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A Study on Impact of Sustainable Practices on Brand Perception

Dr. R Jeyalakshmi, Keerthana S, Salini S

Associate Professor, Sri Sairam Institute of Management Studies, Sri Sairam Engineering College, Chennai, India

Scholar, Sri Sairam Institute of Management Studies, Sri Sairam Engineering College, Chennai, India

Scholar, Sri Sairam Institute of Management Studies, Sri Sairam Engineering College, Chennai, India

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of sustainability practices on consumer brand perception. In a marketplace increasingly shaped by environmental and social concerns, businesses must go beyond traditional profit metrics to embrace ethical, transparent, and eco-conscious operations. The research explores how consumers evaluate brands based on sustainability efforts and how these perceptions influence trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. Using descriptive research design and statistical tools such as Chi-square, Spearman's correlation, and Kruskal-Wallis tests, data from 103 respondents reveal strong consumer awareness and expectations for authenticity. The findings offer valuable insights for integrating sustainability into effective brand strategies.

KEYWORDS: Brand perception, Consumer Behavior, Corporate responsibility, Green marketing, Sustainability

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic business environment, sustainability has evolved from a corporate trend to a strategic necessity. Increasing concerns about climate change, resource scarcity, and ethical responsibility have pushed companies to rethink their operations beyond profit and quality, focusing instead on their environmental and social impact. Consumers, especially younger generations, now evaluate brands not just by products or services, but by the values they represent and how responsibly they operate. When implemented genuinely and communicated transparently, these practices enhance consumer trust, brand loyalty, and market competitiveness. This study aims to analyze how sustainability practices influence consumer perception of brands, the effectiveness of sustainability communication strategies, and the psychological and cultural factors driving sustainability-conscious consumer behavior. Through surveys, interviews, and case studies, it seeks to offer insights into how brands can build credibility, trust, and loyalty by embedding sustainability into their core identity, and how consumer expectations around sustainability are reshaping the brand landscape globally.

1.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma & Patel (2024), The Impact of Carbon-Neutral Branding on Consumer Behavior. Sharma and Patel examined how carbon-neutral branding influences consumer perception across the FMCG, automotive, and technology sectors. The study highlighted that carbon-neutral certifications such as Carbon Neutral and Climate Neutral Certified significantly enhanced brand loyalty.

Li & Wang (2024) - AI-Powered Sustainability Reporting and Brand Image Li and Wang explored the role of AI-powered sustainability reporting in shaping brand perception. Through analyzing reports from 50 multinational corporations, the study revealed that AI-based transparency tools increased consumer trust by 30%.

Rajesh et al. (2024), Sustainable Packaging Initiatives and Consumer Brand Preference. Rajesh et al. studied how the use of sustainable packaging influences consumer preferences. Surveys conducted among 800 urban and semi-urban consumers indicated that 65% preferred brands using biodegradable and recyclable packaging.

Johnson & Lee (2023), The Influence of ESG Reporting on Brand Reputation Johnson and Lee explored how Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting shapes brand reputation. They analysed 100 corporate reports and conducted perception surveys, revealing that consistent ESG disclosures improved brand credibility by 25%.

Martinez et al. (2023), Circular Economy Practices and Luxury Brand Perception Martinez et al. investigated how circular economy practices, such as product repairs, material recycling, and resale initiatives, impacted the luxury fashion industry. The study found that 78% of respondents viewed luxury brands with circular economy programs as ethical and socially responsible.

1.3 NEED FOR THE STUDY

The necessity for research on the effects of sustainability practices on brand perception stems from the increasing focus on environmental and social responsibility in consumer choices. As businesses progressively implement sustainable practices to minimize their ecological impact, consumers are becoming more aware of these initiatives when selecting brands. It is vital for companies to comprehend how these efforts affect brand perception in order to align their marketing strategies with the changing values of consumers. Moreover, regulatory demands and global sustainability objectives have further compelled organizations to adopt environmentally friendly operations. This research can offer valuable insights into whether sustainability initiatives improve brand reputation, foster customer loyalty, and create a competitive edge. It will also enable brands to pinpoint the specific sustainability practices that resonate most with their intended audience.

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Primary Objective:

1. To examine the impact of sustainability practices on brand perception.

Secondary Objective:

2. To assess consumer awareness on sustainability practices.
3. To evaluate the influence of sustainability on brand trust.
4. To analyse consumer willingness to pay for sustainable products.
5. To identify consumer concerns about greenwashing.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study's focus on the effects of sustainability practices on brand perception involves examining how a company's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) efforts affect consumer attitudes, brand loyalty, and purchasing choices. It will investigate a range of sustainability initiatives, such as carbon footprint reduction, waste management, ethical sourcing, the use of renewable energy, and community support programs. Furthermore, the study will examine the influence of digital media, brand communication strategies, and third-party certifications on public perception. It aims to offer insights for companies on effectively incorporating sustainability into their branding strategies while avoiding greenwashing. The results will be valuable for marketers, business leaders, policymakers, and researchers seeking to understand changing consumer expectations and the business rationale for sustainability.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the systematic framework followed to conduct a study. It includes the design, data collection methods, tools, and analytical techniques used to examine the research problem.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the blueprint that outlines how the study will be conducted, ensuring that the procedures used are effective in addressing the research objectives. For this particular project, a Descriptive Research Design has been employed.

DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive research aims to systematically describe a situation, problem, or phenomenon. In this study, it is used to understand and evaluate consumer perceptions of brands based on their sustainability initiatives.

SAMPLE DESIGN

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was adopted for this study. Participants were selected based on availability and willingness to respond to the questionnaire. This method was chosen due to time, resource, and accessibility constraints, while still providing a relevant cross-section of opinions.

SAMPLE SIZE

The study gathered responses from 103 participants. This sample size was adequate for descriptive statistical analysis and allowed meaningful comparisons across age groups, income categories, and consumer awareness levels.

STATISTICAL TOOLS

To ensure robust analysis and derive valid insights from the collected data, the following statistical tools were applied.

H-TEST (KRUSKAL-WALLIS TEST)

The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed to compare the brand perception across more than two independent demographic groups, such as different age brackets or income levels. This helped in identifying which groups showed more concern for sustainability when choosing brands.

U-TEST (MANN-WHITNEY U TEST)

This test was used to compare the differences in brand perception between two independent groups, such as male and female respondents or students and working professionals. It is particularly useful for analyzing ordinal data and drawing conclusions when the data does not follow a normal distribution.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study was based on responses from only 103 participants, which may not provide a fully representative view of the overall consumer population.
2. Convenience sampling was used, which may introduce selection bias and limit the generalizability of the findings.
3. The data collected through questionnaires depends on participants' honesty and understanding, which could lead to biased or inaccurate responses.

II. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2.1 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

2.1.1 KRUSKAL-WALLIS H TEST

Kruskal-Wallis H Test was conducted to compare two or more variables that is the age groups of the respondents and whether they feel positive about brands supporting social causes to see if there is a significant difference in brand perception regarding sustainability.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the age of the respondents and whether they feel positive about brands supporting social causes.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the age of the respondents and whether they feel positive about brands supporting social causes.

TABLE 2.2.1 SHOWING KRUSKAL-WALLIS H TEST BETWEEN AGE GROUPS AND POSITIVE FEELING ABOUT BRANDS SUPPORTING SOCIAL CAUSES

TABLE 2.2.1

Test Statistics	Value
Kruskal-WallisH	1.639
df(degrees of freedom)0029	4
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)	0.802

INTERPRETATION:

If the p-value is greater than 0.05, then H₀ is not rejected, suggesting no significant difference among groups. If the p-value is less than 0.05, then H₀ is rejected, indicating that at least one group differs significantly in brand perception compared to others.

2.1.2 MANN-WHITNEY U TEST

Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to compare two independent variables that is gender of the respondents and respondents look for eco-friendly products while shopping.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the gender of the respondents and respondents look for eco-friendly products while shopping.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the gender of the respondents and respondents look for eco-friendly products while shopping.

TABLE 2.1.2 SHOWING MANN-WHITNEY U TEST BETWEEN GENDER AND RESPONDENTS LOOK FOR ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS WHILE SHOPPING

TABLE 2.2.2

Test Statistics	Value
Mann-Whitney U	612
Wilcoxon W	1473
Z	-1.184
Asymp. Sig.(2-tailed)	0.237

INTERPRETATION:

If your test result showed a p-value > 0.05, you fail to reject H₀, meaning gender does not significantly affect brand perception that is respondents look for eco-friendly products while shopping related to sustainability.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS

3.1 FINDINGS

- Majority (93%) of respondents fall in the 18–25 age group, indicating the study is youth-centric.
- Gender distribution is almost equal, with 54% male and 46% female.
- Most respondents (53%) hold postgraduate degrees, showing a well-educated sample.
- 84% of respondents are students, highlighting the dominance of young learners in the sample.
- 74% of respondents have a monthly income below ₹20,000, reflecting limited purchasing power.
- 91% of respondents are aware of brands' sustainability practices.
- 71% of the respondents are willing to pay more for sustainable products.
- 82% prefer eco-friendly packaging over regular packaging.
- 63% are ready to choose sustainable brands even if they cost more.
- 65% of respondents have switched brands due to sustainability concerns.

3.2 SUGGESTIONS

- Brands should clearly communicate their sustainability practices through verified reports, product labeling, and digital content. Transparency builds consumer trust and helps reduce skepticism about greenwashing.
- Companies must avoid making vague or misleading claims about being eco-friendly. Any claim should be backed by measurable data or recognized certifications to maintain authenticity and protect brand credibility.
- Packaging plays a significant role in consumer perception. Brands should adopt biodegradable, recyclable, or reusable packaging options, and make these easily accessible and affordable to the consumer.
- Many consumers still lack complete knowledge about what constitutes true sustainability. Brands, along with educational institutions and NGOs, can initiate awareness drives to inform the public about responsible consumption.
- Rather than treating sustainability as a marketing campaign, companies should embed it into their mission, operations, and culture. This ensures long-term commitment and deeper brand integration.

IV. CONCLUSION

This Study reinforce the growing importance of sustainability in shaping consumer brand perception. Consumers today are not only aware of sustainability issues but are also actively factoring them into their purchasing decisions. They are drawn toward brands that reflect ethical practices, eco-consciousness, and social responsibility. Many are even willing to pay more or switch brands in favor of sustainable alternatives. However, the data also reveals challenges, particularly in the areas of verifying sustainability claims and understanding the true impact of corporate practices. Consumers expect transparency and proof, not just marketing slogans In conclusion, sustainability is a powerful differentiator and

trust builder in modern branding, and companies that prioritize it authentically will not only serve the planet but also position themselves for future success.

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