

CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY IN GREEN ADVERTISING (SDG 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION)

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Abstract

This study explores the role of consumer psychology in shaping responses to green advertising within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Green advertising, encompassing eco-labels, environmental claims, and sustainability-driven campaigns, seeks to influence consumer awareness, attitudes, and purchasing behavior toward environmentally responsible choices. However, the effectiveness of such advertising is deeply rooted in psychological factors such as values, beliefs, social norms, motivations, and perceptions of credibility. Theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior and Cognitive Dissonance highlight the importance of both rational evaluations and emotional connections in decision-making, while challenges such as greenwashing often undermine consumer trust. By examining how consumers cognitively and emotionally engage with green messages, this research emphasizes the potential of authentic and persuasive advertising to foster behavioral change, reduce skepticism, and encourage sustainable consumption practices aligned with SDG 12's vision of ecological balance.

Keywords: Consumer psychology, Green advertising, Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12), Responsible consumption and production, Green consumer behavior.

Introduction

The perception and effectiveness of green marketing as one of the Sustainable Development Goals 12: Responsible Consumption and Production is one of the most significant parts of Psychologist Theory. It dwells on how consumers in and outside the marketplace will react as new paradigms of an environmental-oriented sustainability are setting in. Changing attitude and behaviour of consumers towards green products skin up to overconsumption and unsustainable production. Advertising has been invoked as an influencer to change the attitude and behavior of consumers towards green product. Thus green advertising has been identified as a significant vehicle communication to create increasing rates of awareness and behavior of responsible consumption. Green advertising intends to trigger buying of commodities and adoption of a different lifestyle that is considered to be eco-positive. It encompasses green products, green labels, as well as green marketing. Whether the green advertising works or not, however, is conditional on the processing of such arguments in a cognitive and emotional manner. Psychological models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior and Cognitive Dissonance as well as the paradigm of Value-Belief-Norm maintain that no matter how much and how well a person possesses knowledge, there remains a gap that needs to be bridged in making a decision. It is subject to different degrees of social constructs, which are interpreted as behavior control, which defines the attitude towards green products. which is, the phenomenon known as the, 'Greenwashing,' and the, false pretence towards the environment that portrays, that lack of trust, which a consumer can hold on their part, and the environment

is something that has been so needlessly complicated by a manner of layers of this kind of interaction.

The psychological consideration becomes crucial because the consumer is inclined to lie just between cynicism and desire and dwell on the individual benefits of green products over the eco-social imperative. Green advertising in the example given would require a balance between the appeal to rational and to the emotional which appeals to identity, values and morals of the consumers. Similarly, cultural, demographic and lifestyle awareness is also quite paramount in as much as they further buffer the processes in which sustainability advocates are formulated, internalized, and enforced. Hence, the fact that the consumer psychology and green advertisement are merged into a single concept shows that advertising can assist in realizing SDG 12 in addition to pointing out that the question of the ways that the psychological knowledge can be utilized to increase the persuasive and authoritative nature of green campaigns should be explored. These are the psychological factors, which this research discusses, which can champion green advertising to rest in a new frame distribution other than a marketing tactic, it may play a set role in transforming the behaviors of consumers to create a smoother sustainable world.

Scope of the Study

This thesis aims to explore the consumer attitudes in the face of sustainability-related claims in the framework of the psychological phenomena associated with consumer reactions to advertisement and their role in the attainment of the sustainability world targets in the psychologically green advertisement field. To be more exact, the analysis targets the consumer psychological layers, in which purchasing green products becomes possible and how green advertising (eco-labels, environmental, CSR-driven) contributes to creating purchase intentions, awareness, and trust. It proceeds to examine the psychologically induced explanations of behavioral models such as Theory of Planned Behavior, Value-Belief-Norm and Cognitive Dissonance in contextualization of the consumer opposition and obedience to sustainable consumer behavior. Broader, albeit of the thesis that advertising is clearly a key tool of the practicing of consumer mastery, it is also such that, in terms of sustainability communication, a much more pragmatic and plausible approach to consumer mastery upshot can be inhabited by arguing that the green antithesis; the counter to advertising is itself, at the same time, a naked but evening-looking exploiteur. Finally, in this study, a green advertising that seems to be a tool of marketing much less than a tool of psychology and sociology is suggested as a psychological as alike as sociological impetus towards supportive consumption in general, and adoption of multifunctional personal and interpersonal behavioral models.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, this examination is devoted to the news of the psychology of consumption, and green advertising rest also discusses obstacles. The aim is the investigation of the psychological dimensions that do give rise to the understanding of the way in which and why the consumers engage with sustainability communications. The study assumptions are the attitude, feelings, motivation as well as the intent to behave with the possibility to describe the psychological as well as emotional factors that make consumers prefer to react to green advertising as well as scenes to stimulate them. The current study is concentrated on the role of dependent and independent variables and difference advertising tactics utilizing rationale and emotional appeals, eco-labels, and CSR motivated advertising in determining attendee attention, trust, and purchase intention. The paper will as well aim at dealing with the obstacles of scepticism and greenwashing given the influence of credibility and authenticity on consumer confidence on the sustainability assertions. It is also aimed at providing meaningful information that would help businesses, decision makers, and communication professionals in creating effective green advertising strategies that foster responsible consumers and accomplish goals of SDG 12.

Sustainable Development Goal 12

Sustainable Development Goal 12 (SDG 12) responsible consumption and production is about the need to re-design the production and consumption process of objects and services to address the reduction of environmental degradation, optimal use of resources and sustainability of future-generation life. The aim of SDG 12 is far beyond waste disposal and resource conservation; it aims to manage the entire life cycle of a product ranging from its design to the sustainable extraction of the raw materials, the production and distribution of the product, its consumption, and disposal or recycling, thus creating circular economies with low ecological footprints. SDG 12 most importantly emphasizes that sustainability is not the outcome of government policies or industrial actions alone; it is a critical outcome of the everyday choices made by consumers. Purchasing decisions modify demand, shape business decisions, and accelerate or impede the pace of transition to a greener economy. The gap between the policies and the outcomes vis-a-vis the condition of the environment is most affected by the consumers' decisions to buy green products, avoid indiscriminate consumption, and practice recycling or reusing.

In this case, advertising 's role in promoting awareness of SDG 12 goes far beyond mere product advertising, to education and social re-engineering of enduring and embedded norms and values, which include making education social and sustainable. Green advertising seeks to attain sustainability by raising awareness and counter information, by promoting socially responsible environmentally driven choices and discouraging, at the same time, discredited and disapproved patterns of consumption. On the other hand, misleading advertising, particularly greenwashing, which steadily erodes the trust of the consumer, creates an obstacle in the pursuit of SDG 12, making the case for the need to focus on authenticity of sustainability communication. The use of consumer psychology in green advertising strategy development which, in turn, helps to achieve SDG 12, is an outcome of the understanding and appreciation by the advertisers of the psychology behind responsible consumption. The outcomes extend to the willingness to fund the behavior and the creation of a net sustainability behavior in the society. SDG 12 goes beyond the balancing of domestic policies to provide a global paradigm framework for individual and collective action by the world to achieve economic development alongside social welfare, which is the goal of communicators, advertisers and businesses.”

Consumer Psychology in Sustainability Green Advertising

Consumer psychology in sustainability explores how attitudes, values, and motivations shape eco-friendly behaviors, showing that people's sustainable choices depend on awareness, environmental concern, lifestyle, product trust, and social expectations, with motivations ranging from planetary responsibility to self-interest like health or cost savings. Theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, Value-Belief-Norm Theory, and Cognitive Dissonance Theory highlight how attitudes, ecological worldviews, and internal conflicts influence green behavior, revealing that sustainable decision-making is not purely rational but shaped by emotional, ethical, and social factors. In this context, green advertising plays a vital role by promoting environmental benefits through eco-labels, recycling claims, energy efficiency, and CSR campaigns, evolving from the environmental movements of the 1960s to today's certification-driven practices. However, the challenge lies in distinguishing genuine green advertising from greenwashing, where false or exaggerated claims undermine trust and sustainability efforts. Since credibility and transparency are essential for consumer engagement, effective sustainability communication must combine authenticity, ethical responsibility, and trust-building to align personal value with social desirability and foster lasting eco-conscious behavior.

Literature Review

Arora, N. K., & Mishra, I. (2023). The authors propose an integrated use of policy, technology, and public engagement for improved resource utilization and waste minimization. They maintain that responsible consumption is not only a policy issue, but also a product of consumer behavior, as one's choice greatly affects the production systems. They also emphasize the need to move from a linear to a circular economy that prioritizes recycling, reusing, and sustainable design. The paper argues that consumer education and awareness about their responsibilities fosters more responsible behavior. Another point that the authors raise is that long-term ecological safety, economic stability, and social wellbeing cannot be created without committed responsible consumption, and is not the activities of choosing eco-friendly initiatives. They focus on the SDG 12 and say that the other related goals simulate the pillar of SDG 12 to the wrought of required interlinkages of sustainability.

Kour, M. (2024). The question is trying to examine such environmental ethics, personal values, and social responsibility as factors predisposing consumer decisions and buying green products. Kour reminds that as the regard to the environment is increasing, itself the attitudinal-behavioral gap is placed under scrutiny against the backdrop of various factors, including perceived effectiveness, it should be affordable, and it should be trusted in the marketing of sustainability. According to the consumer identity project, it is observed that individuals are shifting towards buying goods and services that are ethically and ecologically consonant to their moral concepts. Using behavioral knowledge, Kour contends that individuals make sustainable decisions founded on additional other than rational evaluation; an emotional and moral dilemma. It all concludes the paper arguing that closing the gap to SDG 12, green marketing consumer trust will be hardened, cost of green consumption and availability green in consumption and the ethics of the environment have to be better adopted in personal and societal consumption.

Chan, S., et al (2018): The authors believe that, even though much attention has been paid to developing the concept of sustainable consumption and production, understanding the global and local context of the implementation remains a major shortcoming. They prompt interdisciplinary collaboration among economists and environmental scientists, behavioral psychologists and communication scholars to work on these issues. In particular, the review under consideration talks about the need to analyze consumer psychology in relation to green advertising and discerns that the literature on green policies and production is abundant, while literature on consumers is scant. The paper also points out the need to develop robust frameworks to measure outcomes of sustainability, monitor progress and assess the impact of sustainability interventions. In identifying these gaps, the authors hope to advance a research agenda in support of evidence-informed approaches to bolster the global implementation of SDG 12.

Abbas, S., Munir, H., & Ahmad, Y. (2024). Their research claims that eco-labels enhance credibility because they act as third-party verification of sustainability claims, and that green advertising furthers the claim's awareness and impacts consumer attitudes. The combination of the two helps businesses improve consumer trust and mitigate skepticism associated with greenwashing. The authors provide evidence that consumers are more prone to purchase an eco-friendly product when they are exposed to advertising reinforced by credible eco-labels, because this combination closes the gap between the marketing communication and product reality. The study also discusses the functions of psychological factors such as trust and motivation in the consumer's decision-making. The authors state that eco-labels coupled with green advertising, as the case may be, can strategically serve as powerful facilitators of SDG 12 by promoting the use and wide scale adoption of sustainable consumption.

Greenland, S. J., et al (2023). This type of false and misleading advertisement commonly known as greenwashing, diminishes consumer belief and contributes to skepticism toward true sustainability efforts. Their study identifies the need for businesses to undertake ethical,

transparent, and credible marketing that sustains the promoted product and its consumption. The authors' research on irresponsible marketing demonstrates how such practices disengage consumer expectations, disrupt market equilibrium, and stagnate the shift toward sustainable production. They call for an increased regulatory burden, corporate social responsibility, and advertising that, even beyond the legal requirements of the market, sets sustainability as the primary goal. The authors claim that fostering an environment that reaffirms the objectives of SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production aimed at marketing sustains advertising activism is crucial.

Impact of Green Advertising on Consumer Behavior

The power of green advertising on consumer behavior is profound, as it builds awareness, fosters positive sentiments, and focuses on intention selling concerning sustainable and eco-friendly products and practices. Sustainability and green products messages creates awareness on responsible consumption and offers alternatives to soothe the guilt of harming the environment. This awareness, when coupled with robust and persuasive communication and credible data, leads to positive green brand attitudes as green brands are viewed as ethical and responsible and align to the consumer's inner values. These attitudes are critical in developing purchase intentions, as consumers who recognize the importance of sustainability are more likely to purchase green products. Advertising with the green appeal is also effective regarding the ratio of emotional to rational appeals. Rational appeals offer only quantifiable proof like the reduction of carbon emissions, recyclability, energy efficiency, and so on, whereas emotional appeals address values like moral responsibility and identity, pride of green choice, care for the future, and belonging to a responsible community.

The field of consumer psychology indicates that emotional pitches often yield greater motivation and longer retention, while rational appeals are crucial for establishing credibility and alleviating doubt. Nevertheless, skepticism among consumers dominates green advertising as misleading claims and sham advertising foster an apparent lack of trust, which is known as greenwashing. When consumers are doubtful about the claims of sustainability, their intention to act pro-environment is potentially diminished even if the individual is ecologically conscious. On the contrary, effective communication, and corporate social responsibility, and backed by third party trust, can eliminate skepticism, build trust, and foster loyalty towards genuinely sustainable brands.

Methodology

In this study, green advertising consumer psychology is explored within the context of Sustainable Development Goal 12- Responsible consumption and production, supporting the goal's intention on sustainable development by focusing on attitudes, perceptions, and consumption motivation of the consumers in a sustainable context. The quantitative dimension relied on a self-administered structured questionnaire survey, and 100 respondents, selected through purposive sampling, were obtained in order to achieve gender, age, education, and income-structure appropriateness to gather a wide range of consumer opinions. The structured survey included Likert scale items that focused on eco-labels respondents' awareness of eco-labels, trust on sustainability claims, attitudes toward green advertising, intention to purchase green products, and emotional and rational appeal responses. For determining consumer skepticism, perceptions of greenwashing, emotions toward greenwashing, and attitudes toward greenwashing, qualitative data was used to support the quantitative data explaining the research questions in a more comprehensive manner. The data was processed with descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation) to find basic tendencies and relationships, while correlation and regression were used as inferential statistics to find connections among different measurements, e.g. consumer trust and purchase intention. The research also relied on behavioral theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Value-Belief-Norm matrix, and Cognitive Dissonance, to comment the results psychologically.

Having conducted a pilot test paired with review from peers allowed us to strongly establish the instruments reliability and validity.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	48	48%
	Female	52	52%
Age Group	18–25	30	30%
	26–35	40	40%
	36–45	20	20%
	46+	10	10%
Education Level	Undergraduate	35	35%
	Postgraduate	50	50%
	Doctoral/Other	15	15%
Income Level	Low	25	25%
	Middle	50	50%
	High	25	25%

The demographic profile gives us the framework of the analysis of the psychology of consumers concerning green advertising based on the distribution of respondents. The sample size is nearly evenly proportioned 48- male 52- female, making the balance of genders full, and indicating the availability of multiple opinions. The age-distribution evidences point to the leading proportion (70 percent) of 18-35 years, who are traditionally characterised by the increased ecological concern and the orientation towards sustainable consumption patterns. About the education attainment of the respondents, the highest attainment was postgraduate degree holders (50%), undergraduate holders (35%), doctoral and/or other (15%), therefore they are an indication of a rather educated population likely to value the challenges bedevilling sustainability. There is also balance in distribution of respondents in terms of income; 25 percent of all are low-income earners, 50 percent are middle-income earners, and 25 percent are high-income earners, which ensured that the various groups of the society are represented. This sample set allows us to know the various profiles of consumers and how age, college, and income share could determine the degree of awareness, trust and response to green advertising. It is on the basis of this that by providing diversity the reliability of the results increases, and the breadth of the inferences available is expanded.

Table 2: Consumer Awareness of Green Advertising

Statement (Likert Scale 1–5)	Mean	SD	Rank
I am aware of eco-labels on products.	4.1	0.8	2
Green advertising increases my awareness of sustainability.	4.3	0.7	1
I can differentiate authentic green ads from greenwashing.	3.6	0.9	3

The findings regarding the consumer awareness suggest that the respondents are rather familiar with green advertising and eco-labels. The statement with the highest mean score of 4.3 (SD=

0.7) is that green advertising is associated with enhancing my awareness of sustainability, which implies that green advertising can be effective in increasing awareness that is concerned with environmental problems. Awareness of eco-labels scored a mean of 4.1 (SD = 0.8), ranked second, highlighting that consumers recognize and understand sustainability certifications, which play a crucial role in decision-making. However, the ability to differentiate between authentic green ads and greenwashing scored the lowest with a mean of 3.6 (SD = 0.9), showing moderate awareness but also exposing a gap in consumer ability to critically evaluate sustainability claims. These findings reveal that while consumers are generally well-informed about sustainability through advertising, skepticism persists due to difficulties in identifying authenticity, underscoring the need for transparent communication and credible eco-labeling systems.

Table 3: Impact of Green Advertising on Attitudes & Purchase Intentions

Psychological Factor	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean
Green ads influence my buying decisions.	32%	40%	15%	10%	3%	3.9
I trust brands that use eco-friendly claims.	30%	38%	20%	9%	3%	3.8
Green advertising shapes my long-term attitude toward sustainability.	35%	37%	18%	7%		

The findings demonstrate that green advertising positively influences consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, though with varying intensity. For the statement “Green ads influence my buying decisions,” 72% (32% strongly agree, 40% agree) responded positively, with a mean of 3.9, indicating substantial influence on consumer choice. Similarly, 68% expressed trust in brands using eco-friendly claims (mean = 3.8), suggesting that credibility in green messaging fosters consumer confidence. The strongest impact was observed in shaping long-term attitudes toward sustainability, where 72% (35% strongly agree, 37% agree) acknowledged advertising’s role, also reflected in a mean score of 3.9. Neutral and negative responses, although smaller in proportion, indicate that a segment of consumers remains cautious or unconvinced. Overall, the data highlights that green advertising is effective in creating awareness and fostering positive attitudes, but sustained impact depends on credibility, consistency, and avoiding misleading claims that could erode consumer trust.

Table 4: Emotional vs. Rational Appeals in Green Advertising

Type of Appeal	Preference (%)	Influence on Purchase Intention (Mean)	Trust Level (Mean)
Emotional Appeal	55%	4.1	3.8
Rational Appeal	45%	3.8	4.2

The comparison of emotional and rational appeals reveals important insights into consumer preferences and their psychological impact. A majority of respondents (55%) preferred emotional appeals, reflecting the power of messages that connect with values, identity, and moral responsibility. Emotional appeals also recorded a higher influence on purchase intentions (mean = 4.1), indicating that feelings of pride, care for the environment, or belonging to a socially responsible group are strong motivators. However, trust levels for emotional appeals were slightly lower (mean = 3.8), suggesting that while emotions drive action, they require reinforcement through credible information. In contrast, rational appeals were preferred by 45% of respondents and showed slightly lower influence on purchase intention (mean = 3.8),

but scored higher in trust (mean = 4.2). This indicates that consumers perceive factual, evidence-based claims such as recyclability, certifications, or carbon reduction as more reliable. The findings emphasize the need for integrating both emotional and rational appeals to maximize effectiveness.

Conclusion

Analyzing The Psychology Of Consumer Behavior In Green Advertising Under The Framework Of Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production indicates the connection between the psychological mechanisms, advertising and SSB practices. The data indicate that consumers' level of awareness associated with eco-labels and sustainability messages is high. Nevertheless, it is very hard to distinguish between reality and greenwashing. This is signifying a painful progress being made in the thrust of sustainability communication lapses. The interaction of rational and emotional persuasive communication has been shown to be central in shaping a positive consumer attitude and the formation of a purchase intention, which is the common outcome of green advertising research has shown. The evidence of the eco-friendly practices would be shown as a rational, whereas the tactful impacts would be on the personal values, own identity, and competence of duty. Conversely, consumer skepticism has become by far the strongest deterrent to purchase and consumption and focuses on a lack of trust caused by lack of authenticity, openness, and verification by a third party. The advantages of the analysis include the fact that diverse citizens with varying ages, education levels, and the income population will be more or less aware and responsive to green advertising. The young and better educated individuals, as it indicates are more receptive. Using Some behavioral theories The Theory Of Planned Behavior, Value-Belief-Norm Framework and Cognitive Dissonance, the research suggests that positive sustainable decision making is rational; value-based and in conformity with social norm of emotional and environmental responsibility.

The study ends on the note that it is possible to direct the consumer awareness towards responsible consumption through the strategically worked-out genuine green advertising. Therefore, which led to the realization of the targets in SDG 12. Within the same time frame, it highlights the implications of untruthful actions that can cause apprehension and mistrust in the long-term. The recommendations made point out at the same time that balanced advertising policies that combine psychological, ethical, and communicational parameters are needed to obtain green zealous consumption that will then through advertising lead to integrated sustainable development on practical documents and not on procedural greenwash.

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