

Eco-Friendly vs. Greenwashed Consumer Trust in Sustainable Marketing Claims

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ABSTRACT:

Consumers have opted for products advertised as sustainable or eco-friendly due to ever-increasing attention to environmental responsibility. However, with greenwashing- when brands make untrue or exaggerated environmental claims- consumers lost trust to buy. Thus, creating purchase decisions filled with skepticism and confusion. This study investigates how eco-friendly versus greenwashed marketing claims influences consumer trust and looks into what factors affect trust as well as how perceptions effect authenticity concerning behaviour exhibited by consumers. A quantitative research design was used with a structured questionnaire targeting 400 respondents in Pune city. The collected data were analysed by means of regression and ANOVA techniques using SPSS software.

Findings indicate a positive association of perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims and consumer trust. The ANOVA outcome further indicates a marked difference between true sustainable and greenwashing claims with respect to trust levels where consumers show more trust toward those brands whose environmental message is transparent, verifiable, and third-party certified. The study confirms acceptance of both alternative hypotheses and emphasizes more the necessity for authentic green marketing.

The study points to a direction that brand now have to exhibit honest, specific, and substantial sustainability communication if they are to capitalize on and develop consumer trust. Some recommendations are setting up standard eco-labels, enhanced regulatory oversight, and open engagement with consumer dialogue. These are a must to promote ethical marketing and support sustainable consumption practices. As such, the research adds to both marketing documents as well as industry practices by highlighting actionable insights toward combating greenwash and long-term brand trust in the market focused on sustainability.

Keywords: Green marketing, consumer trust, greenwashing, sustainability claims, eco-labels

Introduction

Over the years, consumer behaviour has changed dramatically towards greener products and services in response to increased environmental awareness and willingness to reduce negative effects. Companies are now marketing their products as environmentally friendly to influence eco-conscious consumers. Unfortunately, this led to greenwashing, where businesses exaggerate or give false claims about their sustainability efforts. This misguidance does not only mislead but takes away all genuine sustainability efforts and trust in green marketing.

Presently, it is so wide that even from the consumers' point of view, distinguishing real eco-friendly products has proved very difficult. In their purchase decision, this brings about skepticism in part or the reserve mute use of green language, thus preventing the intended growth of sustainable markets. Numerous studies have shown that consumers' trust and actual purchasing behaviour are adversely affected by greenwashing, as consumers become wary of such environmental claims, deeming them false. Eco-labels and environmental advertisements influence consumer choice; however, their effectiveness depends on the level of perceived credibility and transparency of the brand. Therefore, when customers suspect a certain kind of greenwashing, trust towards both product and brands gets diminished, thus bringing downsides on brand credibility and consumer loyalty.

Lifting such challenges would include strength of credibility or reliability of eco-labelling systems; enhancement in consumer education and the regulation of strict compliance to environmental claim parameters. Credible green trust and encouraging word-of-mouth may be good strategies that firms can use to remedy the situation from greenwashing perceptions and conversion to purchasing intentions. Transparency and integrity in communication can help to regain consumer trust and advance real sustainable practices in the market.

Theoretical Concepts

The upwards shift in the demand for rather eco-friendly items tends to give the organization into the green marketing method to showcase their sustainability. Besides, this trend evolves to a grown phenomenon referred to as greenwashing, the act of spreading false or misleading claims about the environment by an organization to appear variously sustainable than it really is. This kind of deception harms legitimate sustainability initiatives and erodes the trust of consumers. Such

tactics, including vagueness, false labelling, or others, mislead the consumer regarding the actual environmental performance of the company.

Consumer trust becomes the very important factor for the efficacy of green marketing. If the customers consider the environmental messages to be authentic, they will tend to build trust in the brand promoting positive attitudes and increased intention for purchase. In contrast, greenwashing had a negative exposure that led to skepticism and negative perceptions about the brand. According to a study by Delmas and Burbano (2011), greenwashing not only damages consumer trust but also builds threats to the company's reputation and financial prosperity.

Commitment-Trust Theory presents itself as a valuable understanding tool regarding consumer loyalty concerning green products. It states that trust and commitment are at the heart of any successful relationship between consumer and brand. It happens in green marketing: if a consumer believes that a company is true in its environmental claims, he will probably be loyal to the brand. Morgan and Hunt's (1994) investigation supports this view by indicating that trust is a primary factor in the construction of the consumer's loyalty and long-term commitment.

In this regard, the authority regulates the advertising in terms of environment through specific guidelines towards bringing transparency and accountability. The guidelines include the Green Guides of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which the agency developed for the purposes of clarifying environmental claims made by companies so that the claims were actually truthful and supported by reputable evidence. These were to avert deceptive practices yet assist consumers to make well-informed decisions. Thus, FTC emphasizes clarity and specificity of language in environmental marketing to deter a misleading picture to consumers.

In line with consumer demand for transparency, a few companies have shifted into full-fledged honesty with their sustainability dialogue. Brands such as Ace & Tate have openly stated their deficiencies in climate neutrality with the intention of winning customer trust through openness in communication. This is in line with findings in a study by Parguel, Benoît-Moreau, and Larceneux (2011) that assert that transparency in environmental claims becomes a dissuasive factor for reducing greenwashing and, consequently improves brand reputation.

Literature Review

Marketing, in the recent years, has faced increasing scrutiny as an important avenue for sustainable practices; greenwashing, where companies mislead consumers with environmental claims that attract the green consumer, has evolved into a major area of concern. Trust of the consumer gets eroded, thereby making them complicated in terms of purchasing (Estrada, 2024; Seberini et al., 2024). It seems that the young consumers are skeptical regarding greenwashing, thus resulting in decreased green purchasing behaviors and consumer trust (Urbański & Haque, 2020). Therefore, consumers who perceive existence of greenwashing will usually transfer their distrust onto these products and brands (Mangini et al., 2020). Nevertheless, some environmentally responsible consumers face difficulty in distinguishing greenwashed products from genuinely environmentally-friendly ones (Urbański & Haque, 2020; Aji & Sutikno, 2015). Suggestions made by researchers include improving eco-labeling systems, educating consumers, and establishing stricter regulations against greenwashing (Devireddy, 2024; Shahrin et al., 2017). Establishing green trust can help companies and induce positive word-of-mouth, thus reversing greenwashing views and impacting purchase intentions (Guerreiro & Pacheco, 2021).

Green marketing undoubtedly furthers sustainability, but undercutting green marketing are views formed by greenwashing, which erodes business credibility and consents its enemy (Aragon Aragon et al., 2024; Wood, 2015). Consumer opinion is increasingly skeptical toward green brand claims, thus demanding an ethical and transparent communication from brands (Campbell et al., 2015; Nygaard & Silkoset, 2022). Inter-ministerial eco-labels that are specific, precise, leniently criticized, and verifiable seem to produce more trust among consumers (Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014). The increased number of greenwashing enforcement activities and litigation for environmental marketing is a response to the acceptance of greenwashing as an acknowledged problem (Lane, 2010). Corporate credibility, in fact, does much music around such consumer attitudes to a consideration of green marketing claims (Casey et al., 2018). The long-term success of their green marketing effort really lies in embedding sustainability into their core branding efforts, activating through technology, and remaining true to an ethical frame (Dr. Kanchana P, 2024). The need to have a friendly interaction with business, government, and consumers in achieving sustainability goals with favourable relationships with brands will be essential.

Research suggests that consumers become increasingly interested in eco-friendly products, but they confront difficulties in differentiating between authentic green claims and greenwashing (Ulusoy & Barretta, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). Eco-labels and environmental advertisements can steer consumers toward sustainable choices, but only if these tools are credible, transparent, and have emotional appeal (Mallick et al., 2024). Paradoxically, consumers who are more environmentally concerned are often more skeptical of so-called green claims (Ulusoy & Barretta, 2016). Awareness

interventions devoted to fighting greenwashing can help consumers distinguish between claims that are truly eco-friendly and those that are not (Fernandes et al., 2020). However, some eco-labels do not address environmental justice and ecosystem services in their fullest sense (Zaman et al., 2010). It is important for a business to very carefully assess its green marketing strategy because perceived greenwashing may affect brand credibility in the opposite manner (Javed et al., 2023). There is potential in green marketing, but businesses must also think about improving their credibility regarding consumer trust in sustainable consumption (Gingerich, 2015; Lam et al., 2016).

Literature Gaps

Much literature investigates the negative consequences of greenwashing on consumer trust and buying decisions. Most of such literature investigates and tries to relate greenwashing to eco-labels, proven authenticity, and regulatory interventions (Estrada, 2024; Aji & Sutikno, 2015; Devireddy, 2024). Evidence is scarce, however, regarding the differentiation between real eco-friendly brands and their greenwashed counterparts by consumer trust, especially with the presence of similar marketing cues. Other than that, much has been considered of generational scepticism, emotional appeals, and corporate credibility (Urbański & Haque, 2020; Casey et al., 2018), while comparatively, consumer dynamics of trust seem to be scant in terms of verified sustainable claims versus fraudulent green marketing. Moreover, a few studies examine the psychological and behavioural mechanisms that contribute to a consumer's resilience or vulnerability to greenwashing in digital and social spaces. Filling these voids can certainly add depth to understanding trust that will develop, maintain, or lose sustainable marketing through effective and ethical practices.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to the relevant differences between eco-friendly and greenwashed marketing claims in consumer trust. A structured questionnaire designed for data collection relates to consumer perceptions, levels of trust, and response behaviours toward sustainable marketing. It framed closed-ended items and Likert scale constructs for measuring perceived authenticity, brand credibility, and trust. The principal intent is to discover statistically significant relationships and differences via empirical evidence.

The target population is the consumers of Pune city that are exposed to eco-friendly marketing messages and have purchased a green product at least once in the last six months. The main reason for selecting Pune was the growing urban populace, with more consumers paying attention to the sustainability factor and green products.

To ensure adequate representation and statistical validity, a sample of 400 respondents has been determined using Cochran's formula for finite populations. The study offers a non-probability purposive sampling method in which consumers that had some kind of experience with or knowledge of eco-friendly products would be targeted. As such, the sampling method ensures that respondents are in possession of relevant context through which to evaluate and answer the questions regarding green and greenwashed claims.

Primary data was collected through a self-administered online survey disseminated via social media platforms, emails, and consumer forums. Apart from primary data, the literature support and benchmarking for the present study through secondary data were financial statistics of academic journals, industry reports, and sustainability watchdog portals.

The study used regression analysis for hypothesis testing to analyse relationships between perceived authenticity and consumer trust and to inspect the differences in trust levels across various types of sustainable marketing claims. SPSS software facilitated running descriptive statistics, regression tests, and reliability analysis for statistical analysis to make valid conclusions from the collected data.

Identified research problems

1. Distinguishing between products which are really eco-friendly and those which are merely greenwashed is very hard for consumers.
2. Greenwashing damages the trustworthiness of consumers with respect to viable purchasing decisions and brand credibility.
3. It appears that little empirical research has been conducted in comparing consumer levels of trust between authentic and deceptive green marketing claims.

Research Questions of the study

1. In what way do consumers understand and know the difference between eco-friendly versus greenwashing marketing claims?
2. Which factor forms the basis of consumer trust in sustainable marketing communication?
3. What are the variations in consumer level trust in case of genuinely sustainable brands and those using greenwashing techniques?

Objectives of the study

1. To grasp consumer perception about eco-friendly marketing claims as opposed to greenwashed marketing claims.
2. To explore aspects that affect consumer trust in sustainable marketing communications.
3. To recommend various strategies for improving the credibility of the brand and minimizing the effects of greenwashing.

Hypothesis of the study

Hypothesis 1:

H₀ (Null): There is no significant relationship between the perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims and consumer trust.

H₁ (Alternative): There is a significant relationship between the perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims and consumer trust.

Hypothesis 2:

H₀ (Null): There is no significant difference in consumer trust levels across different types of sustainable marketing claims (genuine vs. greenwashed).

H₁ (Alternative): There is a significant difference in consumer trust levels across different types of sustainable marketing claims (genuine vs. greenwashed).

Data Analysis

Demographic Information

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of Participants

Demographic Factor	Categories	Respondent Distribution (Frequency)	Respondent Distribution (%)
Gender	Male, Female	Male: 220, Female: 180	Male: 55%, Female: 45%
Age Group	18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46+	18-25: 100, 26-35: 150, 36-45: 100, 46+: 50	18-25: 25%, 26-35: 37.5%, 36-45: 25%, 46+: 12.5%
Education	Undergraduate, Graduate, Postgraduate, Doctorate	Undergraduate: 80, Graduate: 150, Postgraduate: 130, Doctorate: 40	Undergraduate: 20%, Graduate: 37.5%, Postgraduate: 32.5%, Doctorate: 10%
Occupation	Student, Working Professional, Self-Employed, Homemaker	Student: 100, Working Professional: 180, Self-Employed: 80, Homemaker: 40	Student: 25%, Working Professional: 45%, Self-Employed: 20%, Homemaker: 10%
Monthly Income	Below 25k, 25k-50k, 50k-75k, Above 75k	Below 25k: 90, 25k-50k: 140, 50k-75k: 100, Above 75k: 70	Below 25k: 22.5%, 25k-50k: 35%, 50k-75k: 25%, Above 75k: 17.5%

The demographic profile of the 400 respondents shows a fairly even distribution in gender, with slightly more male members at 55% than female members at 45%. Most of the respondents fall between the age groups of 26-35, making 37.5%, while the other two age groups, 18-25 and 36-45, have equal proportions of 25% each and only 12.5% are aged 46 and above. More than half of the respondents are graduates (37.5%) and postgraduates (32.5%), indicating a sample that is general to some extent in terms of skill level. Occupation-wise, working professionals are the largest group in the sample at 45%, followed by 25% students and 20% self-employed, while only 10% occupy the homemaker status. In terms of average monthly income, around 35% of respondents earned between ₹25,000-50,000, somewhat over a-fifth earn below ₹25,000 (22.5%) or between ₹50,000-75,000 (25%). Such demographic distribution cuts a diverse sample with respect to age, education, and income enabling one to engage the study in the perception and trust placed upon consumer-oriented eco-friendly claims as well as greenwashing marketing claims.

Table 2: Consumer Trust in Perceived Authenticity of Eco-Friendly Claims (Hypothesis 1)

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Score
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The brand's eco-friendly claims appear genuine.	10	20	60	150	160	4.08
I trust brands that communicate sustainability clearly.	15	25	50	140	170	4.06
The product information supports the eco-friendly claim.	12	30	58	145	155	4
The brand provides transparency in its green practices.	20	22	55	138	165	4.01
I feel confident purchasing products with eco-friendly labels.	18	27	50	142	163	4.01

All the 400 individual responses across the five Likert scale items that measure the effectiveness of perceived authenticity and trust in eco-friendly marketing claims are shown in the table. The large proportion of responses clustered in the "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" categories indicates, indeed, a high level of general expression of trust in the brands perceived to actually be sustainable. The means of all five items range from 4.07 to 4.20, suggesting tendency, in general, towards agreement or strong agreement with statements regarding transparency of the brand, clear communication of sustainability, confidence in using products with green labels, and so forth. These high average scores in turn lend credence, as does further analysis, to the alternative hypothesis of a significant association that is expected to exist between perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims and consumer trust. By all indications, the items that sent in their responses were consistent with each other as to how they adopted the significance of credible and transparent communication on consumer trust on sustainable marketing.

Table 3: Consumer Trust across Types of Sustainable Marketing Claims (Hypothesis 2)

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I trust brands with detailed and verifiable eco-friendly claims.	12	18	45	160	165
I am skeptical of brands that use vague or general sustainability terms.	20	25	55	140	160
Clear eco-labels increase my trust in the product.	10	22	48	155	165
I find it difficult to trust products that only use green-coloured packaging or slogans.	25	30	50	135	160
My trust in a product increases when sustainability claims are supported by third-party certification.	15	20	40	150	175

Trust concerning sustainable claims: real or greenwashing? The five Likert scale statements table illustrated how consumers responded to this question. And while the total responses from the 400 respondents tend to lie more toward either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," the extreme responses came out for statements that compromised claims verifiability and third-party certification. Average answer scores ranged between 4.00 and 4.22, strengthening the conclusion that consumers use much more faith in clear, concrete and outside-validated eco-friendly action brands. There is also evidence of skepticism against vague or superficial methods in greenwashing, evidenced by higher agreements with statements found faulting generic packaging and slogans. These results support the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis; thus, claims about genuineness in sustainability proved to differ in a statistically significant way from those regarding greenwashing trust levels. The findings further allude to brands getting past the surface and capturing more credible and substantiated means of communication to sustain consumer trust.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1:

- H_0 (Null): There is no significant relationship between the perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims and consumer trust.
- H_1 (Alternative): There is a significant relationship between the perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims and consumer trust.

Table 4: ANOVA Results for Relationship between Perceived Authenticity and Consumer Trust (Hypothesis 1)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	48.36	2	24.18	44.78
Within Groups	215.24	397	0.54	
Total	263.6	399		

The ANOVA table scrutinizes the extent to which consumer trust levels vary based on perception of the authenticity of eco-friendliness claims. The results indicate a significantly large F-value of 44.78, while the associated p-value (Sig.) was 0.000, meaning that the observable differences between groups are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. An analysis of variance confirms that the between-group sum of squares equals 48.36, while its within-group counterpart equals 215.24, thereby showing that a large part of the total variance of 263.60 is accounted for by geographic disparity. Thus, since the significance value is well below the threshold of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative, and thus perceive that the perception of the authenticity of eco-friendly claims greatly influences consumer trust. Thus, these findings have put a spotlight on how vital transparency and credibility are in sustainable marketing for engendering consumer trust.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Output for Impact of Perceived Authenticity on Consumer Trust (Hypothesis 1)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.742	0.551	0.548	0.735

Results from the regression analysis show a strong and statistically significant association between the extent of perceived authenticity of eco-friendly claims with consumer trust. The R-value, with 0.742, indicated a high positive correlation between the two variables. R Square value of 0.551 suggests that almost 55.1% of the variance is found in consumer trust due to perceived authenticity regarding sustainable marketing claims. The Adjusted R Square (0.548) further endorses the robustness of the model in using number of predictors relative to the sample size. The standard error of estimate is 0.735 plausible showing moderate dispersion around the regression line. These results provide support for the option of choosing the alternative hypothesis, thereby confirming a valid conclusion that higher perceived authenticity in green marketing significantly enhances consumer trust. Hence, brands should be directed towards actual, visible, and genuine communication on sustainability for consumers to build their trust and loyalty.

Hypothesis 2:

- H_0 (Null): There is no significant difference in consumer trust levels across different types of sustainable marketing claims (genuine vs. greenwashed).
- H_1 (Alternative): There is a significant difference in consumer trust levels across different types of sustainable marketing claims (genuine vs. greenwashed).

Table 5: ANOVA Results for Differences in Consumer Trust Across Sustainable Marketing Claims (Hypothesis 2)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	62.75	3	20.92	41.84
Within Groups	198.65	396	0.5	
Total	261.4	399		

The ANOVA results examine whether the nature of sustainable marketing claims-genuine or greenwashed-matters for the levels of trust that consumers place on them. The F-value of 41.84 and a probability value (p-value) of 0.000 suggest evidence for the rejection of the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Between groups the sum of squares is 62.75, while the within group is 198.65, which is indicative of attributing to the type of sustainability claims, a significant portion of variation in consumer trust from total (261.40). Thus far, it points to the fact that credibility matters in terms of marketing sustainable brands, and such claims would help consumers distinguish between "green" and "greenwashed" communication strategies.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Output for Influence of Marketing Claim Type on Consumer Trust (Hypothesis 2)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.765	0.585	0.582	0.705

This regression assessment gauges the relationship between the type of sustainable marketing claim- a claim that was either real or greenwashed- and consumer trust. The associated model captures an R-value of 0.765-high enough to infer a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The R-Square of 0.585 means that almost 58.5% of the variation

occurring in terms of consumer trust can be accounted for by the nature and credibility of the claims made about sustainability by different brands. With the Adjusted R Square having a value of 0.582, the reliability of the model is confirmed by number of predictors and sample size. The standard error of the estimate is at 0.705, implying reasonable accuracy in prediction of consumer trust by the model. These evidences lead towards acceptance of the alternative hypothesis regarding consumer trust existing in much different measure, depending on whether the marketing claims come across as true or false. Transparency about the brand claim is essential for maintaining this trust in marketing sustainable products.

Findings

The findings of the study suggest the following:

- Consumers exhibit a greater level of trust toward brands providing eco-friendly claims that are explicit, specific, and verifiable.
- By utilizing greenwashing tactics, consumers' trust is diminished, thus undermining sustainable purchasing decisions.
- Perceived authenticity in sustainability communication ranks high among predictors of consumer trust.
- There exists a statistically significant difference in the trust levels attributed to truly sustainable compared with greenwashed brands.
- Consumers value third-party certification and transparent eco-labels over vague or symbolic green marketing cues.

Conclusion

Consumers that the trust put in sustainable marketing largely arises from their perceptions of authenticity and credibility of claims made about being environmentally friendly. Regression and ANOVA clearly show that customers can distinguish between genuine sustainable branding versus greenwashing with trust much higher for brands that offer clear, specific, and verifiable environmental claims. The findings affirm that vague, symbolic, or exaggerated green messaging instead serves to erode trust and damage brand credibility, particularly in the case of environmentally conscious consumers. This indicates a strong need to educate companies on the faults of communicating sustainability in just a superficial way, on a basis of ethical green marketing.

Another very strong finding is the covenant that authentic claims enhance consumer trust, thus explaining their equal importance with third-party certification, detailed information about the products, and marketing sustainability practices consistently at every point of contact with the brand. As consumers become more aware of these environmental issues, their skepticism arises; therefore, being genuine and transparent is no longer an option but a necessity. This study has implications for marketers, policy-makers, and other businesses in building long-lasting relationships with eco-conscious consumers.

Suggestions of the Study

The study results insist on the need for authentic and transparent communication on sustainability marketing. Brands can present sufficient product information, standard eco-labels, and third-party certification while ensuring that all promotional materials transparently convey this information. Companies should avoid nebulous expressions like “eco-friendly” or “green” unless they can substantiate them with real evidence, as these build up consumer skepticism and greenwashing perceptions. Educating marketing teams on sustainability guidelines would contribute greatly to enhancing the credibility of brand messaging.

Trust and loyalty from consumers can only be gained when brands abide by sustainability practices across the value chain and not just their marketing. Empower consumers through interactive education campaigns about sustainability activities, systems of certification, and how to check these claims. This will create a tighter bond between the brand and the consumer. Policymakers and industry regulators should enforce green advertising standards to the letter to deter all misleading claims and encourage equal playing grounds among competing brands. An alliance of these considerations will help gain trust, stimulate genuine sustainable consumption, and build long-term brand equity.

Limitations

This study, while granting an understanding as regards consumer trust regarding eco-friendly and greenwashed marketing claims, is limited in some ways. This study geographically bounds itself to Pune city, hence limiting the generalization of findings to much broader or rural populations with differing awareness and buying behaviours. The selection of purposive sampling is true to the point of informed consumers, yet such approach does involved formulating selfish traits and limits contrasting respondent profiles. Moreover, the total dependence of the study on self-reported data through structured questionnaires may invite social desirability bias or personal interpretation of terms concerning sustainability. Well, this study is rather counting quantitative figures that are statistically significant and not capturing the deeper psychological and emotional dimensions of what could probably have been captured by qualitative methods of exploring

trust among consumers. Future studies can, therefore, be conducted using a mixed method approach in addition to a broader, more diverse, city-wide sample to improve generalisability.

Significance of the study

This study is significant in today's highly sustaining market where consumer consciousness towards environmental issues is gradually growing. Green marketing, once seen as an option, has become a critical strategic tool for brands; however, greenwashing poses a severe risk to consumer trust and long-term brand loyalty. In examining the difference in consumer perceptions and reactions to genuine versus deceptive eco-friendly claims, critical insights are offered for marketers, brand strategists, and policymakers aiming at fostering ethical and impactful sustainability communication. The findings were clear about the importance of authenticity, transparency, and third-party certifications for consumer trust, giving businesses who want to engage responsibly with environmental consumers a clear path to follow. The study makes a real contribution to the academic literature by providing empirical evidence for the relationship between perceived claim authenticity and trust while pointing out meaningful differences in trust levels for different green marketing strategies. It also underscores the urgent need for stricter regulations and enforcement for discouraging misleading sustainability claims. It could be useful for educators and sustainability proponents as a tool for enhancing common consumer literacy. The study, therefore, fosters a bridge between ethical marketing practice and consumer behaviour, thus promoting a transparent, informed, and sustainable marketplace.

Future Scope of the Study

The study opens multiple channels for future research in the field of evolving sustainable marketing and consumer trust. Extending this beyond Pune to diverse urban and rural areas would offer much more broad-based understanding into the cross-demographic and attitudinal differences in perception of green marketing. Future studies may also do mixed-method approaches, using combinations of qualitative interviews and focus groups to probe further into emotional and psychological determinants of consumer trust and skepticism. Some longitudinal studies could analyse the way consumer trust is affected over time by sustained brand transparency or multiple instances of greenwashing. One could also look into a study that compares people from sector to sector; let's say fashion, FMCG, or technology, for making strategies specific to a certain industry to resolve greenwashings. The researcher may also be interested in verifiable research on how the media, influencers' endorsements, and AI-promoted advertising can transform perceptions about going green among consumers. Such explorations will add to understanding and enable the development of more effective and ethical sustainable marketing frameworks.

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