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Topic: The effect of green marketing strategies on consumer purchase intention for eco-friendly products: A study of Unilever UK

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Introduction:

Background of the research:

In the contemporary environment, green marketing plays an essential role in enhancing brands' image among consumers. Eco labelling, sustainable packaging and environmental advertising positively influence consumers' purchase intention for eco-friendly products by increasing trust, providing clear information about the products (Dao, 2024). Noor et al., (2012) further stated that, green advertisement and branding significantly enhance buyers' trust towards products or services and encourage them to make purchasing decisions, especially when combined with environmental knowledge. Unilever claims to be one of the brands that demonstrate sustainability in the UK. It is found that Unilever has developed their dishwashing liquid products by using a renewable and biodegradable foaming ingredient that demonstrates its commitment to green marketing (Unilever, 2019). Unilever uses Fairtrade mark labelling in their products to promote their sustainable substance (Unilever, 2025). The company aims to eliminate plastic packaging by 2035 and they explore alternatives like paper based and reusable packaging models (Unilever, 2024). Therefore, it implies that Unilever engaged with the green marketing to attract more consumers to the brand. They use sustainable ingredients to manufacture their products which helps them to enhance their image among the consumer.

Problem statement:

In the UK, 40% of FMCG companies are highly engaged with green washing issues and make misleading environmental claims (Labbe, 2022). In this regard, it is also seen that Unilever faces green washing issues. They promote their cosmetics products as fully made of sustainable ingredients but it does not happen in reality and they engaged with Greenwashing issues (Wray, 2024). It negatively hampers the consumer perceptions about the firm and they engage with other companies who truly prioritise sustainable products instead of fake promises. It declined Unilever's profit margin by 3.2 percent in the year 2025 (Unilever, 2025a). Hence, it is essential to evaluate how actual green marketing strategies enhance a firm's brand image among the people and engage more consumers to the brand to enhance profitability.

Research rationale:

Green marketing strategies such as green labelling, sustainable packaging and green marketing influence consumers to purchase eco-friendly products through tactics such as green labelling, sustainable-packaging and environmental advertising. Clear and transparent eco-labelling and packaging shows a products' quality. It influences consumers to make purchase decisions and engage them on a long term basis to the firm (Nagar and Verma, 2025). It is seen that in the

UK 81% of people prefer sustainable packaging in the year 2022 (Yltava, 2024). In the UK, consumer purchasing intentions have increased by 60% due to the green packaging (Adesoye, 2024).

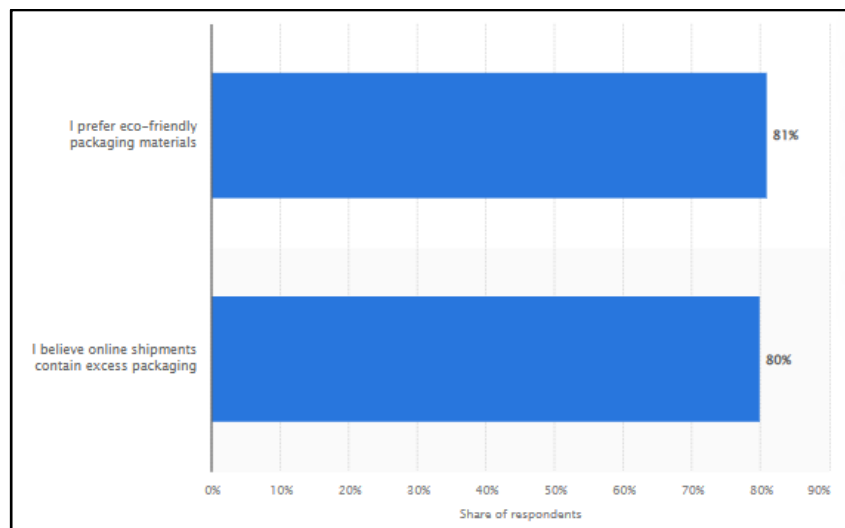


Figure 1: UK consumers' preferences on Eco-friendly packaging
(Source: Yltava, 2024)

Therefore, by emphasizing green marketing, Unilever can enhance their consumer base and their brand reputation in the UK market to ensure profitability in the UK market.

Research aim:

This study aims to critically evaluate the impact of Unilever's green marketing strategies on consumer purchase intentions for Eco-friendly products within the UK.

Research objectives:

- To evaluate the significant marketing strategies adopted by Unilever for promotion of eco-friendly products in the UK.
- To investigate how sustainable packaging and eco-labels enhance consumer willingness to purchase eco-friendly products of Unilever.
- To identify how practices of green marketing impact brand engagement and performance of Unilever.

Research question:

- What are the different green marketing strategies adopted by Unilever for promoting their eco-friendly products?
- How Unilever's eco-labels and sustainable packaging influence people to make purchase decisions?
- How Unilever's green marketing practices impact consumer engagement and brand performance?

Literature Review:

Scope of review:

Sustainability practices can help businesses to enhance consumer trust and engagement towards them. This study will focus on discussing TBL (Triple bottom line) theory and by integrating this principle, brands can effectively deliver sustainable products and services to consumers and sustainable practices influence consumer to make purchasing decisions. It will drive the firm's profit margin and engage more consumers. Therefore, by following the TBL framework, companies can maintain sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility to enhance their public image and build consumer trust.

Eco-labelling and credibility: How labels enhance perceived value/trust

According to Dao (2024), Eco-labels provide clear, understandable information about a product's environmental attributes, allowing consumers to make effective purchase decisions. Eco-branding builds a brand identity based on sustainability which reinforces the value of eco-friendly products (100% recycled plastic, cruelty free products) in the consumers' mind which ensures enhanced customer engagement for the long term. Alternatively, according to Palan et al., (2024), when a firm's products' and service claims are vague, unverified or perceived as green washing, consumers become skeptical on whether to choose the brand because of eroded trust level. It negatively impacts their purchasing decisions. In addition, Green washing scandals and a lack of credibility hamper the brand image, leading to negative publicity which creates a difficulty for organisations to attract new consumers (Salomone, 2023). Therefore, it can be considered that eco-labels act as a stamp of approval of reassuring consumers through which brand meets specific environmental standards. It enhances consumer trust and engagement rate.

Role of environmental advertising authenticity and greenwashing risks

Additionally in the view of Agu et al., (2024), environmental advertisement enhances brand authenticity among people primarily through transparency and verified claims. When advertising is supported by genuine, verifiable sustainable practices, people perceive the brand as honest and responsible which enhances consumer trust on the brand and consumer engagement rate gets enhanced. On the other hand Tarabieh (2021) argued that green washing increases consumer scepticism because when a company's misleading practices are exposed, consumers may become more cautious and less likely to believe a brand's green marketing for which consumers' engagement rate gets reduced. As a result, consumers' shift their preferences to other brands and negative publicity has occurred regarding the brand. It affects the firm's

reputation across the people. Hence, it can be considered that, by utilising proper environmental advertisement business can enhance their reputations across the people and engage more consumers towards the brand.

Sustainable packaging: Its influence on brand image and purchase intention

Sustainable packaging enhances a brand's image by focusing on ensuring ethical business practices and social responsibility. According to Huo et al., (2022), in the contemporary environment half of the UK organisation focuses on sustainable packaging through which they depict manufacturing transparency in front of consumers. Organisations' shows their commitment to deliver sustainable products to the consumers. It creates a stronger rapport with consumers and influences them to make their purchasing decisions. Conversely, consumers widely perceive plastic, especially single-use plastic as harmful to the environment. Brands heavily reliant on such materials face significant reputational risk and consumers seek alternative options (Vanaerschot and Plaisier, 2021). Therefore, it can be considered that, by prioritising sustainable packaging, organisations easily attract consumers and enhance brand image in the competitive market.

Corporate environmental responsibility (CER): Link with perceived brand ethics

Corporate environmental responsibility (CER) enhances brand ethics by building consumer trust, meeting consumer demand. According to Garas (2018), CER initiatives generate a positive public perception that significantly improves the brand image and reputation among the consumers. It is found that companies' engagement with CER lead to greater brand loyalty that boosts firms' sales and profitability (Akanbi and Obafemi, 2024). A strong internal culture of organisation influences buyers to become brand advocates by delivering positive and authentic seamless consumer experiences. Alternatively, modern consumers increasingly expect companies to adhere to a set of moral and ethical standards beyond simply making profit. When a firm claims to be ethical or sustainable but its actions contradicts those claims (green washing), it is perceived as dishonest. It hampers consumers' satisfaction rate and negatively affects the brand performance (Jones, 2019).

In this regard, by following TBL theory, organisations can easily enhance consumer purchase intentions as this theory focuses on implementing ethical practices which help companies to enhance consumer trust on the brand. TBL practices increase a firms' transparency and accountability regarding its business operations and supply chains. This openness enhances the consumer faith in the brand through which firms attract and engage them on a long term basis; ensure profitability (Shou et al., 2019).

Literature Gap:

According to Agu et al., (2024), Eco labelling offers consumers clear, easy-to-understand information about a products' environmental footprint which enhance the consumer trust on a brand. However, this article does not focus on how Eco-labelling enhances positive brand awareness in the competitive environment but this research will focus on how Eco-labelling enhances the brand awareness across the people. Similarly, Huo et al (2022) highlighted that sustainable packaging implies a positive brand perception among the people but it does not focus on how sustainable packaging enhances the healthy lifestyle of the people. This research will also focus on it. Thus, it is considered as a gap between research and review articles.

Conceptual Framework:

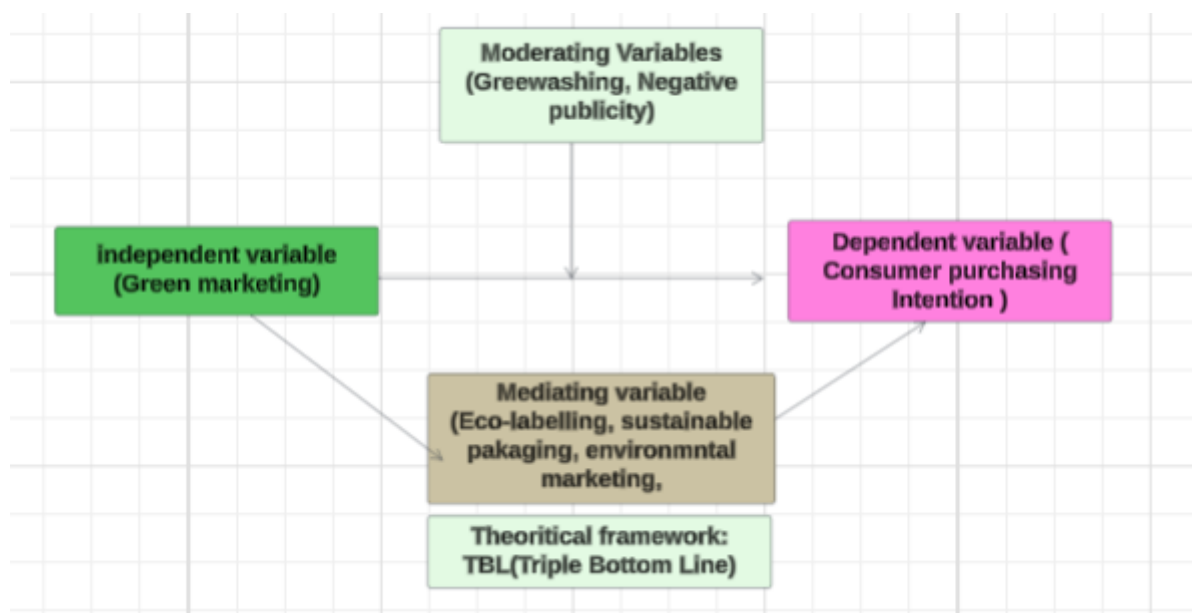


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework
(Source: Self-created)

Hypothesis development:

From the above discussion, three diverse hypotheses are developed by considering the study context. It highlights the effectiveness of green marketing to enhance consumer purchasing intentions.

H1: Consumer trust and purchase intention is influenced by Eco-labelling credibility.

H2: Consumer purchasing intentions and their trust on the brand is influenced through authentic environmental advertisement.

H3: CER (Corporate environmental responsibility) conciliates the relationship between green marketing strategies and consumer purchase intention.

Methodology:***Research philosophy and approach:***

Positivism philosophy relies on quantitative data and structured methodologies, it emphasises on objectivity, measurement and hypothesis testing that allows for systematic analysis (Maksimovic and Evtimov, 2023). This research will focus on this philosophy because it relies on quantifiable observation that enables researchers to use quantitative methods such as surveys to recognise consumer purchasing intentions. It helps researchers to collect consumer purchasing behaviours and attitudes through green marketing that helps firm to recognise the consumers' requirements and attract them towards the brand. This research will not focus on the interpretivism philosophy as it focuses on in depth, context-specific understanding of consumer's behaviours and it is a time consuming process (Ryan, 2018). Hence, for this research, Positivism philosophy will be selected instead of interpretivism.

Research approach:

The deductive approach is important for identifying consumer purchasing intention for a brand because it begins with established theories on consumer behaviours and brand perception to formulate specific, testable hypotheses. This allows researchers to identify the consumer purchasing perception on the brand (Rashid et al., 2024). Alternatively, an inductive approach is often highly specific to the given context or group of people studied and researchers unable to get valuable insight about the participant. Thus, it can lead to flawed assumptions that do not accurately recognise the consumers purchasing behaviour through Green marketing. Hence, it will not be suitable for this research.

Research design:

This research will focus on the primary quantitative analysis because it identifies complex consumer behaviours and preferences into numerical data that can be measured and statistically analysed. This provides clear, actionable insight to the researchers rather than subjective interpretation. Therefore it will help researchers to gain a holistic understanding of the consumer's purchasing decisions making process about a product (Hackett, 2018). Thus, primary quantitative analysis will be appropriate for this research. On the contrary, consumer behaviour and market conditions change rapidly. Qualitative analysis may not reflect the current landscape, thus it usually cannot be generalised to a broader context and researchers unable to analyse consumer purchasing decisions (Lach, 2014). Thus, this research will not focus on this analysis.

Research choice:

A mono method allows researchers to gain a deep, nuanced understanding of buyers purchasing decisions. A mono-method approach is more manageable in terms of time, budget, thus, for the research this choice will be selected (Boardman, R. and McCormick, 2022). Alternatively, this research will not focus on the mixed method because conducting both types of research within one study is labor intensive, requiring more time.

Data collection method:

This research will adopt a structured online questionnaire survey of 50 UK consumers. This is because online questionnaires are a crucial and effective tool for identifying consumer purchasing intentions by enabling businesses to gather direct insights into consumer preferences, purchasing behaviour. It is essential for informed decision making and developing effective marketing strategies for a firm (Palvölgyi and Moormann, 2021). Therefore, online questionnaire surveys form as a cost effective way to get direct feedback from the audiences that will help businesses to make informed decisions.

Sampling strategy:

Non-probability convenience sampling will be used in this research as it allows researchers to gather data quickly from readily available participants. This is vital when market research needs to be conducted within a short timeframe to capture immediate consumer sentiment. It is well suited for the initial stages of research to generate hypotheses, test the viability of a survey or get a preliminary sense of market trends and consumer purchasing intention. This is a straightforward nature of convenience sampling (Pace, 2021). Alternatively, this research will not focus on probability convenience sampling as this sampling method is unreliable for making high-stake business decisions about the actual purchase intentions of consumers (Farrukh et al., 2024).

Data analysis techniques:

Data will be analysed using SPSS to perform correlation and regression analysis to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between green marketing and purchase Intention. Ethical approval will be obtained prior to data collection, and all responses will be handled confidentially. This allows researchers to determine the nature of the consumer to the brand and researchers will easily identify the consumer purchasing intention from the brand (Elseidi and El-Baz, 2016). Therefore, by utilising the SPSS, researchers will easily understand the complex motivation behind consumer purchasing intentions.

Ethical considerations:

This research will be conducted by following certain ethical considerations which includes informed consent, respect for participants, privacy and confidentiality, data integrity. In this

research, participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures and benefits. It will protect participants' personal information by strong data security and only allowing authorised access. Researchers will have a responsibility to design their study to avoid causing physical, psychological or emotional distress to participants (Petrova et al., 2026).

Validity, Reliability, and Limitations:

Primary data is considered as more valid and reliable because collected data from the audiences is more credible and less prone to manipulation or misinterpretation that occur while using second-hand information (King, 2019). In addition, it allows researchers to draw more effective conclusions and make better informed decisions based on direct evidence rather than potential data flawed or generalised information (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). In this research data will be collected from the sources (survey participants) directly which will ensure increased accuracy, and results will be cross-checked to identify any anomalies. Thus it can be considered as valid. Also, a standardised protocol will be used for data collection to ensure reliability. Alternatively, primary quantitative data collection has several limitations such as potential bias, time consuming and expensive (Queirós et al., 2017). These limitations will be acknowledged and mitigated by anonymous participation and validated constructs.

Expected findings:

This research critically will recognise how Unilever's green marketing strategies such as Eco-labelling, sustainable packaging and environmental advertising influence consumers to make purchase decisions for eco-friendly products in the UK market.

Expected relationship between Green marketing and purchase intention:

From the existing literature, it can be anticipated that green marketing strategies build a positive relationship with consumers by offering seamless experiences such as eco-labelling, sustainable packaging which enhance their brand reputation and sales revenue in the competitive market. In this context, by using green marketing strategies, Unilever can easily attract numerous environmentally conscious consumers towards the brand. Therefore, Unilever's environmental-focused campaigns will be expected to increase their consumer trust and brand loyalty for the brand. Conversely, green washing issues erode the consumer trust and reduce the consumer engagement rate towards the brand (Mohammed et al., 2024). Thus, if Unilever falsely promotes their products in front of the consumer then it will create business challenges for them such as hampered brand image across people, dropped sales revenue and brand loyalty. It will negatively affect consumer purchasing intentions and engagement rate

towards the brand (Jones, 2019). Therefore, Unilever's environmental focused marketing will be expected to enhance the consumer trust on the brand and increase the consumer purchasing intentions.

Expected influence of specific dimensions (Eco-labelling, packaging and green advertisement):

According to Garas (2018), green marketing campaigns enhance brand's trustworthiness across the consumers that attract them to the brand. Thus, it can be considered that when the hypothesis will be tested, Unilever can get several insights about green marketing's benefits. It will help them to recognise how strategies of green marketing enhance their consumer base in the UK market and consumer purchasing behaviour.

Expected theoretical and practical contribution:

The discussion of TBL (Triple Bottom Line Theory) can help organisations improve consumer purchasing behaviour through maintaining their product manufacturing transparency and accountability. Therefore, by following the TBL theory, Unilever will be able enhance their consumer base and trust among consumers through maintaining products' manufacturing transparency, using sustainable ingredients while ensuring increased profitability in the competitive market (Shou et al., 2019). Therefore, practically this research can help Unilever to refine their marketing strategies, improve financial stability and enhance their reputations that enhance their consumer purchasing intention from the brand.

Limitations:

This study has several limitations such as time restrictions, access to data, and small sample size. Firstly, a small number of participants and non-probability sampling is unlikely to truly represent the target population, which can lead to biased results. This can restrict generalisability across all UK consumers. Secondly, self-reported data from the survey may increase response bias and negatively affect research outcomes. Hence to mitigate this issue, validated measurement scales, anonymous participation and statistical controls will be helpful. This is because those are crucial for research as it ensures data accuracy, reliability and credibility of findings that helps research to get successful findings (Hite et al., 2024).

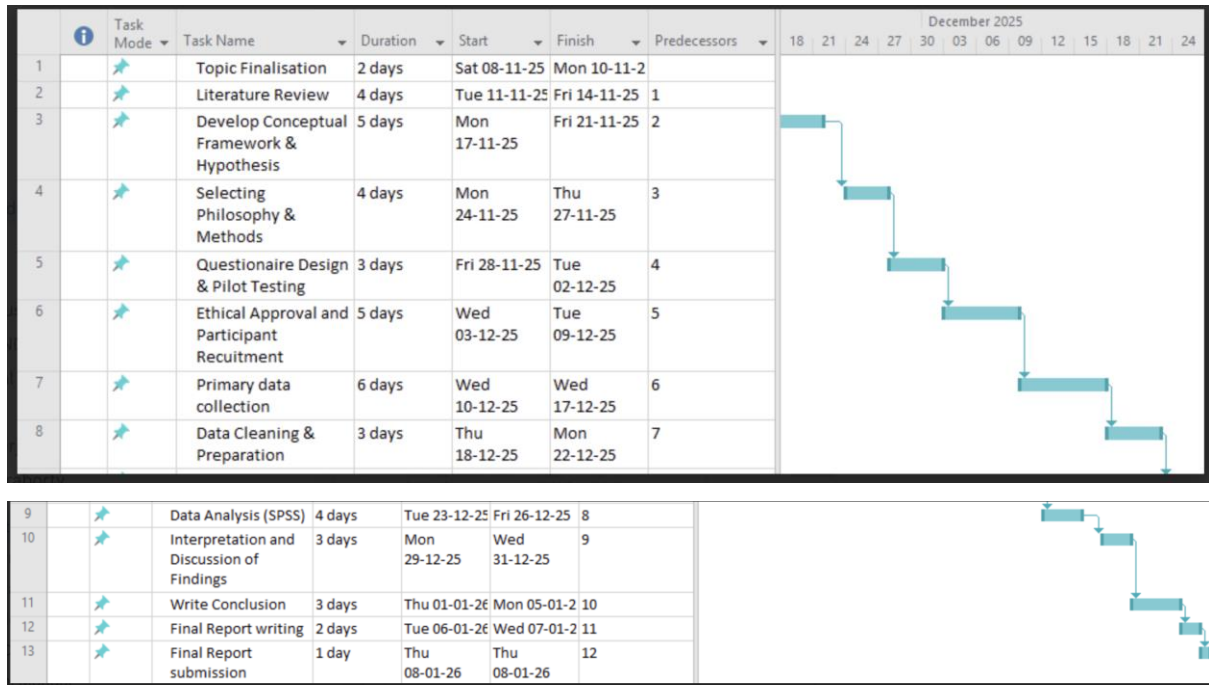


Figure 3: Gantt chart

(Source: Self-created)

This research will take 45 days to be completed as it will start on 8th November, 2025 and the end date will be 8th January 2026. This shows significant milestones of completing the dissertation such as literature review, collection of data, discussion of findings, final submission.

Conclusion:

This proposal outlines how Unilever's green marketing strategy shapes consumers' trust and purchasing intentions for green products in the UK. Currently sustainability has emerged as a significant driver of enhanced brand perception, however misleading sustainability claims undermine customer trust. Therefore, the research is relevant for understanding how enhanced and transparent green marketing strategies can enhance organisational performance through increased customer engagement. The aim of the research is to analyse green marketing (eco-label, sustainable packaging) strategies of Unilever and identify how these influences brand engagement and purchasing intention. In this research usage of positivism philosophy, deductive approach and survey method is justified as it can allow hypothesis testing for gathering insights from UK customers. Findings can be expected to describe authentic and credible strategies of green marketing certainly increases consumers' trust in brand and

supports their decision-making. Overall, this research can contribute both practically and academically by highlighting how transparent practices of sustainability can ensure enhanced brand reputation and direct decisions of the management for more developed performance.

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