



Original Article

Green Marketing: An Examination of Thematic Categories and Implications for Practice and Research in Marketing

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ABSTRACT

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Green marketing, according to the American marketing association, is the marketing of items thought to be ecologically benign. Green marketing therefore combines a wide spectrum of actions including modifications to the manufacturing process, packaging, product modification, and advertising modification. This paper examines the contributions of recent research in the field of green marketing by classifying articles across four main thematic categories: eco-orientation, green marketing strategy, green marketing functions, and green marketing consequences. It outlines the contributions of previous works in each category, explores their implications for green marketing practice and research, and provides suggestions for future research directions to enhance the understanding and application of green marketing in diverse contexts.

Introduction

Green marketing, often referred to as environmental marketing, is a concept that has gained significant attention in recent decades due to growing concerns about the environmental impact of industrial and commercial activities. It encompasses the strategies and practices businesses use to promote products and services that are perceived to be environmentally friendly, including those that contribute to sustainability, reduce carbon footprints, and conserve resources (Peattie, 2012). The rise of green marketing can be attributed to various factors, such as increased environmental awareness, government regulations, consumer demand for sustainable products, and the need for businesses to demonstrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Leonidou et al., 2013).

In today's world, where climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation are pressing concerns, both consumers and businesses are becoming more attuned to the importance of environmental sustainability. As a result, green marketing has emerged as a

critical tool for organizations seeking to align their business practices with environmental responsibility. It offers companies an opportunity to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market while meeting consumer demands for eco-friendly products and services (Kumar et al., 2017).

By incorporating environmental considerations into their marketing strategies, businesses not only address the ecological challenges of our time but also enhance their market position, increase consumer loyalty, and build a positive brand image (Peattie & Crane, 2005). Green marketing holds significant relevance in today's market. This concept has facilitated the re-marketing and repackaging of products that fulfill these criteria. Green marketing enables corporations to co-brand their products across different lines, highlighting the environmentally friendly attributes of some while disregarding others (Mishra and Sharma 2014).

One of the most significant drivers behind the rise of green marketing is the growing trend of eco-conscious consumerism. Consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on the environmental impact of products and services, seeking out brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability (Nimse et al., 2016; Sibte-Ali et al., 2024). This shift in consumer preferences is prompting companies to adopt green marketing strategies to meet the demand for environmentally responsible products.

According to a study by Kumar et al. (2017), businesses that engage in green marketing can often command a price premium, as environmentally conscious consumers are willing to pay more for products that align with their values (García-Salirrosas & Rondon-Eusebio, 2022). Moreover, government regulations and global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement on climate change have created an environment where businesses are expected to adopt more sustainable practices. The increasing pressure from both consumers and regulatory bodies has made green marketing not just a strategy but a necessity for businesses aiming to remain relevant and competitive in today's market (Bocken et al., 2014; (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Paper

This paper aims to critically examine the literature on green marketing by classifying research articles into four major thematic categories: eco-orientation, green marketing strategy, green marketing functions, and green marketing consequences. These categories help to illuminate the various aspects of green marketing that have been studied extensively in literature and provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research in this field. By categorizing the literature, this paper also highlights gaps in research and offers recommendations for future studies.

The first category, eco-orientation, focuses on the organizational commitment to environmental sustainability and how this commitment influences business decisions and practices. Companies with a strong eco-orientation are often seen as more credible and trustworthy in the eyes of consumers, which can lead to improved brand loyalty and market performance (Peattie, 2012). The second category, green marketing strategy, explores the ways in which businesses design and implement strategies to market eco-friendly products and services. This includes adopting green product labeling, environmental branding, and sustainable product differentiation as key components of a successful green marketing strategy (Leonidou et al., 2013; Lakatos et al., 2021).

The third category, green marketing functions, examines the operational aspects of green marketing, such as the role of supply chain management, product development, pricing, and promotion in supporting green marketing initiatives (Bick et al., 2009). These functions are essential for translating green marketing strategies into tangible actions that drive business success and environmental benefits. Finally, the green marketing consequences category looks at the outcomes of green marketing, including consumer behavior changes, improved brand equity, and the overall impact on company performance (Kumar et al., 2017; Gen Z Consumers, 2020).

This paper not only outlines the contributions of existing research in each of these four thematic areas but also provides insights into their implications for both green marketing practice and academic inquiry. It also explores potential directions for future research to address the emerging challenges and opportunities in green marketing, particularly in the context of technological advancements, global sustainability goals, and evolving consumer preferences.

Theoretical Framework

Green marketing, as an evolving concept, is underpinned by various theoretical frameworks that explain consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and corporate sustainability practices. Theories from psychology, marketing, and behavioral economics offer valuable insights into how individuals' values, beliefs, and attitudes shape their eco-friendly consumption patterns. This section outlines the most relevant theories that inform green marketing research and practice.

However, one of the key theories influencing green marketing is corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR emphasizes the idea that businesses have a duty to contribute to societal well-being, including environmental sustainability, beyond the pursuit of profit (Carroll, 1999). Green marketing, as a component of CSR, allows companies to demonstrate their commitment to environmental sustainability while enhancing their reputation and consumer trust (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

Another theoretical framework often applied in green marketing research is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that consumer behavior is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). TPB has been widely used to understand how consumers form attitudes toward green products and make purchase decisions based on their environmental concerns (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). This framework helps businesses understand the psychological factors that drive eco-conscious consumer behavior and tailor their green marketing efforts accordingly.

The growing emphasis on sustainability and the increasing consumer demand for eco-friendly products have elevated the importance of green marketing as a critical business strategy. This paper explored the theoretical foundations underlying green marketing practices by examining influential frameworks, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory, and Self-Congruity Theory.

These theories collectively explain the psychological, cognitive, and emotional drivers of green consumer behavior, offering valuable insights into how businesses can effectively promote sustainable products and services.

The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory, developed by Stern (2000), is a widely recognized framework for explaining pro-environmental behavior. The theory proposes that individuals' ecological behaviors are driven by a causal chain of values, beliefs, and personal norms.

In the context of green marketing, VBN theory explains how consumers' values and beliefs shape their purchasing behaviors. Brands that align their marketing messages with consumers' environmental values can foster loyalty and trust. For instance, Thøgersen and Zhou (2012) found that consumers with strong biospheric values are more likely to prefer products marketed with environmental benefits. Similarly, Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012) highlighted that green advertisements invoking emotional appeals linked to biospheric values significantly influence consumer preferences.

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), is a dual-process theory of persuasion that explains how individuals process persuasive messages. The ELM distinguishes between two distinct routes of information processing:

The Central Route: Involves careful and thoughtful consideration of the message content. Consumers in this route evaluate the quality of the arguments and the relevance of the information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). **The Peripheral Route:** Relies on superficial cues, such as celebrity endorsements, visual aesthetics, or emotional appeals, rather than the message's substantive content. According to Leonidou et al. (2011), green advertisements that include clear, fact-based content are more persuasive for central processors, while visual and emotional cues are more effective for peripheral processors.

Self-Congruity Theory

The Self-Congruity Theory, proposed by Sirgy (1982), posits that consumers are more likely to prefer and remain loyal to brands that reflect their self-concept. The theory emphasizes the importance of image congruence between the consumer's self-identity and the brand's image.

Conclusion

The review revealed that eco-orientation and green marketing strategies are fundamental in shaping consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. By appealing to environmental values and aligning with consumers' self-concepts, brands can foster greater trust, loyalty, and advocacy. Furthermore, the green marketing functions, such as eco-labeling, eco-packaging, and green advertising, play a vital role in enhancing transparency and influencing consumer perceptions.

The consequences of green marketing, including increased brand loyalty, improved corporate reputation, and positive word-of-mouth, highlight the tangible benefits for businesses that prioritize sustainability. The primary contribution and strength of this study is the introduction of a theoretical model that facilitates the identification of a green consumption cycle for the generation of sustainable value, derived from the general marketing practices documented in scientific literature.

To aid their study, these behaviors are classified into five categories that may underpin the formulation of theoretical guidelines for future research on GM. Furthermore, it enhances the

examination of the buying behavior of the ecological consumer by elucidating the influence of general marketing tactics on them.

However, despite the growing effectiveness of green marketing, challenges remain. Greenwashing—the practice of making misleading sustainability claims—undermines consumer trust and poses a significant barrier to genuine green marketing efforts. To overcome this, companies must prioritize authenticity, transparency, and consistent sustainability practices, ensuring their claims are verifiable and backed by credible certifications.

From a research perspective, this paper underscores the need for future studies to explore emerging trends in green marketing, such as the impact of digital green marketing strategies and AI-driven sustainability campaigns. Additionally, investigating cross-cultural differences in green consumer behavior will provide deeper insights into how businesses can tailor their sustainability efforts to diverse markets.

In conclusion, green marketing is no longer just a niche practice but a mainstream business imperative. Companies that integrate authentic and well-communicated green marketing strategies into their operations stand to gain a competitive advantage by building stronger customer relationships, enhancing their brand image, and contributing to a more sustainable future. For researchers, the evolving landscape of green marketing offers fertile ground for further exploration into consumer psychology, corporate ethics, and the long-term impact of sustainability practices.

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