The Green Scene and The Betrayal Behind Eco-Friendly Marketing

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate how Pragmatic legitimacy impacts organizations, causing them to falsely claim they are green brands, thereby engaging in greenwashing that makes consumers feel betrayed. Survey method was employed to collect data from 700 respondents. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed for data collection. Questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS for data analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) was employed using AMOS 23. In the structural model tested with AMOS, we found that our construct had a significant relationship, thereby confirming the primary objective of our study. Pragmatic legitimacy creates such conditions for brand managers that they tend to claim to be green falsely. The study's findings would essentially assist consumers, who are the ultimate victims of greenwashing. By understanding the factors that contribute to greenwashing, consumers can make more informed purchasing decisions, thereby reducing the prevalence of deceptive marketing practices. This study will be important in enhancing the understanding of academicians regarding greenwashing as a precursor to corporate legitimacy. Due to time constraints, the study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the impact of various factors on consumers. This design, although efficient, may not fully capture the complexity of the relationships between variables. The study's sample size was limited, and a convenience sampling technique was employed, which could introduce bias into the results. These limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings of this study. This study explores the concept of how pragmatic legitimacy can lead to greenwashing, ultimately undermining consumers' perceptions of a brand's moral and ethical responsibility, which has a negative impact on the brand.

Keywords: Green Washing, Pragmatic Legitimacy, Perceived Betrayal, Corporate Legitimacy, Green Marketing

Introduction

There has been a growing apprehension of the concept of sustainability and the environment over the past few years (Biswas & Roy, 2015). As a result, most corporations have introduced green practices and market their goods as eco-friendly or sustainable. Greenwashing involves deceiving consumers about the environmental benefits of a specific product, service, or company. The method was initially developed in the 1980s as the first model (Self et al., 2010). Its main aim is to analyse the causes and consequences of greenwashing and present information on the existing knowledge and gaps that need to be filled. Greenwashing is most likely to be observed when marketing and advertising products (Urbański & UlHaque, 2020).

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Companies can present a distorted picture of the environmental characteristics of their product, e.g., by pretending that a product is made of recycled material. Other standard greenwashing techniques include deceptive labelling, vague terms, and environmentally-impacting imagery with no visible signs of related green activities. The presentation of misleading information can lead consumers to form an incorrect perception that their preferences are environmentally sustainable, when in fact, this is not the case (Hameed et al., 2021).

Devoid of genuineness and openness in marketing is harmful not only to the consumer but also to the environment. Consequently, it deters sustainable efforts by poisoning consumer trust (Spielmann & Orth, 2021). When consumers purchase products with false or exaggerated claims, they may not align their actions with their intended environmental objectives. Consequently, this blocks the path to sustainability, and environmental degradation may occur. Despite the numerous related studies, the causes and effects of greenwashing remain ambiguous. This highlights the need for further research and exploration in this area. Most studies available have concentrated on consumer perception, motivation, and responses to greenwashing. Consumer scepticism, cognitive biases, and social norms have been identified as the factors influenced by several factors. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to understand the organizational aspects that promote greenwashing activities fully. It is essential to understand how companies operate internally, how decisions are made, and which customers and external forces compel companies to engage in greenwashing, enabling them to create effective responses.

Additionally, it necessitates an examination of the long-term effects of greenwashing on brand reputation and consumer trust. Although the immediate success resulting from misleading marketing may be beneficial to companies, the impact on their reputation and subsequent loss of customer trust can have lasting effects. This underscores the profound and enduring consequences of greenwashing, making it a matter of significant concern.

There is a need to assess the effectiveness of existing regulatory measures in mitigating greenwashing practices. Despite the existence of regulations, environmental standards, and environmental certification, there is variation in the levels of effectiveness and enforcement of these tools across jurisdictions and specific industries in addressing deceptive environmental claims. It is essential to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the same regulatory framework in order to pinpoint areas for improvement and provide recommendations to enhance their effectiveness. It is within these research gaps that this paper aims to contribute to the field of knowledge regarding greenwashing and offer practical insights to consumers, companies, and policymakers. It aims to identify the drivers of greenwashing activities, analyse the overall impacts on the reputation and credibility of brands, and test the effectiveness of regulatory actions.

Conceptual Background

Here, the theoretical model of greenwashing is presented, offering a clear definition of this term that serves as the prelude to further discussion. Greenwashing has been described as a tactical communication and business promotion instrument used by companies to create an impression of environmental awareness and sustainability, often consisting of inaccurate, embellished, or deceptive explanations. These allegations can include exaggerating the environmental benefits of a product or service, downplaying or minimizing environmental effects, or using implausible language that implies a sense of responsibility toward sustainability without actually making a significant difference. The conceptualization suggests that the practice of greenwashing is an act of deliberate deception aimed at consumers and other stakeholders, resulting from the growing demand for environmentally friendly goods and corporate accountability.

The conceptual framework also explores the intricacies that differentiate between greenwashing and actual sustainability acts. Authentic sustainability activities are those with meaningful and demonstrable action on environmental accountability, originating in the core values and business strategies of a company. These are supported by practical actions, policies, and initiatives aimed at minimizing the environmental impact. In contrast, greenwashing is shallow and hypocritical, driven by the intention to exploit the attractiveness of sustainability to the market without making significant changes or investments into sustainable practices. By highlighting these differences, this study establishes a basis for understanding the ethical considerations relating to greenwashing in the modern corporate world.

Greenwashing is a deceptive approach that can create disillusionment among consumers, who may feel betrayed or deceived when companies lose the trust of their people. These deceptive acts may erode consumer confidence, damage brand image, and ultimately, consumer loyalty will decline, leading to reduced sales. In addition, it is arguably true that greenwashing practices obscure the work of actual environmentally friendly companies that attempt to invest in eco-friendly business operations but face difficulties competing with their business rivals who engage in unethical marketing. The conceptualization emphasizes the necessity of identifying genuine sustainability actions and distinguishing them from greenwashing, as well as the need for an effective regulatory tool that prevents false advertising and promotes transparency and Accountability in the domain of corporate sustainability.

In this study, the corporate legitimacy theory is also considered an antecedent of greenwashing. Corporate legitimacy theory is a foundational theory in social and environmental accounting, explaining how and why corporations want their practices, reports, and actions to be aligned with societal norms, expectations, and values. Its core propositions suggest that an organization's economic performance is never the sole determining factor in its survival and prosperity, but instead that it aims to survive and succeed according to how legitimate it is perceived to be by major stakeholders, such as the people, government, investors, and civil society.

Legitimacy is widely understood as an assumption or a generalized belief that the activities of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate in a socially constructed set of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995). Legitimacy in the corporate context refers to how well a company's behaviour meets the expectations of its stakeholders. In the event of this congruence, organizations have a higher chance of being sustained in terms of support, resources, and being allowed to operate.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theory of legitimacy is part of the broader tradition of institutional theory and social contract theory. It presupposes that businesses act under a social contract, whereby they are allowed to operate in exchange for doing what is expected of them in society. When a corporation fails to meet these expectations, whether in its environmental practices, labour treatment, or financial dealings, it will lose its legitimacy and, by definition, stakeholder backing.

Legitimacy-Gap and the Corporate Behaviour

A central notion of the theory is the concept of the legitimacy gap, which refers to the disparity between societal expectations and corporate behaviour. As this gap increases, companies can either face disrepute or, at worst, governmental inquiry or citizen unrest. They could respond by implementing corrective measures or taking communicative actions that would help reduce the gap and bring the stakeholders' understanding back to the same footing.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The study question regarding the causes and effects of greenwashing is of paramount importance in the modern business environment. As the focus on sustainability and environmental matters intensifies around the globe, consumers, investors, and regulators are becoming more vocal about holding companies accountable for their environmental impact and the environmental behaviour they practice. This has led to a massive increase in the number of companies trying to market themselves as environmentally friendly, often by using deceptive or outrageous green marketing practices. This process of greenwashing represents a severe ethical, social, and economic threat that needs a more in-depth exploration of its internal factors and long-lasting impacts.

Consumer behaviour is not the only effect of greenwashing; it also impacts the reputation and decision-making of corporations and investors. It is essential to comprehend the rationale behind greenwashing trends and to understand the implications of greenwashing on consumer perceptions and buying behaviour in order to sustain credibility in the marketplace. Additionally, the greenwashing antecedents, such as pragmatic cognitive and moral legitimacy, can be investigated to provide insight into the inner drivers of greenwashing that prompt companies to make false claims about sustainable practices. The study will provide meaningful insights that can help policymakers, corporations, and consumers develop more effective methods for identifying and mitigating greenwashing, thereby creating a more transparent and environmentally responsible business environment.

The value of this research extends beyond business and marketing tactics. By explicating the various aspects of greenwashing and its key determinants, the study will make contributions to the disciplines of environmental ethics and corporate social responsibility. As the world continues to focus on combating climate change and creating a better world through sustainability, understanding what leads to greenwashing can inform the design of more effective laws and policies to prevent such acts of deception. Indeed, the outcomes of the proposed research will serve as a starting point in creating mechanisms that facilitate authentic environmental stewardship, encompassing more responsible and sustainable business practices, as well as the establishment of beneficial connections between firms, consumers, and the environment.

Pragmatic Legitimacy: The Conceptual Framework

In this section, the researchers will investigate the detailed definition and conceptualization of pragmatic legitimacy, which is one of the dimensions of the theory of corporate legitimacy related to the phenomenon of greenwashing. Pragmatic legitimacy refers to the appropriateness and effectiveness of organizational practices and communication measures in supporting their sustainability claims. This discussion examines both the instrumental and strategic aspects of legitimacy, with a particular focus on the strategic resource, specifically how businesses utilize greenwashing as a strategic tool to achieve their practical objectives.

Pragmatic legitimacy is based on the premise that organizations employ greenwashing techniques to project themselves as having socially acceptable practices and environmentally aware operations. However, they may not necessarily be making genuine attempts towards sustainability. By pursuing this line of action, companies seek to reap various instrumental advantages, which, besides enhancing their market dominance, may include attracting ecologically conscientious customers and access to sources of funding/investments in projects that comply with the green agenda. Pragmatic legitimacy refers more to the practical consequences that firms strive for when engaging in deceptive marketing about the environment, rather than the actual authenticity of their sustainability efforts (Watts et al., 2019).

Part of the problem lies in understanding pragmatic legitimacy in the context of greenwashing and a deeper understanding of the complexity of corporate sustainability initiatives, as well as the consequences of unethical environmental claims, which this study presents. The statement evokes the importance of endorsing intelligent and sincere sustainability initiatives that are deeply rooted in genuine intentions to preserve the environment as well as social responsibility. Additionally, this theoretical framework provides a basis for analysing the impact of pragmatic legitimacy on consumer behaviour, stakeholder perceptions, and the long-term reputations of corporate brands. There are far-reaching developments in the use of greenwashing by companies that may impact various stakeholders and society as a whole. This means that the conceptualization of pragmatic legitimacy provides a comprehensive picture of understanding strategic and instrumental elements of greenwashing practices (Yang et al., 2020). The identification of the factors underlying pragmatic legitimacy and the subsequent analysis of its practical implications form a worthwhile contribution that this research can make to the growing body of knowledge in the areas of corporate sustainability, ethical marketing, and consumer decision-making. It is essential to understand the complexity of pragmatic legitimacy, as portrayed in the concept of greenwashing, to facilitate moral and transparent actions that comply with the values and requirements of modern, environmentally aware consumers.

Pragmatic legitimacy has a profound impact on consumer attitudes and behaviour toward greenwashing. As awareness of environmental issues increases, consumers are taking initiatives to acquire products and services that are environmentally friendly. In addition, they expect firms to demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability even more. However, the adoption of greenwashing practices can blur the line between genuine sustainability efforts and false advertising tactics, leading consumers to form incorrect ideas about the actual environmental impact of their choices (Rahman & Nguyen-Viet, 2023).

When people are exposed to greenwashing, their initial attitude and perceptions towards a brand or product are positively influenced, as they perceive the company as environmentally responsible. A favourable attitude towards a product or brand can lead to the formation of favourable intentions among consumers to purchase or offer assistance. In the Long term, as the gap between the promises of a healthy environment and the reality of Consumer trust and adherence shrinks, behaviours become visible, losing effective credibility. Consumers can feel deceived and betrayed, which can lead to negative word-of-mouth communication, poor brand loyalty, and even boycotts (Zhang et al., 2018).

It is crucial to establish the regenerative effects of pragmatic legitimacy on consumer behaviour, which enterprises must identify in order to achieve successful marketing. The long-term sustainability results in most cases in a positive consumer response, brand loyalty, and an enhanced reputation through a genuine approach to addressing sustainability issues. Although greenwashing strategies may appear to yield short-term profitability for businesses, these activities can ultimately harm their image and erode consumer trust. This can lead to very severe financial and ethical consequences. Pragmatic legitimacy is also a vital aspect of greenwashing because it determines the behaviour and communication efforts of organizations, as well as affecting consumer perceptions. Responsible and transparent sustainability solutions, authentic customer relationships, and a greener marketplace are all intertwined with an understanding of this phenomenon. Through the recognition of pragmatic legitimacy in their decision-making process, consumers can make informed decisions and reward businesses that prioritize sustainability, thereby influencing others to do the same (Theng So et al., 2013).

Greenwashing

The shift from domestic to global markets has given consumers a better understanding of eco-friendly products and services. Consumers strive to use less harmful products for both human beings and the environment. The consumer trend in the preference for products that are `green is changing, and thus companies seek to incorporate those practices and procedures that are acceptable to the environment. Green products have become a growing concern worldwide. As consumers adopt a positive evaluation of companies that have a reputation for being environmentally friendly, or "green," companies. Companies often make false claims to appear environmentally friendly, which is referred to as greenwashing. Greenwashing is a term that is so generic that it can be perceived as a piece of jargon under numerous heads (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). It can be explanatory when we examine the developments of its use so far. Two distinct characteristics may characterize greenwashing. One of them can be referred to as an intrinsic characteristic, i.e., proximity to honesty (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). The second one is a communicative aspect (characters, means of deception, or misunderstanding people). Greenwashing may also be distinguished at the macro and Micro Levels. At the macro level, there is interest in organizations or firms whose greenwashing practices are evident. At the micro level, greenwashing is present in terms of influencing consumers through the use of greenwashing messages. Greenwashing occurs in cases where companies or brands present positive news about their environmental performance or social performance, regardless of whether their actual performance is misrepresented (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011). Thus, when greenwashing frauds of firms or companies, particularly those related to green products and environmental protection, are revealed, their stakeholders or customers may not trust such a firm or brand. Since trust is always a significant factor in building a good perception towards a given brand, as a good perception is converted into intention, and intention is also the path towards behaviour (buying). Similarly, trusted brands will foster brand loyalty among consumers, and companies should refrain from practicing greenwashing to achieve the expected outcomes. Thus, brand confidence between green products or services and their stakeholders will be compromised when greenwashing occurs (Chen & Chang, 2013). Greenwashing portrays a situation of firms where over-communication is achieved by capitalizing on their environmental performance (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Most corporations provide details about their environmental record and policies on their websites, and approximately 98 percent of goods with environmental claims seduce their customers by vowing to adhere to one or all seven principles of greenwashing. They include the sin of the hidden trade-off, the sin of no proof, the sin of vagueness, the sin of irrelevance, the sin of the lesser of two evils, the sin of fibbing, and the sin of false labels. That is why the research on greenwashing and its consequences is being re-collected nowadays. Consumers are now better informed about green products, and they are more interested in green purchasing, which is a key reason that propels them towards purchasing environmentally friendly products and services. Once companies meet their social responsibilities, consumers perceive them as environmentally friendly and are even willing to pay a higher price (Grimmer & Bingham, 2013). This implies that if consumers realise companies are greenwashing, they are unlikely to have a purchasing intention towards the products and services (Chen et al., 2014). Thus, recent research studies and work have acknowledged that consumers' green purchasing intentions are influenced adversely by perceptions of greenwashing (Chen & Chang, 2013).

Perceived Betrayal

Betrayal ensues when individuals realize that their expectations are unfulfilled, when they experience exploitation, when they perceive inappropriate exclusion from decisions affecting their lives, or when their creative potential is hindered in circumstances where its expression is legitimate. Consequently, betrayal may emerge in any relational context in which salient expectations are breached or rules are violated. Scholars investigating betrayal have concentrated on close relationships, employee–employer relationships, and betrayal as the mechanism yielding the motivation underlying online consumer protest (Gregoire & Fisher, 2008).

The sorrow, frustration, and pain associated with perceived betrayal reflect the disappointed party's subjective appraisal of the relational bond and can prove highly consequential for the person experiencing betrayal. Empirical research indicates that perceptions of betrayal intensify consumers' reactions to service failure (Wan et al., 2011), heighten the desire to terminate a relationship when commitment is low (Wiggin & Yalch, 2015), and occasionally precipitate retaliatory behaviour against a brand (Gregoire & Fisher, 2008).

Prior investigations on betrayal have examined close relationships (Finkel et al., 2002), employee–employer relationships, and business relationships (Hannon et al., 2010). The results of these studies indicate that the feeling of betrayal implies a violation of the rules of the game in relationships and an infringement of the principles of honesty, decency, and fairness. Within business environments, betrayal is exemplified by circumstances in which customers (buyers) believe that firms (sellers) have lied to them, exploited them, violated their trust, cheated, or broken their promises, as noted by Wu et al. Algorithmic Price Discrimination promises, or the disclosure of confidential information, both of which produce severe repercussions for the vulnerable party and impair the performance of the business relationship as a whole (Leonidou et al., 2018). Because betrayal arises within relational contexts, it differs substantially from constructs such as dissatisfaction and anger.

According to the above discussion, we come to the following devised hypothesis:

H1: Pragmatic Legitimacy has a significant impact on green washing.

H2: Greenwashing has a significant impact on perceived betrayal.

Figure 1: Hypothesis development

Methodology

Population

Accumulating evidence of heightened environmental pollution has prompted corporations worldwide to intensify their commitment to environmental stewardship. In China, phenomena such as persistent haze and escalating water contamination have increasingly assumed prominence. In Pakistan, parallel environmental concerns—among them intensifying air pollution, dwindling food security, and the mismanagement of electronic waste—are likewise garnering attention. Out of the 1.2 billion population, Pakistan in the year 2021, placing itself in the 3rd most polluting nation in the world, only behind China and the United States, who have been hailed as the most significant environmental stains, these intensifying environmental mitigations have been accompanied by a marked ascent in public awareness, to which stakeholders—including investors, consumers, governments, and corporate purchasers—have responded by exerting growing pressure on firms to divulge performance data as well as to market products that adhere to sustainability standards. Along with a growing awareness of environmental issues among the consumer clientele, a majority of businesses have accordingly undertaken such practices. In turn, this study examines the urban populations of key cities in the province of Punjab, which is the economic hub of Pakistan; in 2024, it contributed 60.58 percent to the country's economy.

Sample

A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used in our study. The study's sample comprises urban citizens of Pakistan whose average wage is 100,000 or more, making them individuals with both purchasing power and the ability to repeat purchase. The sample size indicates the precision of our estimates; therefore, to determine the sample size, we can select the most appropriate criteria based on our study. SEM requires a sample size of at least 200

(Kline, 2011). Another criterion states that a sample size of 5–10 responses for each parameter will tend to yield a suitable sample size (Bentler & Chou, 1987). Based on the above-mentioned guidelines, approximately 700 participants were required to respond to the questionnaire to test our proposed model, considering that many responses received were incomplete and did not meet specific required criteria.

Data Collection

The information obtained is primary and was collected firsthand among urban people in Punjab. In our study, primary data were gathered through the survey method. Survey Techniques are effective, and data can be collected at relatively low cost (Check & Schutt, 2011). The data were obtained using a self-administered questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale. The survey consisted of 35 items. It was established that the respondents were well identified, introduced, and accustomed to the research topic and the purpose of the study. They were then requested to respond in two forms, one containing high-involvement products and the other low-involvement products.

Measurement Instrument

Respondents were asked to choose the most suitable answer through a five-point Likert Scale ranging from (1=Strongly Disagree to Agree 5=Strongly). Standard questions were used to measure the key variables, which were adopted from previous studies. The questionnaire comprised three variables, classified into their respective dimensions. The variables include Pragmatic Legitimacy, Green Washing, and Perceived Betrayal. The scale for pragmatic legitimacy was taken from Suchmann (1995). The scale for greenwashing was taken from Leonidou and Skarmeas (2017). Items for the scale of Perceived Betrayal were taken from Gregoire and Fisher (2008). Demographic data was also collected regarding age, education, income, and occupation.

Data screening is generally required because the data set contains rogue responses as respondents vary in their levels of concentration and determination when responding to the questions asked. For data screening purposes, outliers, missing values, and normality were determined. Out of 499 useable responses, 27 missing value cases were detected and were treated by taking the mean of the corresponding values (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2011). Outliers were removed by replacing the outlier data with the mean of the remaining data in the corresponding cell. The results showed a normal distribution of the data, as the values of skewness and kurtosis were within the range of ±1 and ±3, respectively.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Data Analysis was conducted using SPSS 23, and the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique in AMOS version 22 was employed to perform Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for the measurement model of each category of the constructs. The initial step in Structural Equation Modelling involved the Measurement Model, where we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Reducing the items based on reliability, validity, and other criteria is one of the primary aims of conducting a Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Table 1: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Structural Path			Γ	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PL	→	GW	.358	4.110	0.001	Accepted
H2	GW	→	PB	.409	4.569	0.001	Accepted

Results and Discussion

The empirical findings are consistent in that organizations with the most significant interest in managing both their public image and performance legitimately, such as firms serving the environmentally sensitive services industry, are most likely to consider green claims as a pragmatic instrument to elicit stakeholder acceptance. This is more common because it can be challenging to assess environmental performance externally. When that is the case, symbolic practices such as sustainability reports or environmental branding can replace any actual gains, thereby fulfilling the need for apparent Accountability.

It is also interesting that the unequal level of information between firms and stakeholders can mediate the connection between greenwashing and pragmatic legitimacy. In cases where stakeholders are unable to evaluate the actual environmental impact of a firm comprehensively, the claims made by the firm, whether true or false, may be sufficient to create pragmatic legitimacy (Marquis & Toffel, 2012). This suggests that greenwashing is not only misleading but also a relatively reasonable response to external pressures within an institutional environment characterized by low levels of transparency.

Furthermore, pragmatic legitimacy is justified by the cost-benefit conception, which enables greenwashing in situations where the benefits of maintaining a good image outweigh the potential reputation loss if false accusations are exposed (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011). The findings thus highlight a paradox: stakeholders seeking greater corporate responsibility may inadvertently encourage superficial compliance, mainly when legitimacy is gauged through easily manipulated signals rather than verifiable performance indicators.

From a practical perspective, this underscores the need for more robust verification mechanisms and third-party certifications to ensure that legitimacy claims reflect actual environmental performance. Enhanced transparency requirements, such as mandatory disclosures and independent audits, can reduce the scope for strategic greenwashing and align pragmatic legitimacy with substantive Accountability. Moreover, the legitimacy that makes the brand man falsely claim has been impacts the level of hate and betrayal, which can make consumer negative about the certain brand and consequently, spread of mouth as well (1995) states that greenwashing impacts the brand in such a way that there is no going back when it comes to rebranding your brand identity.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that pragmatic legitimacy plays a critical role in shaping corporate greenwashing behaviour. It functions both as a motivator and an enabler, particularly in institutional environments that reward perception over performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of pragmatic legitimacy on corporate greenwashing practices. The findings support the hypothesis that pragmatic legitimacy has a significant impact on greenwashing, aligning with the broader theoretical framework of legitimacy theory and stakeholder management. Pragmatic legitimacy, rooted in the self-interested evaluations of an organization's stakeholders (Suchman, 1995), appears to act as both a driver and a justification mechanism for greenwashing behaviours. In sum, greenwashing is a significant driver of perceived betrayal, particularly in a market where environmental claims are increasingly scrutinized. Brands that fail to meet consumer expectations for ethical behaviour risk not only reputational damage but also the erosion of trust and emotional connection. These findings underscore the crucial importance of authentic sustainability practices and transparent communication in fostering long-term, trust-based consumer relationships.

Implications

While seeking legitimacy through environmental claims, being greenwashed can initially attract stakeholders with misleading or exaggerated claims (greenwashing), but it can also lead to long-term brand damage. As consumers today are more informed and sceptical, once they detect insincerity, the brand may face backlash, reduced loyalty, and loss of trust. Companies must back environmentally claims with tangible actions. This includes third-party certifications, transparent reporting, and measurable outcomes. Similarly, authenticity in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) efforts strengthens long-term legitimacy and customer loyalty. PR teams must carefully vet sustainability claims. Misleading language or exaggerated metrics can be counterproductive, and marketing strategies should emphasize verifiable efforts over vague or feel-good language ("eco-friendly," "green," etc.). The study supports calls for more rigorous standards and enforcement around environmental claims.

Limitations and Future Research

All researches have limitations that might affect its findings. First, due to time constraints, the study employed a cross-sectional method to examine the impact of various factors on consumers' impulsive tendencies. It is suggested that future research may use a longitudinal study method. Second, the study employed a survey design to assess the impact of external influences on impulsive tendencies. Future research may employ an experimental design to investigate the impact of these variables on consumers' impulse buying tendencies. The sample size was 700 respondents. Future research may increase the sample size, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the results. Another major limitation of the study was the use of a non-probability convenience sampling technique, which limits the generalization of findings. Future research may employ alternative sampling techniques to enhance the generalizability of the results. Future research may emphasize the addition of other services that already exist, allowing us to refine our findings and raise awareness that unplanned buying can also occur or originate while availing of services.

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