification are important complementary sources to influence the perceptions and valuation of green products by the consumers. With the impact of sustainability on the dynamics of markets, today, an integrated, open, and evidence-based strategy in green promotion can help the firms with the help of which they build sustainable consumer relationships and competitive advantage on the base of creating and sustaining value.

9. OVERALL CONCLUSION

The present study arrives at the conclusion that marketing claims, as well as third-party certification, are an important and complementary contributor to the development of consumers perceived value of the green product. Empirical analysis involved in multiple linear regression revealed that the mixture of persuasive environmental message and credible eco-labels has significant impact in consumer attitudes and purchase intend. When well stated and emotionally appealing; marketing claims attract the attention of consumers and shape the environmental context of a commodity. Nevertheless, when backed by certified authorizations, their effect is considerably multiplied, as it is what gives credibility to those statements and makes people less suspicious.

The results confirm that in a marketplace where greenwashing it becomes a continuous topic of concern, trust and transparency essentially plays a significant role in influencing consumer behavior. People do not accept advertising stories anymore but seek to find an external confirmation of the sustainability practices. Organizations are therefore

advised to do two things, first they have to make investment in credible certification systems and secondly; they are also advised to communicate their sustainability initiatives in a clear, engaging, and consistent way.

It is also shown in this study that green value perception done by a consumer is not done independently but has been due to a synergistic effect of what brands are saying and what they can actually show. Companies which find a balance between the facade of green communication and the real responsibility to maintain environmental performance will find it easier to develop brand loyalty and promote sustained consumption.

To conclude, the paper has argued that there is need to strategically combine credible marketing and verifiable certification in a bid to increase the perceived value of the green products. The conclusion has crucial implications to marketers, brand strategists, and policymakers that need to shift to a greener society by encouraging environmentally responsible residents to buy products and minimize the gap between intent and action within the green market.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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