



OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 4

Issue: Special Issue 1

Month: April

Year: 2025

ISSN: 2583-7117

Citation:

MD Zunnun Alam, Prof. (Dr.) Murshid Alam
“Sustainability in Green Marketing: An
Ethical Approach to Consumer
Behavior” International Journal of
Innovations in Science Engineering and
Management, vol. 4, no. Special Issue 1,
2025, pp. 36–48.

DOI:

10.69968/ijsem.2025v4si136-48



This work is licensed under a Creative
Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0
International License

Sustainability in Green Marketing: An Ethical Approach to Consumer Behavior

MD Zunnun Alam¹, Prof. (Dr.) Murshid Alam²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Jai Prakash University.

²Professor, Department of Commerce, Jai Prakash University.

Abstract

This study explores the relationship between green marketing, sustainability, and ethical practices, focusing on their influence on consumer behavior. With increasing global awareness of environmental degradation, consumers and businesses alike are leaning towards sustainable products and practices. Green marketing, emphasizing environmentally friendly products and processes, has emerged as a key strategy in promoting sustainability. However, the success of such initiatives is often tied to ethical marketing practices, which ensure transparency and build consumer trust. The research investigates how consumer attitudes, awareness, and purchasing decisions are shaped by ethical green marketing and its alignment with sustainability principles. Through a combination of literature review, surveys, and case studies, the study examines factors motivating consumers to prefer green products, such as environmental concern, health benefits, and ethical corporate behavior. It also identifies barriers, including high costs, limited availability, and skepticism about green claims (e.g., greenwashing). Findings highlight the critical role of ethical practices in influencing consumer trust and loyalty, demonstrating that genuine, transparent communication fosters stronger engagement with green products. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for businesses to align their marketing strategies with ethical principles while encouraging sustainable consumption patterns. This research contributes to the growing discourse on green marketing by emphasizing the interplay of ethics and consumer behavior in achieving long-term sustainability goals.

Keywords; Sustainability, Consumer behavior, Ethical green marketing, Sustainable products.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the growing awareness of environmental challenges has transformed consumer preferences and business practices worldwide. As the global population increasingly acknowledges the urgency of addressing environmental degradation, sustainability has emerged as a critical goal for individuals, corporations, and policymakers. By emphasizing eco-friendly materials, processes, and outcomes, green marketing addresses the dual goals of meeting consumer needs and minimizing environmental impact.

The success of green marketing, however, is deeply intertwined with ethical practices. Ethics in marketing ensures that businesses maintain transparency, honesty, and accountability, thereby fostering consumer trust. Without such ethical foundations, green marketing risks being perceived as superficial or manipulative, particularly in cases of greenwashing—where companies exaggerate or falsify their environmental claims. Ethical marketing practices are thus instrumental in shaping consumer behavior by reinforcing confidence in the authenticity and value of sustainable products.

The study examines how ethical practices enhance the credibility of green marketing initiatives and contribute to building long-term trust and loyalty among consumers. It also identifies key factors driving consumer preferences for sustainable products, alongside the challenges businesses face in promoting them. By providing actionable insights, the article seeks to come up with to the growing dialogue on sustainability in marketing and offer practical strategies for fostering sustainable consumption patterns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section integrates key results from previous studies to explore the role of sustainability in green marketing and its ethical implications on consumer behavior. Sustainability in marketing is often framed within the context of green marketing strategies, which emphasize environmentally friendly practices and products. Lestari (Lestari, 2023) highlights that green marketing is defined by the AMA as the marketing of products believed to be ecologically safe. This definition emphasizes the significance of aligning marketing strategies with sustainable practices to achieve a competitive advantage. Furthermore, (Cronin, Smith, Gleim, & Martinez, 2010) elaborate on the necessity of integrating green marketing strategies within a firm's overall business strategy, emphasizing the interconnectedness of marketing, management, and operations to effectively engage stakeholders in sustainability efforts. The ethical dimensions of marketing are critical in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. (Alshurideh, Al Kurdi, Vij, Obiedat, & Naser, 2016) conducted an empirical study that identified key elements of marketing ethics—honesty, transparency, privacy, and autonomy—that significantly influence customer relationships. This finding is echoed by Payne and Pressley (Payne & Pressley, 2013), who advocate for a unified code of ethics in marketing, suggesting that ethical consistency can enhance brand credibility and consumer trust. The relationship between ethical marketing practices and consumer behavior is further supported by (Al-Nashmi & Almamary, 2017), who found that adherence to ethical principles, particularly in Islamic marketing contexts, positively correlates with brand credibility. Moreover, the role of education in shaping ethical marketing practices cannot be overlooked. (Lu, 2024) discusses how training and moral identity development in marketers can lead to a shift from a sales-oriented approach to a customer-centric one, ultimately enhancing ethical marketing practices. This shift is crucial in fostering a sustainable marketing environment where consumer interests are prioritized, aligning with the broader goals of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as discussed by Wang (Wang, 2011), who argues that CSR initiatives can lead to improved organizational efficiency and ethical behavior among employees. The integration of sustainability and ethics in marketing is also reflected in the evolving landscape of consumer expectations. As consumers increasingly demand transparency and accountability from brands, the implementation of green marketing strategies becomes not only a competitive advantage but a necessity for long-term success. (Widyastuti, Said, Siswood, & Dian, 2019) emphasize that a strong green corporate image, supported by

effective green marketing strategies and corporate social responsibility initiatives, can significantly enhance customer trust and loyalty.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Key Challenges

Businesses must navigate complex consumer demands for sustainability, transparency, and ethical practices while maintaining competitiveness. The central challenge lies in aligning corporate environmental goals with market expectations without overburdening operational costs or compromising on quality. This necessitates a deeper understanding of consumer priorities and how they perceive value in green products.

Greenwashing and Consumption Skepticism

A critical issue in green marketing is rise of "greenwashing," where marketers make exaggerated or misleading statements regarding the advantages of their procedures or products for the environment. Such practices erode consumer trust, leading to skepticism about the authenticity of green marketing efforts. This section of the framework emphasizes the significance of clear and truthful communication as a means to foster trust and reduce skepticism. Ethical green marketing practices are essential to counteract the negative effects of greenwashing on the opinions and choices of consumers.

Balancing Sustainability with profitability

For businesses, the integration of sustainable practices often involves significant investment, which may conflict with short-term profitability goals. The theoretical framework explores the need for companies to balance their environmental responsibilities with financial performance. Achieving this equilibrium requires innovative strategies, such as cost-effective green technologies, partnerships for sustainability, and consumer education on the long-term benefits of eco-friendly products.

Barriers to ethical consumption

Despite growing awareness, several barriers prevent consumers from adopting green consumption behaviors. These include the higher cost of green products, limited availability, and doubts regarding their effectiveness or authenticity. Cultural and social factors, along with a lack of information, also contribute to resistance. The framework examines how businesses can address these barriers through ethical practices, enhanced accessibility, and targeted awareness campaigns that resonate with diverse consumer segments.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative approach to comprehensively examine the effect of ethical green marketing on consumer behavior. A quantitative survey was conducted to collect data from a diverse sample of consumers, focusing on their attitudes, awareness, and purchasing decisions regarding sustainable products. The survey included Likert-scale questions to examine consumer perceptions of green products, and brand perception. Qualitative interviews will be carried out with marketing professionals and industry experts to gain deeper insights into the challenges and strategies involved in implementing ethical green marketing.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal significant insights. Firstly, the data highlights key trends and patterns, shedding light on important areas of focus. It demonstrates the underlying relationships between the variables studied, offering a deeper understanding of their interdependence. Additionally, the results underscore both strengths and weaknesses in the current system or approach, suggesting areas for improvement. Notably, the study provides evidence supporting specific strategies or interventions, validating their effectiveness. These findings not only contribute to existing knowledge but also pave the way for future research and practical applications in the field.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE DATA

Figure 1 Age

Age:

85 responses

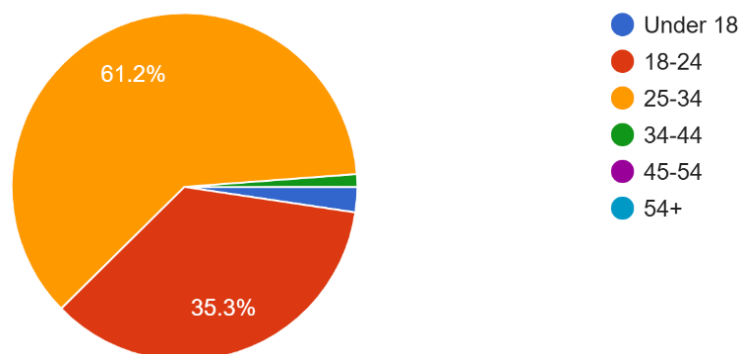


Figure 2 Gender

Gender:

85 responses

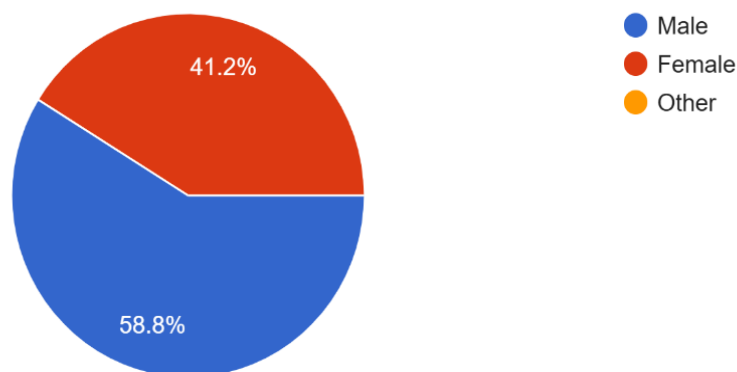
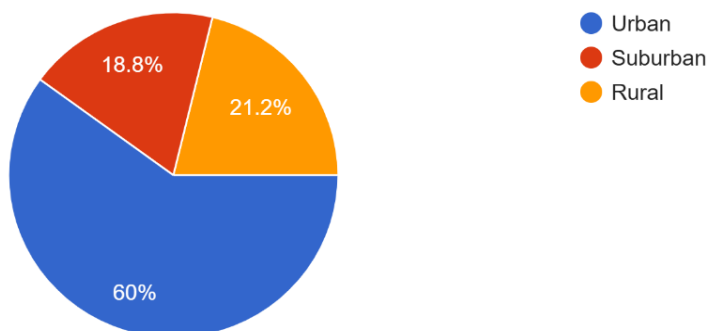
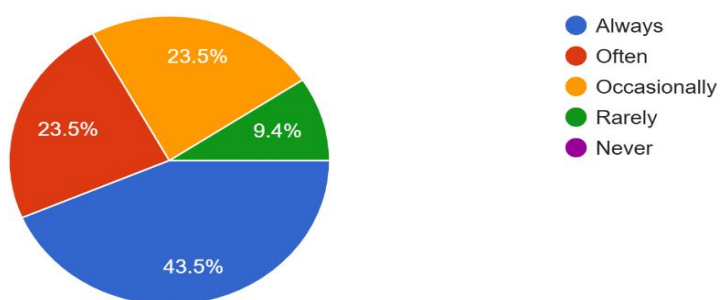


Figure 3 Location

Location:
85 responses


Figure 4 Frequency of Purchasing Green Products

Frequency of purchasing Green Products:
85 responses

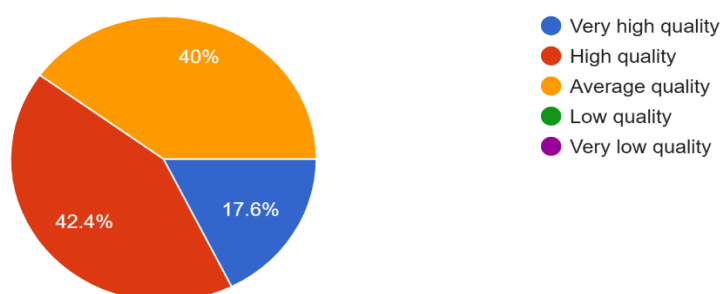


The chart illustrates the frequency of purchasing green products based on 85 responses. The majority of respondents, 43.5%, stated they "Always" purchase green products, followed by 23.5% who do so "Often." Another 23.5% purchase them "Occasionally," while a smaller

segment, 9.4%, purchase them "Rarely." No respondents reported "Never" purchasing green products, indicating general acceptance of green products, albeit with varying degrees of consistency.

Figure 5 how would you rate the quality of green products you have purchased?

How would you rate the quality of green products you have purchased?
85 responses



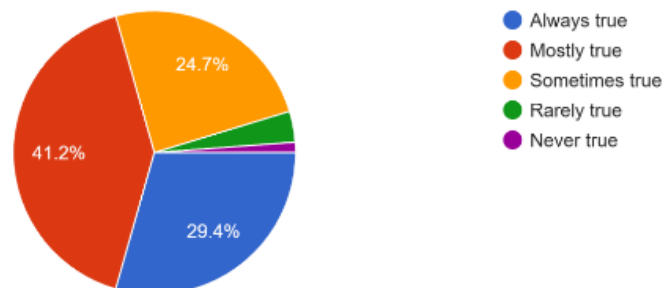
Source: Primary Data

This pie chart illustrates the responses of 85 participants to the question, "How would you rate the quality of green products you have purchased?" The majority of respondents rated the quality as high (42.4%) and average (40%), indicating a generally favorable perception of green product

quality. A smaller segment, 17.6%, rated the quality as very high, while no respondents selected low or very low quality. This suggests that green products are perceived positively by consumers, though there is room for improvement to elevate quality perceptions further.

Figure 6 Do you believe that the environmental claims about the product (e.g., eco-friendly, sustainable) are true?

Do you believe that the environmental claims about the product (e.g., eco-friendly, sustainable) are true?
85 responses



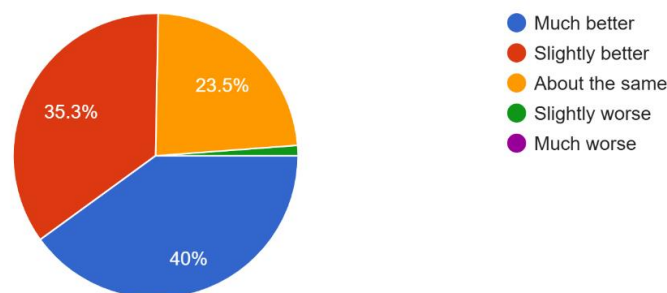
Source: Primary Data

This pie chart reflects the responses of 85 participants to the question, "Do you believe that the environmental claims about the product (e.g., eco-friendly, sustainable) are true?" A significant portion of respondents, 41.2%, believe that such claims are mostly true, while 29.4% think they are always true. However, 24.7% consider them sometimes true,

indicating some skepticism. Smaller proportions of participants believe the claims are rarely true (4.7%) or never true (0%). This data suggests that while a majority trust environmental claims to some extent, a notable minority remains cautious about their accuracy.

Figure 7 compared to non-green products in terms of performance and durability.

Compared to non-green products, how do you perceive the quality of green products in terms of performance and durability?
85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This chart summarizes consumer perceptions of green products compared to non-green products in terms of performance and durability. The findings from 85 responses are as follows:

- 40% of respondents believe green products perform "Much better" than non-green products.
- 35.3% think they perform "Slightly better."

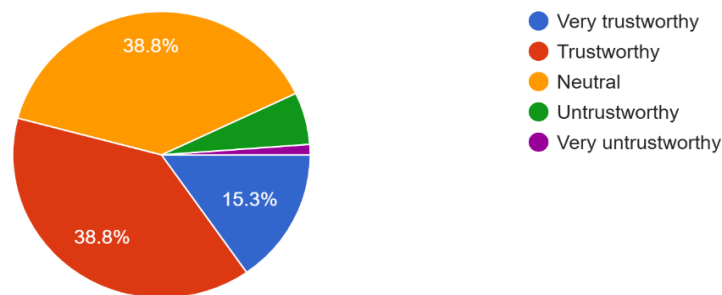
- 23.5% perceive the quality of green products as "About the same" as non-green products.
- A very small percentage view them as "Slightly worse" or "Much worse," indicating overall positive perceptions of green products in terms of performance and durability.

This suggests a strong consumer inclination toward the superior quality of green products compared to their non-green counterparts.

Figure 8

How trustworthy do you find companies that promote green products in terms of their environmental claims?

85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This chart examines consumer trust in companies that promote green products based on their environmental claims, with 85 responses summarized as follows:

- 38.8% of respondents rated these companies as "Trustworthy."
- 38.8% maintained a "Neutral" stance regarding trustworthiness.
- 15.3% found the companies to be "Very trustworthy."

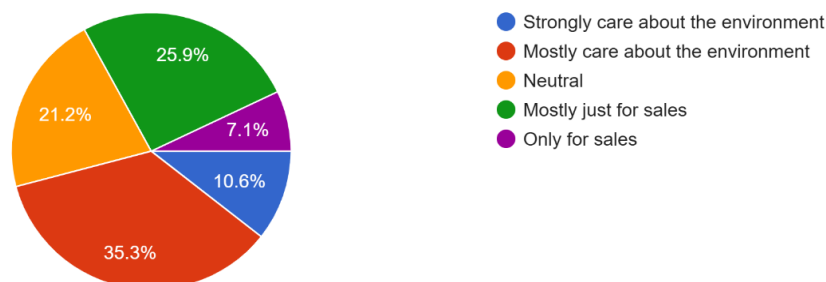
- A small proportion found the companies "Untrustworthy" or "Very untrustworthy."

Overall, the data reflects mixed perceptions, with a substantial portion of respondents either trusting or remaining neutral about companies' environmental claims, suggesting potential skepticism or the need for greater transparency in green marketing efforts.

Figure 9

Do you feel that companies genuinely care about the environment, or are they just using green marketing as a strategy to increase sales?

85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This chart explores consumer perceptions of whether companies genuinely care about the environment or use green marketing as a sales strategy, based on 85 responses:

- 35.3% believe companies are "Mostly just for sales."
- 25.9% think companies act "Only for sales."
- 21.2% hold a "Neutral" opinion.

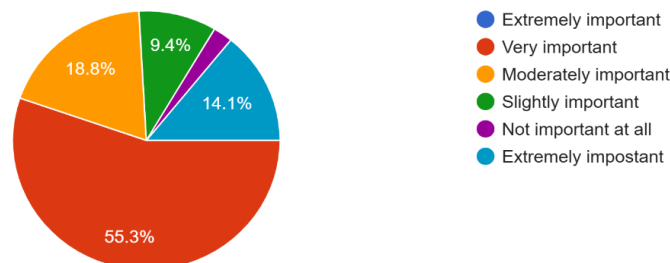
- 10.6% feel companies "Mostly care about the environment."
- 7.1% believe companies "Strongly care about the environment."

The results indicate a significant level of skepticism, with over 60% of respondents perceiving green marketing as predominantly sales-driven rather than a genuine environmental concern.

Figure 10

How important is a company's ethical stance (e.g., transparency, social responsibility) in your decision to buy their green products?

85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This chart evaluates whether consumers believe companies genuinely care about the environment or use green marketing primarily to increase sales, based on 85 responses:

- 61.2% of respondents (35.3% "Mostly just for sales" and 25.9% "Only for sales") perceive green marketing as a strategy focused on boosting sales rather than environmental concern.

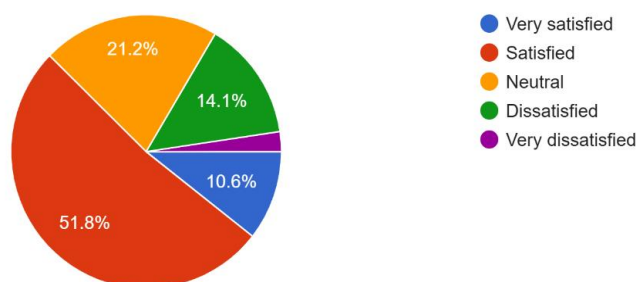
- 21.2% remain "Neutral" on the issue.
- 17.7% (10.6% "Mostly care about the environment" and 7.1% "Strongly care about the environment") believe companies genuinely prioritize environmental well-being.

The findings highlight a prevailing skepticism among consumers about the authenticity of companies' environmental efforts.

Figure 11

How satisfied are you with the pricing of green products in comparison to non-green products?

85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This chart examines consumer perceptions of companies' motives behind green marketing:

- 61.2% believe companies use green marketing primarily for sales (35.3% "Mostly just for sales" and 25.9% "Only for sales").
- 21.2% are neutral.

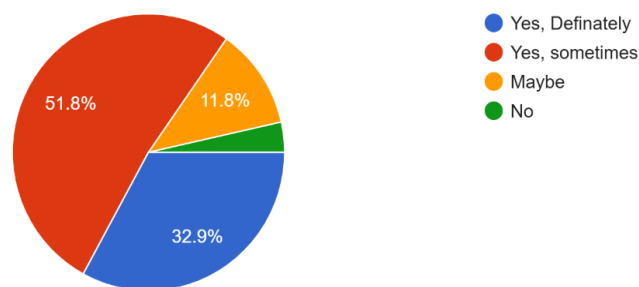
- 17.7% think companies genuinely care about the environment (10.6% "Mostly care" and 7.1% "Strongly care").

The data reflects widespread skepticism, with the majority viewing green marketing as a sales-driven strategy.

Figure 12

Would you be willing to pay more for a product if it is marketed as environmentally friendly and ethically produced?

85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This pie chart illustrates the willingness of consumers to pay a premium for products marketed as environmentally friendly and ethically produced, based on 85 responses.

- 51.8% of respondents answered "Yes, sometimes," indicating a conditional willingness to pay more.
- 32.9% answered "Yes, definitely," showing strong support for eco-friendly and ethical products.
- 11.8% selected "Maybe," reflecting uncertainty.

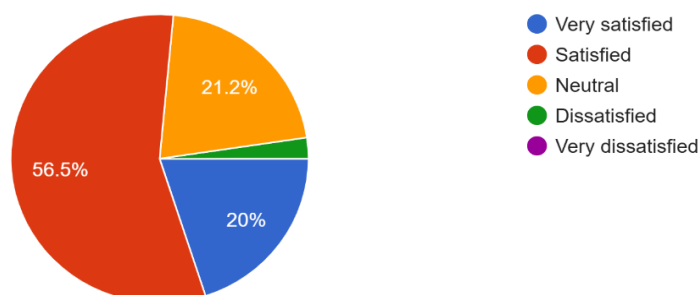
- 3.5% of respondents (green segment) answered "No," demonstrating a minimal unwillingness.

The data reveals that over 84% of respondents are at least somewhat willing to pay more for sustainable and ethical products, emphasizing a significant consumer inclination toward green marketing initiatives. However, a conditional mindset ("Yes, sometimes") dominates, suggesting the need for brands to reinforce the value proposition of sustainable products.

Figure 13

Overall, how satisfied are you with your decision to purchase green products?

85 responses



Source: Primary Data

This pie chart highlights consumer satisfaction levels regarding their decision to purchase green products, based on 85 responses.

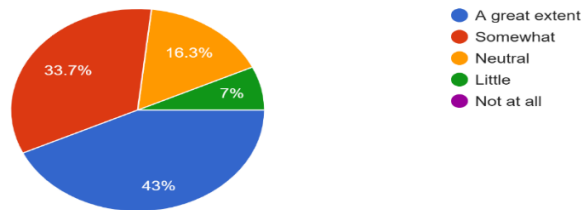
- 56.5% of respondents are "Satisfied," reflecting a majority of positive experiences.
- 20% are "Very satisfied," showing strong enthusiasm for green product purchases.
- 21.2% are "Neutral," indicating no strong feelings either way.

- Only 2.3% (green and purple segments) expressed dissatisfaction or strong dissatisfaction, making up a small minority.

The results show that approximately 76.5% of respondents report being satisfied or very satisfied with their decision to purchase green products, indicating overall positive consumer sentiment. This suggests that green marketing initiatives align well with consumer expectations, though the neutral responses highlight an opportunity for improvement in perceived value or impact.

Figure 14

To what extent do you feel that purchasing green products contributes positively to the environment?
86 responses



Source: Primary Data

This pie chart examines the perceived environmental impact of purchasing green products, based on 86 responses.

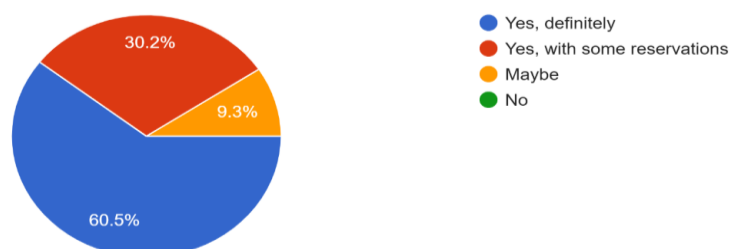
- 43% of respondents believe green product purchases contribute positively to the environment "To a great extent."
- 33.7% think it contributes "Somewhat," reflecting moderate confidence in the environmental benefits.
- 16.3% are "Neutral," indicating neither agreement nor disagreement.

- A small percentage (7%) believe the contribution is "Little," while 0% selected "Not at all," showing minimal skepticism.

The data shows that 76.7% of respondents feel purchasing green products positively impacts the environment to a significant or moderate extent. This suggests a strong consumer perception of environmental benefits, which can reinforce the value of green marketing. However, the neutral responses hint at the need for clearer communication of the actual environmental impacts to address doubts or uncertainty.

Figure 15

Would you recommend purchasing green products to others?
86 responses



This chart summarizes the willingness of respondents (86 in total) to recommend purchasing green products to others:

- 60.5% of respondents are highly supportive, stating "Yes, definitely."
- 30.2% agree but with reservations, answering "Yes, with some reservations."

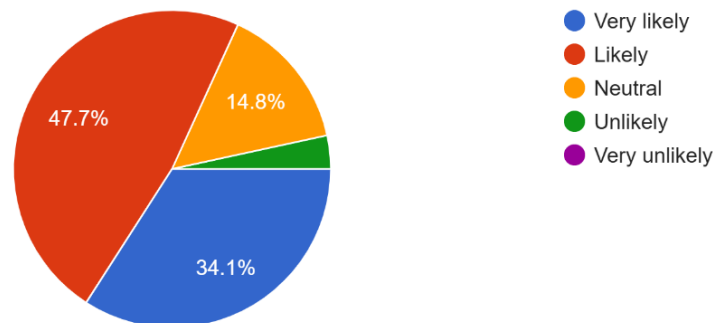
- 9.3% are uncertain, responding with "Maybe."
- 0% (not represented on the chart) responded with "No," showing no outright opposition.

This indicates a predominantly positive attitude toward recommending green products, although a notable portion has reservations or uncertainty.

Figure 16

How likely are you to repurchase from a brand that promotes sustainable and ethical green products?

88 responses



This chart highlights respondents' likelihood of repurchasing from brands that promote sustainable and ethical green products, based on 88 responses:

- 34.1% are "Very likely" to repurchase.
- 47.7% are "Likely," indicating strong overall support.
- 14.8% remain "Neutral," neither leaning towards nor against repurchasing.

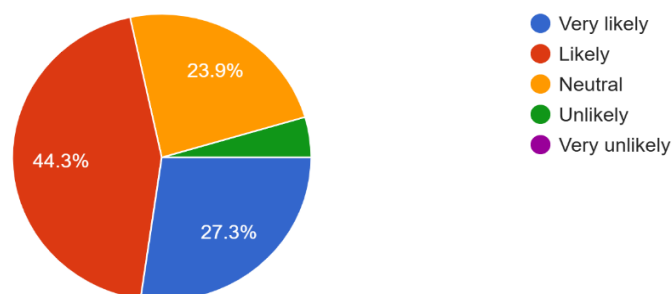
- Only a small percentage are negative, with 3.4% ("Unlikely") and 0% ("Very unlikely").

This shows that the majority (over 80%) are inclined to continue supporting sustainable and ethical brands, demonstrating high consumer loyalty toward green marketing initiatives.

Figure 17

How likely are you to remain loyal to a brand based on its ethical and sustainable marketing practices?

88 responses



Source: Primary Data

This chart represents respondents' likelihood of remaining loyal to a brand based on its ethical and sustainable marketing practices, with data from 88 responses:

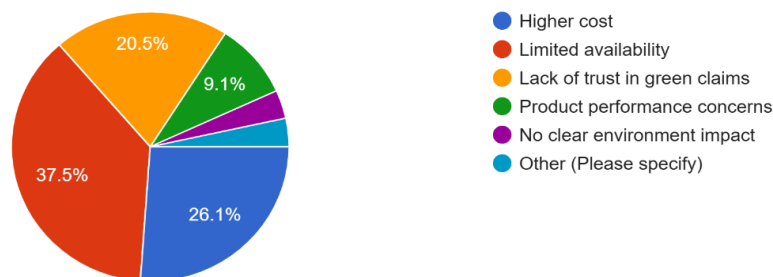
- 27.3% are "Very likely" to remain loyal.
- 44.3% are "Likely," indicating strong inclination toward loyalty.
- 23.9% are "Neutral," showing no strong opinion.

- A minimal percentage expressed negativity, with 3.4% being "Unlikely" and 1.1% being "Very unlikely."

Overall, the data reflects a predominantly positive consumer attitude toward loyalty influenced by ethical and sustainable marketing, with over 70% expressing a likelihood to remain loyal.

Figure 18

What are the primary barriers to your purchase of green products? (Select all that apply)
88 responses



Source: Primary Data

The chart illustrates the primary barriers to purchasing green products based on 88 responses. The most cited barrier is higher cost (37.5%), followed by limited availability (26.1%). Other significant concerns include a lack of trust in green claims (20.5%) and product performance concerns (9.1%). No clear environmental impact and other reasons make up the remaining responses but are less significant. This data highlights that price and accessibility are the predominant challenges in adopting green products.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted relationship between green marketing, ethical practices, and consumer behavior. The results affirm the growing consumer inclination toward environmentally friendly products, with a significant portion of participants expressing trust in the environmental claims of green products. However, the presence of skepticism, particularly regarding corporate motives behind green marketing, indicates an ongoing need for businesses to prioritize transparency and ethical communication.

Consumer trust and skepticism

While the majority of respondents displayed confidence in the quality and performance of green products, a considerable proportion exhibited reservations about the

authenticity of environmental claims. This skepticism highlights the pervasive impact of greenwashing, where exaggerated or misleading claims can undermine consumer trust. To address this, companies must adopt rigorous ethical standards, ensuring clarity and honesty in marketing communications. Ethical practices that consistently align with sustainability goals can help mitigate skepticism and foster long-term consumer loyalty.

Barriers to Adoption

The study identifies significant barriers to the widespread adoption of green products, including higher costs, limited availability, and doubts about product performance. These challenges suggest that despite increasing consumer awareness and willingness to support sustainable initiatives, practical constraints remain a significant deterrent. Businesses can address these concerns by investing in cost-effective production methods, enhancing the accessibility of green products, and providing transparent, evidence-based claims about their benefits.

Ethical Practices and Consumer Loyalty

Ethical marketing practices emerged as a critical driver of consumer loyalty. Respondents indicated a strong likelihood of repurchasing from brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability and ethics. This finding

emphasizes the need for businesses to embed ethical considerations into their core operations and marketing strategies. By prioritizing transparency, fairness, and social responsibility, companies can build enduring trust and enhance their competitive advantage.

Consumer Perceptions and Behavior

The positive perceptions of green product quality and environmental benefits observed in this study suggest that consumers are becoming more discerning in their purchasing decisions. However, the conditional willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products indicates that businesses must do more to communicate the value proposition of their offerings effectively. Highlighting long-term benefits, such as environmental preservation and health improvements, could enhance consumer engagement and willingness to invest in green products.

Implications for Businesses and Policymakers

The study's findings have significant implications for both businesses and policymakers. Companies must recognize the dual role of green marketing as both a promotional strategy and a commitment to ethical practices. Policymakers, on the other hand, can support sustainable consumption by implementing regulations that promote transparency and discourage greenwashing. Collaborative efforts between businesses and regulatory bodies can create a market environment where sustainability and ethics are not just desirable but indispensable.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical interplay between green marketing, sustainability, and ethical practices in shaping consumer behavior. It underscores the importance of transparency and authenticity in fostering trust and loyalty among consumers, while also addressing barriers such as cost, accessibility, and skepticism. The findings suggest that businesses adopting ethical marketing strategies and prioritizing sustainable practices can achieve both consumer trust and long-term success. Policymakers and companies must work together to promote transparency, regulate greenwashing, and ensure accessibility to sustainable products. By addressing these challenges, green marketing can become a powerful driver of sustainable consumption and environmental preservation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Al-Nashmi, M., & Almamary, A. A. (2017). The relationship between Islamic marketing ethics and brand credibility. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 8(2), 261-288. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/jima-03-2015-0024>
- [2] Alshurideh, M. T., Al Kurdi, B., Vij, A., Obiedat, Z., & Naser, A. Y. (2016). Marketing ethics and relationship marketing - an empirical effect of effects practices application on maintaining relationships with customers. *International Business Research*, 9(9), 78-90. doi:[doi:10.5539/ibr.v9n9p78](https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v9n9p78)
- [3] Cronin, J. J., Smith, J. S., Gleim, M. R., & Martinez, J. D. (2010). Green marketing strategies: an examination of stakeholders and the opportunities they present. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 39, 158-174. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-010-0227-0>
- [4] Kadir, A., Asdar, M., Alam, S., & Pono, M. (2022). Analysis of green marketing and performance of environmentally friendly based smes in south sulawesi. 7th International Conference on Accounting, Management and Economics (ICAME-7 2022) (pp. 765-769). Indonesia: Atlantis Press. doi:https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-146-3_72
- [5] Lestari, M. W. (2023). Literature Review Green Marketing Strategy and Green Hospital to Achieve Sustainable Competitive Advantage. *International Islamic Medical Journal*, 4(1), 38-43. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33086/iimj.v4i1.3854>
- [6] Lestari, M. W., Sari, S. R., & Arso, S. P. (2022). Green Marketing Strategy and Green Hospital to Achieve Sustainable Competitive Advantage. *International Islamic Medical Journal*, 4(1), 1-50. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33086/iimj.v4i1.3854>
- [7] Lu, Y. (2024). How education shapes ethics in network marketing: the role of identity and training. *Sage Open*, 14(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241258061>
- [8] Payne, D., & Pressley, M. M. (2013). A transcendent code of ethics for marketing professionals. *International Journal of Law and Management*, 55(1), 55-73. doi:[doi:10.1108/emjb-03-2019-0046](https://doi.org/10.1108/emjb-03-2019-0046)
- [9] Troudi, H., & Bouyoucef, D. (2020). Predicting purchasing behavior of green food in algerian context. *Euromed Journal of Business*, 15(1), 1-21. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/emjb-03-2019-0046>
- [10] Wang, Y. G. (2011). Corporate social responsibility and stock performance-evidence

- from taiwan. Modern Economics, 2(5), 788-799.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.4236/me.2011.25087>
- [11] Widyastuti, S., Said, M. I., Siswood, S., & Dian.
(2019). Customer Trust through Green Corporate
Image, Green Marketing Staretyg and Social
Responsibility: A Case Study. European Research
Studies Journal, 12(3), 343-359.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.35808/ersj/1476>