

# Green Marketing: The Study on Linkage between Green Advertisement and Environmentally Responsible Behaviour

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## Abstract

*Since the 1970s, “Green Marketing” has been gaining relevance due to the rise in consumer awareness of green products, but it has gained even more traction during the past two decades. Many businesses have improved their processes or launched new goods or manufacturing processes to market themselves as environmentally friendly. The best communication instrument for addressing ecological consequences and influencing customer perception by promoting a green image has been marketing’s focus. Therefore, a key factor in determining a company’s strategic direction is the impact of consumer perception on green purchase behaviour. The purpose of this study is to examine how individual behaviours may impact consumer responses (more or less) towards eco-friendly advertisement claims. The research would also understand whether the effectiveness of strong and weak eco-friendly product claims in the advertisement for green products. The study employs a focus group research methodology to determine whether environmentally conscious consumers have environmentally conscious purchasing behaviours and whether they are open to the green advertising that businesses claim to display. The result suggests the consumer’s attitude towards environmental claims and their receptivity in different conditions.*

**Keywords:** Consumer Behaviour, Green Advertisement, Green Marketing, Green Claims.

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## Introduction

From an academic standpoint, the “green challenge” is a fiercely contested subject because of the shifts in consumer purchasing behaviour that have mounted in recent time. By becoming more environmentally conscious, which is evident in cleaner production methods and green marketing, corporations have helped modify the corporate structure in order to meet customer demand for green products (Kinnear et al., 1974; Menon & Menon, 1997; Ottman, 1993; Fitzgerald, 1993).

Due to customer demand, there has been an increase in green brands over the past ten years, which has allowed green marketing to develop into a multifaceted, both strategic and tactical, approach. Since consumers will always be concerned about the environment (Peattie, 1992), ecological advertising will also rise in conjunction with rising consumer awareness of environmental protection (Carlson, Grove and Kangun, 1993).

Customers are frequently exposed to messaging using terms like recyclable, ecologically friendly, ozone safe, and biodegradable in green marketing, yet a number of these communications are received with hostility from consumers. According to a survey, only 6% of respondents thought green advertising promises were “extremely credible,” and 90% thought they were “slightly,” “not really,” or “not at all” credible (Chase and Smith, 1992). Generally speaking, green advertising needs to be questioned because it is not credible (Kilbourne, 1995). This is important for ecological products since studies show that views about advertisements influence brand attitudes, which may result in a decline in sales (Gorn, 1982; Lutz, MacKenzie and Belch, 1983; Mitchell and Olson, 1981).

## Green Advertising

Green advertising was described by Zinkhan and Carlson in 1995 as “promotional messages that may appeal to the needs and desires of environmentally concerned consumers.” The relationship between a product and the ecological system, which might be addressed in advertising either directly or indirectly (Banerjee, Gulas & Iyer, 1995). “Green advertising” refers to advertisements that emphasise a product,

service, idea, or organization’s ability to prevent or mitigate environmental harm.

There is basic 3 facets of green advertising: (1) Knowledge base advertising which focus to improve consumer understanding in the direction of ecological flora and fauna. (2) Commercial orientation which aims to increase the sales of goods and services. (3) Lastly, the companies are concerned with improving and enhancing their sustainable image to attract long-term clients (Banerjee et al., 1995; Menon, et al., 1999).

## Literature Review

Ecological concerns are now being included in businesses’ advertising tactics to interact with consumers as a growing number of customers are considering environmentally friendly products when making purchase decisions (Grillo, Tokarczyk & Hansen, 2008 and Ozkocak, & Tuna, 2011). According to research (David1994), corporate environmental advertising typically consists of three elements: an overall declaration of the company’s concern towards the environment, a synopsis of the various activities the company has started to show its interest and dedication to ecological sustainability, and a description of specific environmentally related activities the company is involved in and/or results the company’s claims that they credit for. This study found that consumer responses to green marketing were significantly influenced by their earlier opinions about the company’s environmental care. According to research on consumer reactions to green advertising in China, the two most important factors influencing consumers’ intentions to buy green products were their perception of the validity of the environmental advertisement’s claims and the product’s applicability to their daily lives (Chan, 2004). The findings also showed that a clear and convincing claim was essential for developing favourable views toward green advertising and enhancing the messages’ perceived credibility.

It is not always the case that consumer behaviour is reflective of environmental awareness and concern. (Kaplan, 2000, Dunlap, & Mertig, 2000). The majority of studies examined the discrepancy between consumers’ expressed sentiments and their genuine buying behaviour. According to Patel and Chugan (2010), marketers can create advertising strategies

that effectively convey the obvious and significant environmental benefits of green housing. Here, green-focused advertising becomes essential for the businesses. According to a study, green advertising had a negligible effect on Penang consumers' purchasing decisions in Malaysia (Rahbar & Wahid, 2011). Another study that looked at five aspects, including eco-label, green corporate perception, green packaging, green product value, and green advertisement, concluded that the latter did not significantly affect consumers' perceptions of green products or their intention to buy them (Kong, W., Harun, A., Sulong, R. S., & Lily, J. 2014). According to research on the usefulness of green advertising in Pakistani consumers' daily lives, green purchasing intentions were significantly but unfavourably affected (Ahmad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2010). According to Chase and Smith (1992), environmental statements in commercials and on product labels were discovered to occasionally affect the purchasing decisions of 70% of the respondents.

Whether an environmentally sensitive attitude results in the behaviour of buying green products depends on a variety of circumstances. As identified by Ali et al, (2011) these factors are green purchase attitude, environmental knowledge (Mostafa, 2006), perceived product price and quality (D'Souza et al. 2007, Patel et al, 2007), the company's ecological standing (Schwepker, & Cornwell, 1991), ecological apprehensions (Ong & Phau, 2007) and the credibility of ecological advertising (Thøgersen, 2011). Some eco-friendly commercials incorporate an educational component (e.g., helping stakeholders understand the nature of environmental issues), others are solely commercial in nature (e.g., persuading consumers to purchase the brand's products and establish themselves as loyal customers), while still a few are image-focused (e.g., raising the company's "green profile") (Banarjee et al. 1995, Memon, A, et al. 1995). According to a study on the effect of green advertising on Shanghai consumers' purchase intentions, the most significant factor influencing consumers' decision to buy green products is the veracity of the claims made in green advertising (Zhu, 2013).

## The focus groups

Focus group method allows to collect respondents' perceptions of green advertising by putting ourselves "into the customers' shoes" (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). Focus groups enabled us to access information that could not be gathered through in-person interviews and assisted us in contributing to consumers' shared knowledge (Hines, 2000).

Focus groups was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, the management institute's students assisted in the initial stages of participant recruitment by phone and email. The information about the participant was taken from the database of the parents available with the institute. The second and third sets of participants were selected randomly from the database available from the institute and from local NGO workers in the community. For each category, a random subset was contacted to solicit their participation. By doing this, we made sure that the respondents were diverse. The chosen respondents included a variety of ages and genders. The focus groups typically had nine participants, which is in line with the suggestions made by Krueger and Casey (1994) as well as Fern's (1982) results that larger groups of participants produce noticeably more ideas than smaller ones. Every focus group session lasts for almost 90 minutes.

According to Axelrod's (1975), there are 10 significant facets for effective focus group research, which include a skilled moderator and common questions created by the researcher after a thorough examination of pertinent prior research. These included:

- Does green advertising use language that is misleading in terms of its environmental features?
- Does "Green" advertisement mislead with depictions or graphs of its environmental features?
- Is there ambiguity in the "green" claim made in green advertising?
- Does the "green" advertisement exaggerate what the product's green functionality actually is?

- Green advertising conceals crucial information, making the “going green” claim sound more impressive than it actually is.
- Does “green” advertising accurately describe how well the products work?
- Do you feel environmentally responsible while using green products?
- According to you, green products are more expensive than their conventional counterparts?
- Given a choice, would you prefer the green version of the product or the conventional one?
- Are you sceptical towards the claim made in green advertisement?

All the focus group sessions were video recorded and transcribed by the two students. The participant was shown green advertisements to give the feel of “green” claims. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the transcriptions were analysed. The first step was transcription, and in the second step, the data were segregated with reference to the research objective. The data was put under research themes like perception, attitude and environmental behaviour. Codes and labels were assigned paragraph by paragraph.

## Stimulus Material

Four advertisements were selected based on their green claims. The first two ads were for air conditioners by Tata Voltas and LG, as they met criteria for green claims. Both the companies’ advertisements claim for less energy consumption. The second ad was of the Maruti Ciaz Smart hybrid car, as the mileage of the vehicle is considered to be green. The third category is Philips LED bulbs. These advertisements were chosen because the product in this category has limited involvement. Additionally, it is typical to find environmental claims connected to products that require little effort. Furthermore, it was essential to choose a product category with obvious ecological relevance.

## Findings and Analysis

First identify the variables from the transcription and then the focus group matrix is built. The matrix shows the agreement and disagreement of the participants towards green advertisements. Followed by matrix we have given the table stating the comments of the participant in the focus group. We designate the first comment in the Table as “C1,” the second as “C2,” and so on for the sake of reader convenience. The remarks listed in the table below correspond to the themes identified during the focus groups.

### Focus Group 1:

Matrix 1										
Focus group discussion Points	Members									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	SE	SE	SE	SE	A	SE	SE	NR	NR	SE
2	SE	SE	SE	SE	A	SE	SE	NR	NR	SE
3	SE	SD	NR	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	NR
4	SE	SE	SD	A	SD	SE	NR	SE	SE	NR
5	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	SE	A
6	D	SE	SE	NR	NR	NR	NR	SE	SE	A
7	SE	SD	SE	SE	A	SD	NR	NR	SE	NR
8	SE	A	SE	A	D	A	A	SE	A	A
9	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
10	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

Where:

A = Indicated Agreement
D = Indicated Disagreement
SE = Provided significant statement or example suggesting agreement
SD = Provided significant statement or example suggesting disagreement
NR = Did not indicate agreement or disagreement (Nonresponsive)
G = Chosen green product
C = Chosen conventional product

Table no: 1		
Variables	Comment no:	Comment
Perception towards claims.	C1	I believe in Green advertising, but I feel that the claims are overblown.
	C2	It depends on the product category and the perception of the consumers as to how significantly these products impact their lives. From the advertisement's point of view, they are vague; until and unless we use the product, how can we know about our need for the same?
Attitude towards green advertisements	C3	I feel that the green advertisements are a gimmick because the marketer exaggerates the claims. Up to a certain extent yes companies do not reveal the entire thing in their advertisements..
Perception towards personal preferences	C4	Going green is very good because somewhere it is affecting customers' pockets in the long run, and companies showing the figure are agreeable. The claims can be justified after consuming the product..
	C5	The company must justify the claims by showing the reality of the offerings.
Barriers towards Green Claims	C6	Green advertisements showing green claims do come with an asterisk. So before consuming the product, the customer should read the claims..
	C7	I feel that green advertisements are impactful and do motivate the consumer to purchase the product.
Perception towards pricing.	C8	There are many competitors for conventional products and due to their pricing strategies, selection of the product is difficult.
	C9	I feel green advertisements need improvement, they are not very effective as they don't show the things exactly instead they show larger than life pictures.
Trust	C10	I trust green advertisements, but finally it depends on the category of products they are promoting and how much they are worth consuming.

<b>Matrix no: 2</b>										
Focus group discussion points	Members									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	SD	A	A	A	SD	SE	A	SE	SE	A
2	SD	A	SE	SE	SD	D	D	A	SE	A
3	SD	NR	NR	A	D	SD	SE	A	A	SE
4	SE	A	SE	A	SE	A	A	A	A	A
5	A	A	A	A	SE	A	SE	A	SE	A
6	SD	A	A	A	SD	SE	A	SE	A	A
7	SE	A	A	SE	A	SE	A	SD	SD	A
8	SE	A	A	A	SE	A	A	SE	A	A
9	G	C	C	C	G	G	G	C	C	G
10	SE	A	A	SE	SE	A	SE	SE	A	SE

Where:

A = Indicated Agreement
D = Indicated Disagreement
SE = Provided significant statement or example suggesting agreement
SD = Provided significant statement or example suggesting disagreement
NR = Did not indicate agreement or disagreement (Nonresponsive)
G = Chosen green product
C = Chosen conventional product

<b>Table no: 2</b>		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Comment no:</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Perception towards claims	C1	I'm really doubtful regarding whether whatever is shown in green ads is actually factual or not.
	C2	It needs more research to understand, or it may be hard to understand for those without any technical background.
Environmental behaviour	C3	Green advertising shows the certifications of the technologies used in their products. Therefore, it seems trustworthy to me. And if the certification is shown, I will definitely use the product.
	C4	It is difficult to show the green claims in a very short span of time in the green ads. But if there is any certification shown, I would definitely purchase those products.

Environmental behaviour and pricing of the green products.	C5	No matter how green the product is, the pricing of the conventional product compared to the green product does differ and so does the purchase decision.
Attitude towards ads	C6	I don't know what the claims are, but I feel environmentally responsible while trusting the green claims shown in the ads.
	C7	Normally green products are having the latest technologies which are costly in nature that's why it is less preferable for the customers.
	C8	Compared to the normal products if these products are offering the same facilities with not more affecting to the pocket then yes Green products are more preferable.
Knowledge and experience	C9	I feel experience and knowledge do play an important role in understanding green ads and even green products.
	C10	Functionality of the product is more important to me than the claims which are shown in the advertisement.

Matrix no: 3										
Focus group discussion points	Members									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	SD	SE	D	D	SE	NR	A	SE	SE	D
2	SE	SE	A	A	A	A	SE	A	SE	A
3	SE	SE	SE	A	A	A	A	SD	SD	A
4	A	SE	A	SE	SE	NR	A	A	A	SE
5	A	A	SE	A	A	NR	A	SE	SE	A
6	SE	SE	A	SE	SE	A	A	A	A	A
7	SD	SE	A	A	SE	D	A	SE	SD	A
8	SE	SE	A	SE	A	A	SE	A	A	A
9	G	C	G	G	C	C	G	G	C	G
10	A	SE	A	A	SE	NR	SE	A	A	SE

Where:

A = Indicated Agreement
D = Indicated Disagreement
SE = Provided significant statement or example suggesting agreement
SD = Provided significant statement or example suggesting disagreement
NR = Did not indicate agreement or disagreement (Nonresponsive)
G = Chosen green product

C = Chosen conventional product

**Table no: 3**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Comment no:</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Environmental Behaviour and knowledge	C2	I feel that the way the customer interprets the green ads matters a lot in terms of their purchase intention.
Knowledge	C3	I need awareness and education from green ads about being a green consumer and environmentally responsible.
Environmentally responsible	C4	Again it's not only depends on the product but the behaviour of the consumer, if someone have purchased eco-friendly product but consuming unnecessarily and other person consuming very consciously according to his needs then definitely the green consumer is not those who have purchased that product but how you are consuming any product with the mind-set of environmental responsible is important
	C1	Yes I can connect with green technology advertisements and I can also search on it or can visit the showroom for further details and we can find out that these technologies give value addition regarding environmental friendliness. Yes, green ads can be trusted.
Attitude towards green ads and personal preferences	C5	I believe that the graphical representation of the data in the green ads is important, but misleading customers through celebrities is not acceptable.
	C6	I think we are quite used to some kind of masking being done in the green advertisements and according to me, that's ok to sell the product.
Perception	C7	If a choice would be given to them to select a green product or conventional one it would depend upon the consumer's perception towards green and technology know-how.
Knowledge and claims	C8	I would like to know what level of energy consumption is in the product if they are claiming it is environmentally safe in the green ads.
Claims	C10	If the latest technology is used in the products, then the price will definitely be higher for the green products compared to the conventional.
Claims and experience	C9	Green ads are sceptical in nature because whatever they are claiming is not justifiable without experience of that product personally.

## Conclusion

The study analysed responses to four different green advertising strategies and tested how consumers reacted to green ads emphasising the importance of unique individual qualities. As a result, we provide implications for the deployment of these green advertising strategies and the determination of which consumers are more likely to react favourably to them and why. According to the research, regardless of the sort of claim, customers who care about the environment, especially as demonstrated by their prior behaviour, will be responsive to advertising with a green theme.



It is important to acknowledge several limitations to our findings. Instead of trying to investigate plausible claims and test them in various formats, we aimed to uncover consumer variables that would affect ad reaction. We did not seek to identify the potentially misleading nature of the claims. Therefore, our results shouldn't be construed as proof that customers are easily duped by promises of being environmentally friendly. The results imply that people who care about the environment and wish to take action to address that concern may not reject plausible claims. Future research should look at how consumers react to claims for complicated, expensive products. There could be various patterns.

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