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Institute of Inner-City Learning
London Campus

Master of Business Administration Programme
LCMB7035 - Dissertation

***Evaluating Sustainable Packaging as a Marketing Strategy:
A Multiple Case Study of Consumer Response and
Effectiveness at ALDI UK***

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Word Count: 16254

Date of submission: 01 February 2026

Declaration

I, Shah Ahasan Ahmed, Student ID: 2428343, hereby declare that this dissertation, entitled “***Evaluating Sustainable Packaging as a Marketing Strategy: A Multiple Case Study of Consumer Response and Effectiveness at ALDI UK***”, is my own independent work and research. It has not presented wholly or partially at this or any other institution of higher learning.

Any information and support used in the creation of this dissertation have been cited and referenced appropriately following academic practices. As an academic institution, I know the effects of academic misconduct, and I attest that this work meets the rules of the university on plagiarism and ethical research conduct.

Signature : Shah Ahasan Ahmed

Date : 01 February 2026

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor for unceasing guidance, support, and invaluable feedback all along this dissertation. The expertise and encouragement of these people have shaped this work to a great extent. I am also looking thanks for the staff and faculty members at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David who exerted their academic support. A special thanks is extended to the involved companies in the case studies for making useful secondary data available. I would like to acknowledge my family and friends for their undying support and encouragement throughout this journey. Finally, I would like to give credit to all the researchers and authors who contributed to this research.

Abstract

This dissertation compares sustainable packaging as a strategic marketing mechanism in the UK discount retail sector, using the focal case of ALDI UK, supported by a comparative analysis of Lidl, ASDA and Iceland. Drawing on Green Marketing Theory, the study questions the processes and whether and under which conditions sustainable packaging creates marketing value in situations of cost-leadership with high price-sensitivity. Rather than analysing sustainability as an inherent source of advantage, the research analytically investigates the interplay between packaging design, communication credibility, consumer trust and affordability limits. Chapter One successfully sets the problem for the research by identifying a gap in the existing literature to apply green marketing principles in discount retail models that is theoretical and empirical in nature. Chapter Two conducts a synthesis of works relating to sustainability marketing, packaging communication, and consumer behaviour in an attempt to create a conceptual framework to position authenticity, transparency, and price alignment as mediating and moderating mechanisms that shape consumer response. This framework challenges the assumption of unidirectionality of pro-environmental initiatives to positively determine behavioural results, especially in value-driven markets.

Using an interpretivist, inductive and multi-case study methodology, Chapter Three rationalises the exclusive use of secondary data to minimise the social desirability bias and capture the real-world organisational outcomes. Chapter Four uses both a within- and cross-case structured approach to examine the operationalisation and perception of sustainable packaging strategies across retailers. The findings show that for sustainable packaging to contribute to building brand trust and positioning against the competition, it must be coherently integrated with the cost strategy of the retailer and communicated in a clear and explicit manner. ALDI and Lidl have realised and aligned their sustainability initiatives and their operational efficiency dynamic, serving consumer trust without hurting price credibility. In contrast, ASDA's more incremental approach reveals poor marketing returns, and Iceland's radical strategy of eliminating the use of plastic reveals the extent of reputational benefit in strong sustainability signalling, but cost and scalability limitations. Chapter Five provides an analytic setting of these findings within the Green Marketing Theory, by extending the theory by determining the boundary conditions under which sustainability becomes a

competitive asset (versus reputational risk). The discussion shows that sustainable packaging functions as a less individualistic form of design differentiation and more as a legitimacy-producing mechanism/dependent upon perceived authenticity and economic rationality. Chapter Six concludes that sustainable packaging can only facilitate marketing effectiveness in discount retailing if it is embedded as a strategic concept and cost-disciplined as well as transparent in communication. The dissertation makes a contribution from a theoretical point of view by refining Green Marketing Theory for the value-based retail context, from an empirical point of view by demonstrating the utility of secondary data case analysis, and from a managerial point of view by providing evidence-based guidance about the sustainable implementation without compromising affordability or consumer trust.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Sustainability has become a core goal of the modern business strategy, particularly in the retail business, where environmental responsibility is becoming the leading determinant of consumer expectancy and corporate image. The transition to the principles of a circular economy has increased the pace of change in the linear consumption model, which makes retailers adopt sustainable practices to decrease waste, carbon emissions, and improve brand credibility (García-Arca, Garrido and Prado-Prado, 2017). Packaging, as a discourse, plays a pivotal role as it is a physical point of contact between the consumer and the brand. In the United Kingdom, the changing regulatory landscape, including the introduction of the Plastic Packaging Tax in 2022, and initiatives of such organisations as WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), have increased the pressure on retailers to replace non-recyclable material with environmentally friendly materials (Barbosa, Alireza Shabani Shojaei and Miranda, 2023). These legislative acts, together with the increased levels of environmental awareness, are rebranding packaging as a functional but planned marketing tool.

The retail business in the UK, especially the discount industry, is facing unique challenges to balance affordability and environmental responsibility. Companies like ALDI, Lidl, and ASDA do business in a price-sensitive market in which the level of operational efficiency is the most important. However, sustainability has come up as a point of difference even among the price-sensitive customers (Boz, Korhonen and Sand, 2020). As an example, ALDI UK has been able to position itself as a leader in the availability of sustainability by committing to ensuring that 100 per cent of its packaging will be recycled, reused, or compostable by 2025 (Silva and Nilsson, 2025). This pledge is in line with its value-based brand identity that has placed a premium on both affordability as well as responsibility. Implementing sustainability in its supply chain and marketing communication, ALDI shows that cost leadership can be achieved along with environmental sensitivity at the same time, which has become a more crucial statement in the competitive retailing environment.

Sustainable packaging is also consequential since it mediates the ethical responsibility and consumer psychology. Purchasing packages that communicate a sense of environmental care instil trust, enhance the sense of authenticity and can affect the

intentions to purchase. According to García-Arca, Garrido and Prado-Prado (2017), almost two-thirds of consumers in the UK prefer products with little or easy-to-recycle packaging, which suggests direct effects of sustainability on the buying behaviour. However, when many retailers have embraced the use of eco-friendly packaging, empirical analysis of its effectiveness as a marketing tool in a discount retail setting is lacking.

The gap highlights the freshness of the current research, which aims to investigate the correlation between sustainable packaging efforts and consumer reaction through the use of secondary data (Barbosa, Alireza Shabani Shojaei and Miranda, 2023). The research will be used to add insights to the existing knowledge about how sustainability can serve both as a moral duty and as a competitive instrument in improving competitiveness using value-based markets.

1.2 Research Rationale

1.2.1 Theoretical Justification

Sustainability and marketing have become more popular in existing business research, with environmental stewardship demonstrating an increase in brand equity and consumer trust (Afif, Rebolledo and Roy, 2022). The first emergence of green marketing was in the form of a strategy to make the corporate goal and the values of the environment consistent. The green marketing theory provides that sustainability in the product design, communication, and branding can help shape the purchasing decision and create long-term loyalty. Maintaining packaging serves to deliver green packaging promises and create a perception of environmental responsibility held by consumers toward a firm (Grosu, 2024). Various models explain the communication of marketing messages through packaging: The Packaging Communication Model views packaging as a silent salesman, communicating the values of the brand, whereas the Green Branding Framework attributes sustainability design to consumer trust and competitive advantage. Empirical studies suggest that environmentally friendly packaging positively affects the perception of the quality of products and brand loyalty (Silva and Nilsson, 2025). As a result, sustainable marketing strategies like environmentally friendly packaging can influence the purchase intention and behaviour once the consumers feel authenticity, relevance and easy adoption. The

empirical research indicates that the successful implementation of sustainability into marketing strategy can help to distinguish brands and create trust in the customers. Despite the changes in sustainable packaging, there still exist some theoretical and empirical uncertainties concerning its effectiveness in marketing. To start with, consumer attitudes and intentions are a primary concern of most recent research, which does not imply any tangible behavioural results and thus generates a gap between declared preferences and actual performance. Self-reported survey data will be prone to social desirability bias and a lack of sustainability knowledge (Jain and Hudnurkar, 2022). Second, the current studies have been heavily focused on luxury or mainstream brands, but the discount retail with the cost leadership strategy has been underrepresented. Very little is also known about the role of marketing communication disclosure and marketing brand authenticity in consumer confidence in sustainability assertions. The majority of previous studies use only primary survey data, and do not compare results with corporate sustainability reports, industry audit reports or longitudinal performance measures. The current theoretical perspectives might not capture the concept of strategic alignment of sustainability in marketing in a variety of business mindsets, particularly due to the high rates of environmental regulatory changes and the demand for digital transparency (Koch, Frommeyer and Schewe, 2022). Such limitations highlight why it is crucial to have deep, context-oriented case studies that will bridge theory and practice.

The main theoretical void is that there is an insufficiency of context-specific studies of discount retail sustainable packaging marketing that are based on secondary data. Whereas sustainability is an element of perception and trust, there are limited studies investigating its effect on them in the context of cost-led business models like ALDI UK, where the main driver of brand identity is low price and efficient operations (Koch, Frommeyer and Schewe, 2022). The question of how sustainable packaging conveys brand value in a world where consumers do not value environmental ideals but its price is still unclear. In the value-retail setting, the interaction between sustainable packaging, marketing effectiveness and consumer reaction is not well explored. The fact that the reactions of the different market segments are likely to be different will hamper the formulation of sustainable marketing theory and consumer behaviour theory (Rajesh and Subhashini, 2021). Introduction of price sensitivity, authenticity of communication, and strategic integration in the sustainability-based marketing

systems could increase the theoretical strength. In this regard, the proposed research will use secondary sources to examine the initiatives of ALDI UK to provide an evidence-based synthesis of sustainability communication that will be correlated with the quantitative marketing outcomes (Silva and Nilsson, 2025).

1.2.2 Practical Justification

Retailers, who face competitive and regulatory pressure, must grasp sustainable packaging's marketing effectiveness from a management and operational perspective. Managers cannot determine how investments in environmentally friendly packaging affect brand performance and customer loyalty because of a lack of substantial secondary data research (Silva and Nilsson, 2025). Due to strategic decision-making uncertainty, this theoretical gap becomes practical. Retailers like ALDI UK must spend a lot of time developing packaging, negotiating supplier contracts, and promoting sustainability to customers (Wandosell et al., 2021). Due to the absence of empirical clarity about marketing effects, judgments based on assumptions rather than facts may be inefficient and reputationally risky.

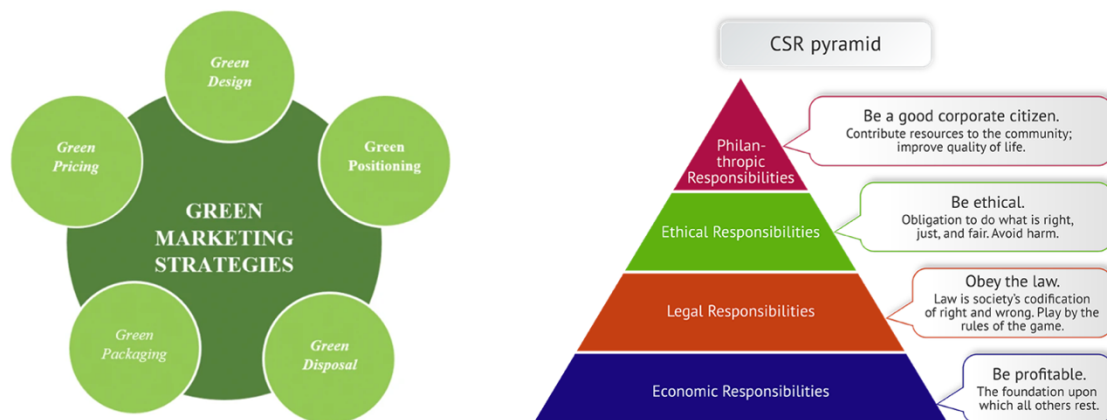


Figure 1: Green Marketing & Corporate Social Responsibility

Theory Source: Self-Made

Sustainability has become a competitive and compliance value in the UK retail industry, making the issue particularly important. According to WRAP (2023), the UK generates 2.5 million tons of plastic packaging trash every year, and as a result, the UK government has begun enforcing stricter rules on recycling & producer

responsibility. This is forcing the hands of the merchants to innovate with minimum environmental and financial impact. According to Grosu (2024), over 70% of European customers care for sustainability when shopping. Frommeyer et al found that 58% of UK buyers stopped purchasing plastic-heavy items. Such numbers show how much money is worth the awareness of the environment. Even though the heavy retailers made their aggressive packaging commitment, there are few comprehensive studies on how this impacts the marketing efficiency. With the cheaper end format, the price elasticity of demand is still high. They have a number of management pain points. First, there is a need for executives to gauge the efficacy of sustainable packaging projects, and the projects are typically about cost reduction instead of creating long-term brand equity (Wandosell et al. 2021).

Second, customer opinion on eco-packaging is still mixed; some value convenience or cost. Such a murky arena makes it difficult for managers to make estimates of demand or to justify sustainable spending. Third, sustainability communication is still tough; ambiguous or technical communication claims might make customers think their company is greenwashing.

Failure to address this knowledge gap has high opportunity costs. Retailers risk underestimating sustainability as a competitive weapon that may boost reputation, customer loyalty, and environmental investment interest (Vadakkepatt et al., 2021). As shown by ALDI UK, businesses can turn environmental promises into a competitive advantage by understanding how sustainable packaging influences marketing success.

1.3 Research Contribution and Motivation

The proposed research is a theoretical, empirical and practical contribution to the growing body of literature on sustainable marketing by questioning the nexus of environmental responsibility and consumer behaviour in price-oriented retail settings (Vadakkepatt et al., 2021). It closes the conceptual gaps found in the previous sections by proposing sustainability communications, packaging strategy and consumer response into a logical analysis framework, using ALDI UK as a case study example.

1.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

The paper contributes to the theory because it builds on the Green Marketing Theory as applied to the discount retail with references to ALDI, Lidl, and ASDA. Green Marketing Theory describes how environmental properties of the product and packaging design generate the value of instilling responsibility, credibility, and environmental commitment in the customer (Rajesh and Subhashini, 2021). The study can be extended by the theory to include cost-led retailers, where the theory can be used as the strategy to consider; the company considers price, convenience, and cost-effectiveness to be the most influential factors in decision-making.

The study puts Green Marketing Theory in a broader competitive context by analysing several discount retailers as opposed to one organisation. It shows that even in a price-sensitive market, sustainable packaging can act as a signal of strategic marketing. The results make the theory more specific as they emphasise the significance of authenticity and transparency as the prerequisites of efficacy (Jestratijevic, Maystorovich and Vrabich-Brodnjak, 2022). Sustainable packaging improves brand equity where the environmental claims are transparent, plausible and consistent with the real practices.

On the whole, the research contributes to the development of the Green Marketing Theory as it demonstrates how the sustainability communication process can be conducted within the framework of cost limitations. It connects eco-signalling, consumer trust and brand performance in low-price retail markets, and gives a more real-world and context-specific view of the performance of green marketing.

1.3.2 Empirical Contribution

The study has great value empirically due to its study methodology, a multiple case study, which is interpretivist and secondary, based on data. This is in line with the suggestion of García-Arca, Garrido and Prado-Prado (2017), who assert that case studies offer a deep, contextualised understanding of tricky organisational phenomena. The study by focusing on ALDI UK, provides a subtle understanding of the integration of sustainability into the discount retail sector, which has been the least represented in the previous empirical literature that has either favoured premium or global brands. The triangulated secondary sources applied in the study, including sustainability reports, industry analyses, and consumer trend data, are a holistic

empirical basis that augments validity, but also deconstructs the bias related to self-reported primary data (Boz, Korhonen and Sand, 2020). It shows how qualitative synthesis of secondary evidence can provide substantial theoretical and managerial value, hence illustrating a new avenue of research that reconciles the worth of academic rigour and practicality, and proving that secondary data analysis can be a viable approach to evaluate marketing phenomena when primary data gathering is limited.

1.3.3 Practical Contribution

Practically, the research provides practical insights to managers, policymakers, and retailers aiming at integrating the goals of brand strategy with environmental goals. It determines the main processes by which sustainable packaging can affect consumer trust and loyalty, providing decision-makers with guidelines on how sustainable packaging can be communicated to the audience without undermining the cost benefits (Boz, Korhonen and Sand, 2020). The results could be used to influence policy discussions on standardisation of sustainability labelling and corporate reporting, and thus increase the impact in reducing the greenwashing risks (S. Kavitha and S. Sunderasan, 2022). To practitioners, the study highlights the importance of consistency, transparency, and communication efforts in the packaging of messages to enhance brand equity and brand differentiation.

1.3.4 Originality

The originality of the dissertation is that it brings sustainability and marketing strategy together by the use of a secondary-data case study with a backdrop of the discount retail industry, which is rarely explored in scholarly papers (Afif, Rebolledo and Roy, 2022). Through its interpretivist-based reasoning, it opposes the prevalence of survey-based behavioural models and presents an elicited view which takes into account the interaction between the affordability, the authenticity, and the environmental consciousness. Finally, the research provides a theoretically supported but practice-driven model that contributes to the understanding of the efficacy of sustainable marketing within the context of a real-life retail market.

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

1.4.1 Aim

The research aims to evaluate how sustainable packaging functions as a marketing strategy at ALDI UK and how consumers respond to its effectiveness.

1.4.2 Objectives

- To explore how ALDI UK uses sustainable packaging as part of its marketing strategy and how it reflects the company's values and goals.
- To understand how consumers perceive and respond to ALDI's sustainable-packaging efforts and assess how these initiatives strengthen the brand's image, trust, and competitive position in the market.

1.4.3 Research Questions

- How does sustainable packaging function as a marketing strategy at ALDI UK, and to what extent does secondary evidence show its effectiveness in influencing consumer response and enhancing brand competitiveness?

1.5 Dissertation Structure

Chapter	Title	Description (Summary of Content)
Chapter 1	Introduction and Rationale	Introduces the research background, rationale, aim, objectives, and questions, establishing the foundation for the study.
Chapter 2	Literature Review	provides a critical and thematic review of existing theories, models, and empirical studies on sustainable packaging, marketing strategy, and consumer behaviour.
Chapter 3	Methodology	Explains the research design using Saunders' Research Onion model, detailing philosophy, approach, strategy, data sources, and analysis method.

Chapter 4	Data Analysis and Interpretation	presents and interprets secondary data on ALDI UK's sustainable-packaging strategy and consumer response.
Chapter 5	Findings and Discussion	Discusses key insights, linking findings with theoretical frameworks and industry practice.
Chapter 6	Conclusion and Recommendations	Summarises results, concludes, and proposes managerial and research recommendations.

Table 1: Dissertation Structure

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the major theories and research on sustainable marketing, packaging and consumer response. It follows Chapter 1 by filling the gap in the evidence of the relationship between sustainable packaging and the effectiveness of marketing in the context of discount retail, using ALDI UK as the case study. The literature on corporate social responsibility, green marketing, packaging communication, and consumer-behaviour models is reviewed, but the technical components regarding packaging production or material design are avoided (Santos, Gomes and Nogueira, 2021). The discussion is structured around four key themes: sustainability in marketing, packaging as a strategy, consumer perception and retail evidence. The discussion ends with a conceptual framework that connects these concepts to the objectives of the research.

2.2 Thematic Overview of the Literature

2.2.1 Sustainability and Green Marketing

Sustainability is now at the heart of modern marketing and retail approaches and represents deeper changes in organisational responses to environmental pressures, regulations and competition. From the lens of Green Marketing, sustainability has become a strategic plan which is not only related to the product but also communication and brand positioning as an unnecessary addition (Kashif, Zarkada, and Ramayah 2018). Green marketing stresses the notion of producing value through being environmentally friendly, based on a better brand image and consumer confidence (Santos, Gomes, and Nogueira, 2021). It tries to encourage products, services and practices with a minimum impact on the environment, with direct transmission to the consumer. Packaging in particular is of key importance, with the use of eco-friendly materials, less plastics and ease of recyclability markings, and simplified designs being an environmental reminder to the consumer (Frias Jamilena, Polo Pena, and Rodriguez Molina, 2017). These cues contribute to the differentiation of retailers as well as creating the sense of responsibility and concern in competitive markets.

The literature suggests that green marketing can affect the attitudes of consumers in a positive way, and trust and attachment to the brands that are perceived to be

sustainable. However, the effects of this on business are less predictable. Consumers, with all the environmental awareness that they have, are sensitive, however, to price and convenience (Frias Jamilena, Polo Pena and Rodriguez Molina, 2017). The effectiveness of green marketing is not solely measured in relation to the efforts for sustainable work, but also to the clarity and credibility of the same. Ambiguous or excessive claims on sustainability can help to undermine trust.

UK retail reports expose such a tension with a majority of consumers wanting recyclable or less packaged goods, but being reluctant to pay more for environmentally friendly products (Herrmann, Rhein, and Sträter, 2022). This is a challenge to the discount retailers, which are geared to the cost leadership models. A knowledge gap exists regarding how green marketing translates into terms of long-term loyalty in the low-price point retail environment. Companies like ALDI have to balance environmental signalling with cost effectiveness (Jamwal et al., 2021). This suggests that there is still much research to be conducted on how sustainable packaging can increase trust and competitive advantage without hurting cost leadership.

2.2.2 Packaging as a Marketing Communication Tool

Packaging has taken its niche in marketing strategy. It is a functional need, as well as a communication tool that defines consumer judgment. Majeed *et al.* (2022) referred to packaging as the silent salesman because of its contribution to communicating messages at the point of sale. The packaging appeals, conveys value, and creates emotional appeal. Its appearance, including colour, layout and design, affects the manner in which a customer perceives the quality and purpose of a product. Trust and support decision-making is shaped by informational elements like labels and claims. Sustainable packaging adds another emotional touch. It expresses environmental accountability and gives an indication of morality. It helps the brands to demonstrate that they are concerned with waste minimisation and the protection of resources. Such communication is critical in developing credibility on sustainability. The argument presented in the Green Branding Framework by Osarodion Ogiemwonyi *et al.* (2023) is that sustainability-oriented packaging builds brand trust when it is accompanied by clear and credible messages. The framework elaborates that consumers are responsive when the packaging design depicts true environmental concern.

The recent research concurs with this opinion. Rahman, Zahid and Al-Faryan (2023) discovered that consumers are strongly connected to the emotions and ethics when they observe environmentally friendly packaging. Lima *et al.* (2024) also noted that sustainable materials establish the feeling of purity and authenticity. Such reactions may have an effect on the desire to prefer a particular brand. Packaging also makes a symbolic signal of firm values, which could make the general brand identity stronger. Nevertheless, the literature has its contradictions, too. Other consumers get confused with eco-labels or distrust declared claims that appear unclear. Others look after convenience or product performance rather than environmental benefits (Lima *et al.*, 2024). It is also found that there exists a discrepancy between perceived and actual sustainability. As an illustration, the packaging can be environmentally friendly because of colour and design decisions, despite the materials not being entirely recyclable. This illusion of sustainability impact makes it difficult to determine the role of packaging on behaviour.

Another problem is the inability to measure the communication effectiveness of the packaging with the help of secondary data. Most of the available research is based on primary surveys, interviews, or experiments. Less literature can be found measuring sustainable packaging based on external sources, e.g. corporate readings, customer comments, and retail performance. This restricts our knowledge of the mechanism of packaging communication in real-life retail situations, particularly in the case of a discount retailer (Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah, 2018). The case of ALDIs may provide some valuable information regarding the possibility of using simple, minimal, and low-cost packaging to convey a sense of sustainability. The latter points to a significant gap in the research: it is important to know how sustainable packaging can serve as a marketing tool and a cost-effective business strategy at the same time.

2.2.3 Consumer Behaviour and Sustainability Perception

The study examines the consumer interpretations of sustainable packaging and how this influences the consumer's trust, perception and brand consideration in accordance with the Green marketing theory. This theory lays stressed on the role of credibility, authenticity, and the ethical responsibility in influencing the behavior of consumers (Kashif, Zarkada, and Ramayah, 2018). Discount retailers like ALDI, Lidl and ASDA, who have customer bases which are more interested in their cheapness

than anything else, and yet expect them to be responsible businesses, can use this theory to strengthen their brands.

Based on Green Marketing Theory, Sustainable packaging is an environmental indicator, which is a sign of intention of the company to the minimum level of waste and saving natural resource. Studies show that the packaging components (color, texture, environmentally friendly symbols) can influence the impression on the consumer. Eco-friendly images, for instance, provoke positive emotional reactions, which draw the products safer, more ethical or natural (Podvorica and Ukaj, 2019). Even without the technical understanding, the recyclable/compostable types of packaging help to build the perception that a brand is making good choices.

This is in support of the Green Marketing Framework since it highlights the importance of sustainability in building brand legitimacy. Consumers don't just look at companies based on what they place on the market place; they look at companies based on what they do. Eco-friendly packaging sends out responsibility, openness and compliance with social norms which is very useful for discount retailers that do not want to give up their affordability but at the same time do not want to show irresponsibility.

However, there are some contradictions in the consumer behavior. While many consumers have shown concern for sustainability, price, convenience and habit can often drive purchasing decisions, increasing value vs price tension in discount retail (Mondal and Giri, 2022). Sustainable packaging can be looked down upon if it's seen as an additional expense. Consumer skepticism was also a reason for the lack of trust in any claims made about sustainability when they are vague. This is where clear, honest communication is vitally important something that sits within the principles of Green Marketing.

Lastly, the current research has a gap especially in the use of self-report surveys to measure attitudes than actual behavior, the study shows. This research addresses the gap by leveraging real world data regarding ALDI, Lidl and Asda, it gives insights based on consumer behavior as opposed to conceptual model of intent (Tetiana Kalashnikova et al., 2023).

2.2.4 Empirical Evidence in Retail Sustainability

The empirical studies of the retail industry indicate that there is an increase in interest towards sustainability and its impact on consumer behaviour. As a response to the

pressure from the environment and the expectations of the consumer, several UK retailers, such as ASDA, Lidl, and ALDI, have launched sustainable packaging strategies. Such efforts provide useful lessons on what works and where the problem areas exist. According to Tang and Li (2024), the UK supermarkets have minimised the usage of single-use plastic and have enhanced the product lines with greater recyclability. ASDA also came up with well-defined labels for recycling, which enhanced customer awareness. Lidl introduced light packaging to minimise its carbon footprint. ALDI had determined that it would ensure that all its packaging is recyclable, reusable, or compostable by the year 2025. These moves represent a general move towards responsible packaging in the industry.

Six out of ten shoppers in the UK would choose a brand whose packaging is recyclable. Sustainability works in favour of trust and long-term loyalty. Nevertheless, both articles demonstrate that price is one of the key factors. Discount retailers will thus have to place sustainability in a manner that adds value and not cost. The impact of sustainability on the results of retail segments is not consistent (Yang and Chai, 2022). The effects of loyalty tend to be higher with premium retailers since customers anticipate quality and being ethical. Discount stores have higher pressure on margins and prices. This implies that the sustainability plans have to be straightforward, low-cost, and simple to communicate.

ALDI's approach stands out. Its sustainability message is very succinct and simple, befitting its low-cost philosophy. It focuses on recycling and waste minimisation and keeps the packaging uncomplicated. The empirical evidence indicates that the customers of ALDIs react favorably to its environmental efforts, yet the reaction is tempered by the price sensitivity. This brings out an under-investigated connection in the literature (Jamwal *et al.*, 2021). The role of sustainability on cost-leadership strategies has not been adequately studied by researchers. Little is known about how discount retailers can use sustainability as a competitive advantage. Existing research usually does not pay much attention to how operational effectiveness, supply-chain ease, and packaging decisions influence the degree of marketing and how consumer perception in low-cost settings (Jamwal *et al.*, 2021). This is where the necessity of further research on ALDI's sustainable packaging strategy is supported. It also supports the fact that it is essential to assess the real-world results with the help of

secondary data when it is possible to compare actual performance with the trends in the industry.

2.3 Theoretical Foundation and Contribution

The paper is entirely based on the Green Marketing Theory, which offers the most important theoretical perspective on examining the marketing strategy of sustainable packaging and consumer response. The Green Marketing Theory is a theory that describes how organisations incorporate environmental values in the product, packaging, and communication in an effort to realise marketing value and enhance brand meaning. From this point of view, sustainable packaging is a transparent eco cue that conveys responsibility, transparency and environmental commitment to the consumer. These cues aid in forming trust, brand perception, and assist in differentiation in the competing retail markets (Herrmann, Rhein and Sträter, 2022).

The most important constructs in the theory include value creation in the environment, trustworthiness of communication and perceived authenticity. Sustainable packaging is strategic when environmental claims are authentic, portrayed and supported by real practices. This is especially applicable in the case of ALDI UK, whereby plain and regular packaging messages are used to cement the cost-effective but responsible stand of the brand (Osarodion Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023). Green Marketing Theory has proposed that it is not the environmental claims that bring about sustainability-driven competitive advantage, but rather the clarity and credibility of these claims.

The current research adds to the Green Marketing Theory because it expands the scope of application to the discount-retail environment, where the price sensitivity has a significant impact on the consumer's expectations (Majeed et al, 2022). The research offers a refinement of the theory in pointing to the importance of the perception of authenticity and the perception of cost-effectiveness, and showing how green marketing can be used effectively to reinforce brand equity and trust without hurting cost leadership.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that will be used to guide the analysis in this dissertation. The framework integrates the important legacies that are available in the literature, which are referred to as sustainability practice, packaging strategy,

consumer perception and brand effectiveness. It explains how these factors interact and the way that sustainable packaging can affect the marketing performance of ALDI UK. It is aimed at the creation of a specific visual and narrative setting that links the theoretical knowledge with the actual patterns for actions derived on the basis of secondary sources (Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah, 2018). It also relates the rationale behind certain relations to be consequential, especially in a discount retail setup where affordability defines the consumer expectations and behaviour.

The element in the framework that is the independent variable is the sustainable packaging strategy of ALDI. This will include the materials used, which can be recycled or composted plastics; the writing on the packaging, including the feasibility of recycling; and the design decisions that will encourage minimum wastage. According to Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah (2018), the positive perceptions are created by the use of sustainable materials and clear eco-labels. Also, the packaging design acts as an indicator of environmental responsibility, hence aiding consumers in reading through brand values.

The model uses three mediators, which include consumer perception, trust and authenticity. These mediators are the processes of psychology that link the packaging strategy of ALDI to consumer response. Studies have also shown that sustainability indications do influence quality and ethics perceptions (Lima *et al.*, 2024). As long as consumers feel that the intentions of a retailer are good, they trust them, which further strengthens loyalty. Authenticity is also a key factor that defines whether consumers would perceive sustainability efforts as authentic or just a marketing strategy. As a result, these intermediaries explain the process of achieving the meaning of sustainable packaging to the customers of ALDI. There are two moderators used, which include price sensitivity and clarity of communication. Price holds a very strong voice in the discount retailing domain. The research suggests that sustainability has been appreciated, but only in a context where it does not raise cost significantly (Rahman, Zahid and Al-Faryan, 2023). Clarity of communication also moderates perception; transparency underlies less confusion and less scepticism, which makes sustainability easier to understand and believe. These moderators influence how far the packaging strategy of ALDI goes in influencing consumer trust and general brand reaction (Mondal and Giri, 2022). The marketing effectiveness and the brand equity are the dependent variables. These variables indicate the ability of ALDI to remain

loyal, build trust and reinforce its competitive edge. The studies have shown that when the activities are stable and communicated, sustainability can contribute to brand equity.

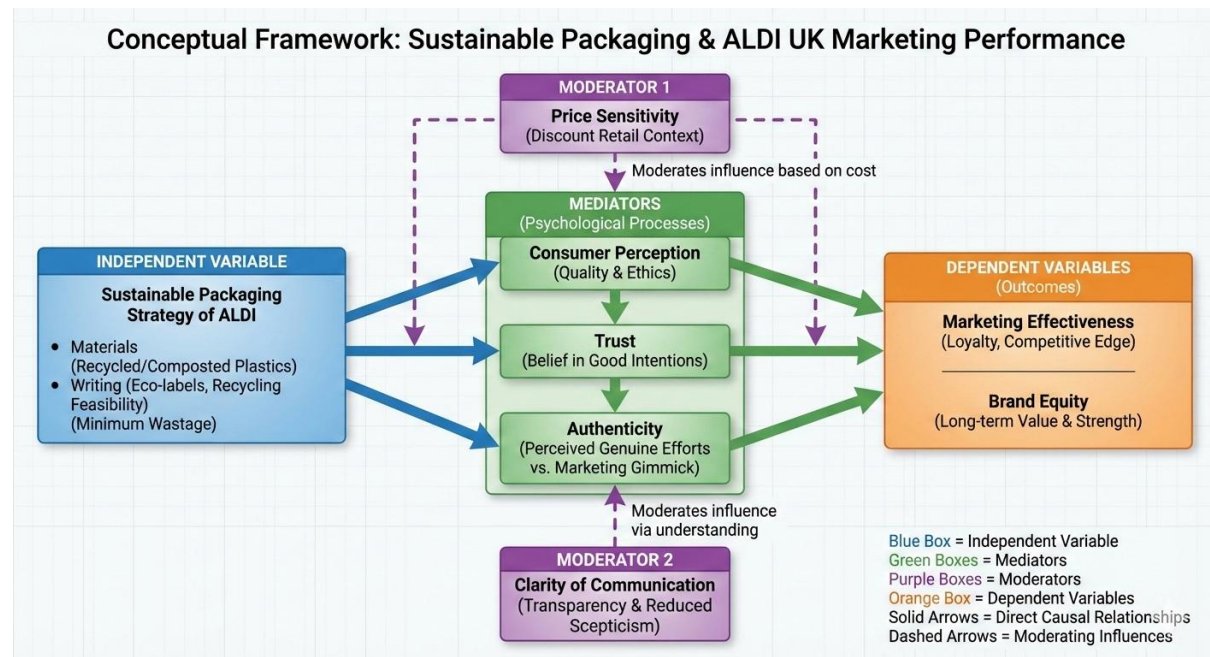


Figure 2: Theoretical Model to assess Sustainable Packaging as a Marketing Strategy at ALDI UK (Self-Made)

The analysis in Chapter 4 will be guided by this framework, as it will group themes obtained through secondary data. It will also serve as a basis for the interpretation that will occur in Chapter 5, as it will connect the findings of the empirical research to the theory and how sustainable packaging affects consumer reaction in a cost-conscious retail environment.

2.5 Summary Table of Key Literature

Author & Year	Theory / Framework	Key Constructs	Methodology	Main Findings	Relevance to This Study
Podvorica and Ukaj (2019)	Green Marketing Theory	Eco-value creation, credibility	Critical review	Effective green marketing needs authenticity.	Highlights need for authentic packaging messages.
Frías Jamilena, Polo Peña and Rodríguez Molina (2017)	Marketing Strategy	Value creation, brand equity	Theoretical	Sustainability strengthens brand meaning.	Connect packaging to value-based positioning.
Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah (2018)	Theory of Planned Behaviour	Attitudes, norms, behavioural control	Behavioural theory	Intention predicts eco-friendly buying.	Used to assess consumer response to ALDI packaging.
Lima <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Value–Belief–Norm Model	Values, moral norms	Behavioural theory	Values shape sustainable behaviour.	Shows how trust mediates sustainability choices.
Herrmann, Rhein and Sträter (2022)	Packaging Perception	Visual cues, eco-signals	Experiments	Eco-packaging improves ethical impressions.	Supports visual role of ALDI packaging.

Santos, Gomes and Nogueira (2021)	Sustainable Packaging Model	Perceived sustainability	Quantitative survey	Eco-materials elevate perceived quality.	Relevant for understanding response to ALDI's materials.
Majeed <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Green Branding Framework	Authenticity, transparency	Conceptual	Green branding builds long-term loyalty.	Supports authenticity as mediator in framework.
Tang and Li (2024)	Consumer Perception Theory	Emotion, value signalling	Mixed methods	Emotional cues drive eco-choice.	Helps analyse consumer trust around ALDI's packaging.
Yang and Chai (2022)	Green Consumption	Attitude, trust	Survey	Trust predicts green purchase behaviour.	Shows trust as key mediator in ALDI case.
Jamwal <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Industry Sustainability Framework	Recyclability, waste reduction	Industry audit	UK shoppers demand recyclable packaging.	Provides UK-specific context for ALDI analysis.
Tetiana Kalashnikova <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Retail Consumer Trends	Eco-preference, price tension	Market report	67% prefer recyclable packaging.	Supports UK market relevance of packaging.
Rahman, Zahid and Al-Faryan (2023)	Sustainability Strategy	Trust, brand differentiation	Retail insight	Sustainability boosts long-term loyalty.	Helps assess ALDI's competitive potential.

Mondal and Giri (2022)	Retail Sustainability	Cost-leadership tension	Case-based study	Discount retailers struggle to balance cost and eco-initiatives.	Directly linked to ALDI's sustainability challenges.
Osarodion Ogiemwonyi <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Green Retail Behaviour	Perceived value, eco-label clarity	Survey	Clear labels improve trust and purchase intention.	Supports communication clarity as moderator.

Table 2: Summary Table of Key Literature

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed major themes in sustainability marketing, packaging communication and consumer behaviour. It emphasised the way in which sustainable packaging can be used to define trust and purpose, as well as recognise gaps and contradictions, especially in cost-driven retail where price sensitivity is a factor (Podvorica and Ukaj, 2019). The review renewed Green Marketing Theory and Corporate Social Responsibility as convenient points of departure toward learning about these dynamics. These insights were incorporated in the conceptual framework that has connected packaging strategy, mediators, moderators and marketing effectiveness. This forms the foundation of Chapter 3, which is going to describe the Research Onion-related methodology that will analyse secondary data about ALDI UK.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter explains and justifies the research approach applied to assess the role of sustainable packaging as a marketing strategy at ALDI UK and the way consumers react to its effectiveness. The research question will explore the impact of sustainable packaging on consumer perception and brand competitiveness, utilising secondary evidence (Faillie, 2019). It takes a qualitative, interpretivist, and abductive methodological approach that is backed by a multi-case study approach and thematic analysis of secondary data. The chapter presents the philosophy of the research, approach, strategy, the selection of the cases used, data sources, methods of the analysis, measures of the quality of the research, the ethical considerations and gives the conclusion to prepare the groundwork of Chapter 4.

3.2 Research Philosophy, Approach, and Design

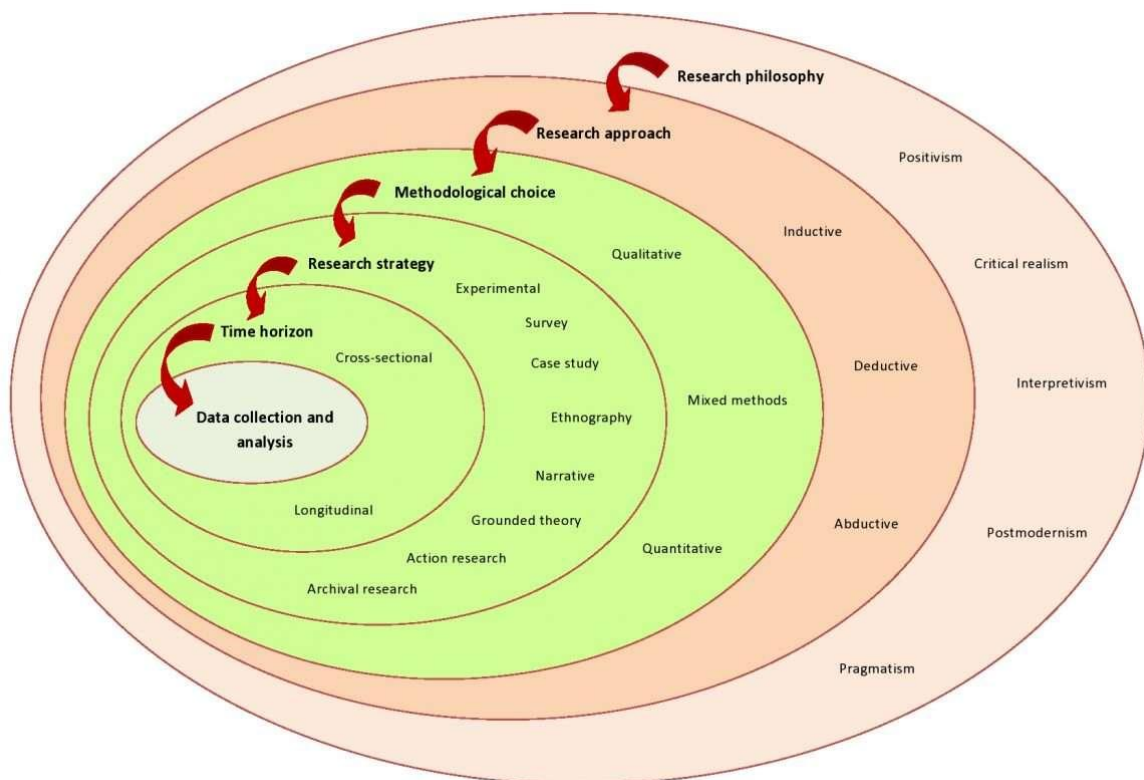


Figure 3: Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2019)

The Research Onion by Saunders et al. (2019) is used to inform this study as it is a systematic approach that justifies methodological decisions. The onion demonstrates

how philosophy, approach and strategy collaborate to create a consistent methodology design.

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

The research follows an interpretivist philosophy and presupposes that organisational realities, including messages about sustainability, are socially constructed, and that can only be perceived through the context and meaning, not measurement. This is appropriate since the study examines the means through which ALDI UK discloses sustainable packaging, and the way this is understood using secondary evidence (Almusaed, Almssad and Yitmen, 2025). An expedient aspect also in favour of methodological flexibility is the ability to use diverse sources of data to produce a practical retail strategy in the real world. Combined, pragmatism and interpretivism offer a solid basis of analysis that makes sense and is practical.

3.2.2 Research Approach

This study uses an inductive approach to research. An inductive approach is appropriate as the research aims to generate knowledge from existing evidence as opposed to testing predetermined hypotheses. The research is an analysis of secondary data aimed at exploring the markets of sustainable packaging use as a marketing strategy within ALDI UK and consumer response to the same. Patterns and insights are identified directly from the reports, industry data and published evidence (Bezanilla *et al.*, 2019). These results are then used to make broader conclusions relating to the Green Marketing Theory. By enabling the generation of insights from real-world data, the inductive approach is compatible with a flexible and evidence-driven analysis that is also compatible with case study research, which is of a qualitative nature.

3.2.3 Research Strategy

The case study research strategy is in line with the definitions provided by Ebneyamini and Moghadam (2018). A case study allows exploration in depth of a phenomenon in its organisational context as it is, especially when there are no clear lines between the phenomenon and its surroundings (Ebneyamini and Moghadam, 2018). This directly correlates with the objective of comprehending the sustainability of the packaging

process in the marketing plan of ALDI UK and the reaction of the consumer towards it through secondary data.

3.3 Justification for Case Study Methodology

3.3.1 Alignment with Research Questions

The case study approach is a suitable research methodology since the research questions aim at comprehending how sustainable packaging is an appropriate marketing strategy in ALDI UK and what secondary data can tell us about consumer response. Almusaed, Almssad and Yitmen (2025) claim that case studies are perfectly fit when the questions are how and what, and the inquiry is carried out to explore the contemporary phenomena in real-life organisational settings. This is in line with the objective of the study to research on sustainability practices that form part of the marketing strategy of ALDI.

3.3.2 Strengths of Case Studies

Case studies make it possible to gain profound, contextualised insight, which makes it possible to examine the mechanisms by which sustainable packaging adds marketing meaning. They endorse the study of organisational procedures, communication plans and contextual contingencies (Bezanilla *et al.*, 2019). Case studies are also useful in theory refinement, particularly in Green Marketing Theory, because they connect patterns in the real world with theoretical understandings. They also generate rich and evidence-based grounds that are useful in managerial decision-making.

3.3.3 Suitability of Secondary Data

The use of secondary data makes the case study more robust. Longitudinal, detailed and externally confirmed information is provided by sources like the sustainability report of ALDI, industry analysis, press releases, analyst briefing, and market research (Alam, 2021). Such data forms enable the retrieval of organisational information which would have been difficult to obtain using primary interviews or surveys. Triangulation of various sources of public information is also facilitated by secondary data, enhancing the credibility and minimising dependence on one particular account (Alam, 2021).

3.3.4 Rationale for Multi-case Design

Multi-case design is more rigorous in methodology because it allows the logic of replication and identification of patterns. In contrast to other discount retailers, like Lidl, Iceland and ASDA, a comparison of ALDI with these firms adds to the generalisability and helps to identify contextual influences on sustainable packaging strategy (Mauthner, 2020). Three cases offer the combination of depth and breadth that is befitting an MBA dissertation.

3.3.5 Limitations

Secondary data can be incomplete, biased in favour of positive reporting or not operational. These weaknesses are dealt with by triangulation and critical analysis, as discussed in Section 3.7.

3.4 Case Selection and Sampling Strategy

3.4.1 Sampling Logic

This paper applies purposive (theoretical) sampling as it is done by Goffin *et al.* (2019). The cases were chosen due to their enlightenment on the main phenomenon under study, i.e. the application of sustainable packaging as a promotional instrument in discount retail. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to select cases that are rich in information and will enable the researcher to carry out analysis with a level of depth instead of statistical representativeness (Hoda, 2024). In contrast to probability sampling, which is based on statistical generalisation, case study research is focused on analytical generalisation to theory. It is aimed to explore and expand Green Marketing Theory by analysing the functioning of sustainability communication in the various retail settings.

3.4.2 Case Selection Criteria

Cases were selected using explicit criteria:

- **Relevance:** Organisations must actively implement sustainable packaging initiatives central to their marketing strategy (Janis, 2022).
- **Information richness:** Each case must have sufficient publicly available secondary data, including sustainability reports, industry analyses, and media coverage.

- **Diversity:** Cases must vary along meaningful dimensions, such as branding approach, sustainability maturity, and operational scale, to enable cross-case pattern identification (Janis, 2022).
- **Currency:** Data must be recent (within the last five years) to reflect current sustainability practices.
- **Credibility:** Selected cases must have verifiable and reputable data sources (Janis, 2022).

Based on these criteria, **ALDI UK, Lidl, Iceland and ASDA** were selected as cases.

3.4.3 Case Profiles (Summary)

Case	Industry	Firm Size	Geography	Key Focus	Primary Data Sources
ALDI UK	Discount Grocery Retail	Large	United Kingdom	Sustainable packaging within a strict cost-leadership model	Sustainability reports, annual reports, WRAP publications, Mintel, Financial Times
Lidl UK	Discount Grocery Retail	Large	United Kingdom	Packaging reduction, recyclability, and sustainability communication	Corporate sustainability reports, NGO reports, Statista, industry press
ASDA UK	Value-Focused Grocery Retail	Large	United Kingdom	Plastic reduction initiatives and responsible packaging at scale	Annual reports, sustainability disclosures, Deloitte Insights, business media
Iceland Supermarket	Frozen & Value Grocery Retail	Medium–Large	United Kingdom	Plastic elimination leadership and visible green packaging commitments	Corporate reports, environmental campaign documents, WRAP, media coverage

Table 3: Detailed case profiles are presented in Chapter 4

3.4.5 Justification of Case Diversity

Despite operating in the discount/value retail sector, the cases are differentiated in terms of maturity in sustainability, positioning of brands, and packaging strategy (Mwita, 2025). The resulting controlled diversity will enable useful cross-case comparison, which enhances a better analytical understanding, even with contextual viability to the research objectives.

3.5 Data Sources and Data Collection

The research uses only the secondary data that was collected based on several reliable and publicly available sources to ensure rigour and transparency.

3.5.1 Types of Secondary Data Sources

Company sustainability reports and annual reports

- Strengths: Report legally, accountable data on sustainability commitments, packaging programs and long-term goals. Provide over time data which can be analysed using strategic progression (Welch *et al.*, 2020, pp. 171–220).
- Limitations: Can be reputation-building; can ignore the issues of operation.

Market research and analyst reports (e.g., WRAP, Deloitte, Statista, Mintel)

- Strengths: The strengths present the industry standards, consumer trends and other statistics relevant to sustainable packaging in the UK retail industry.
- Limitations: Aggregate-level information might not be targeted at ALDI UK (Ospina, Esteve and Lee, 2018).

Business press and trade publications (e.g., The Guardian, Retail Week)

- Strengths: Provide independent comment, external verification, as well as, critical evaluation of sustainability claims.
- Limitations The depth of the variables is not fixed; coverage can be in high-visibility problems instead of mechanisms.

NGO and regulatory publications (e.g., WRAP UK, Greenpeace audits)

- Strengths: Make objective appraisals of packaging performance, waste reduction and compliance (Rashid *et al.*, 2029).
- Limitations: May emphasise the negatives over the positives.

Company websites, press releases, and public statements

- Strengths: Supply current announcements, commitments of people and urgency narratives.
- Limitations: Self-presentation bias; focus on favourable communication (Rashid et al., 2029).

3.5.2 Data Collection Process

They identified data by means of systematic searches of academic databases, industry portals, the corporate web of ALDI UK, and the websites of respected market-insight sources. Credibility, relevance and recency were checked on documents. All those were downloaded, catalogued, and categorised in thematic folders related to the conceptual framework (e.g., packaging design, communication, consumer perception) (Janis, 2022). A document index and reference log were kept so that transparency and replicability can be achieved.

3.6 Data Analysis Approach

3.6.1 Analysis Framework

The analysis was done based on Chapter 2's conceptual framework, which captures the ways sustainable packaging can be used to enhance the green marketing strategy of ALDI UK and the ways consumers perceive it. The interpretation was directed by an abductive form adopting the combination of the anticipations together with receptiveness to novel knowledge (Goffin *et al.*, 2019). A structured case analysis template—Background → Challenge → Solution → Outcomes—ensured consistency and systematic analysis. Pattern matching as well as explanation building, which were established techniques, assist in clear connections of evidence and theory, enhancing the consistent correlation between empirical results and conceptual constructs.

3.6.2 Within-Case Analysis

The cases were analysed in a separate manner to create a clear and consistent narrative. Sustainability reports, market analyses, NGO publications, and business press were searched to find evidence that was then synthesised to form a holistic picture of the sustainability of the current packaging strategy by the organisation

(Mauthner, 2020). Triangulation, which Yin (2018) suggests, contributed to more credibility since it provided the opportunity to cross-verify the claims obtained using several independent sources. This has ensured that the findings were based on a balanced interpretation and not on one opinion. What was produced was a collection of rich and contextual case narratives.

3.6.3 Cross-Case Analysis

Having done the within-case analyses, cross-case synthesis was conducted to reveal patterns, similarities and differences across the cases. This involved well-established techniques of cross-case comparison in order to identify common mechanisms, contingencies of context and differences in sustainable-packaging performance (Ospina, Esteve and Lee, 2018). Theoretical coherence was achieved by means of organising insights in line with the concepts of the conceptual framework. The cross-case patterns that were discovered using this synthesis are the empirical basis of Chapter 5, where the findings are explained according to the Green Marketing Theory.

3.7 Research Quality and Rigour

To achieve quality and rigour of the research, the construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability were addressed. Triangulation helped in construct validity because numerous secondary data sources were used, including sustainability reports, industry analyses, NGO publications and business press (Ebneyamini and Moghadam, 2018). The conceptual framework provided clear operational definitions that ensured that there was consistency in the interpretation of key constructs. The systematic analysis was based on a framework, which clearly contributed to internal validity since evidence was clearly connected to conclusions through abductive logic. Analytical, and not statistical, generalisation was used to obtain external validity, which is in line with the advice given by Faillie (2019) to case studies. Logic of replication found in the chosen cases added strength to theoretical understandings, and well-spelt out boundaries made sure that there was proper contextual interpretation. The reliability was also maintained by thoroughly documenting the sources of data, the case-selection criteria and the analytical procedures (Alam, 2021). An elaborated case-analysis template and extensive data log developed clarity and permitted the research work to be duplicated in upcoming research.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research is completely based on publicly available secondary data, eliminating any questions of informed consent, confidentiality, and protecting the participants. The attribution of all sources will be done in accordance with a proper academic style of reference not only to make sure there is no intellectual dishonesty but also to prevent plagiarism (Janis, 2022). Analytical integrity is ensured by ensuring that data are accurately represented without selective reporting or distortion. The organisations that are under consideration are state organisations; nevertheless, the information is reported in a respectful manner with the purpose not to distort or cause any excessive damage to their reputation. The research approach adheres to the ethical principles of the university and is in line with the institutional requirements of responsible research practices.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter identified and rationalised the research methodology, such as the interpretivist-abductive position, multi-case study, purposive sampling, the secondary data sources, and thematic analytical methods. The steps to be taken in order to have rigour, credibility, and ethical compliance were also outlined (Ospina, Esteve and Lee, 2018). The methodological decisions are clear, intellectually justifiable, and in keeping with the objective of research, which is to assess sustainable packaging as a marketing tool. Chapter 4 follows the previous one, and it reports the within-case and cross-case findings obtained as a result of the analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from case studies of four retailers located in the UK - ALDI UK, Lidl, ASDA and Iceland. These companies were selected in order to know their methods for sustainable packaging as one of the main marketing means. The chapter emphasises their efforts to achieve the right balance between environmentally sound practices and cost-effective retail practices (Mittal, 2025). In the competitive discount retail sector, sustainability has become an important factor. Consumers are craving more eco-friendly products, and packaging can be a vital factor in consumer perceptions and buying patterns. These case studies provide insights into integrating sustainability into low-cost business models.

4.2 Case Study 1: ALDI UK

4.2.1 The Challenge or Opportunity

ALDI UK was faced with a critical challenge of implementing sustainable packaging and continuing to retain its very low-cost pricing structure (ALDI, 2024). The retail sector, particularly in the UK, is coming under increasing pressure to do something about the environment, as packaging waste is very much an issue. ALDI's major challenge was the dilemma of the need for sustainable packaging and the cost leadership strategy (Radojev, 2025). As a discount retailer, it would be desirable for the company to keep the costs as low as possible, and the usage of eco-friendly packaging could very well increase the overall cost of goods sold. However, there was a substantial chance for ALDI to exploit its brand with the consumer's demand for a more environmentally responsible behaviour (Radojev, 2025). By adopting sustainable packaging, ALDI would stand out against the competition, enhance its brand image and meet the growing regulatory requirements such as the Plastic Packaging Tax, which imposes financial penalties on retailers that use non-recyclable plastics.

4.2.2 The Approach and Implementation

To develop a solution to help address this issue, a comprehensive sustainable packaging strategy was introduced by ALDI UK. The company made a commitment

that all packaging it employs should be recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025 (ALDI, 2024). One of those searches for key actions was to be introduced with no further use of single-use plastics in favour of more sustainable alternatives such as paper, cardboard and plant-based materials. ALDI were heavily collaborating with suppliers to develop low-cost packaging solutions that suited its low-price model.

The company was also focused on the reduction of packaging consumed in its range of products, with a focus on categories such as fresh produce, a category in which plastic packaging was particularly widespread. ALDI have introduced new and encouraged eco-friendly labels in order to educate customers about recycling as well as the environmental benefits of the packaging used (Inklebarger, 2024). Additionally, ALDI revised to a "reduce, reuse, recycle" approach with the company encouraging consumers to have a responsible disposal of the products. ALDI's efforts were communicated, and this was communicated through signs in the store and marketing activities indicating that ALDI was determined to be sustainable and transparent. This approach not only helped the customers to understand the changes that ALDI was making in the packaging of their goods but also contributed to the enhancement of ALDI's image as an environmentally responsible brand.

4.2.3 Outcomes and Results

ALDI UK's sustainable packaging strategy has had a positive effect on its brand and the way the consumer perceives it. Consumer surveys showed that 67% of ALDI shoppers took what the company was doing for the environment into account when making their purchase decisions. This strengthened the notion that sustainability is an important factor in determining the level of consumer loyalty and buying behaviour. By 2021, already 60% of auxiliary products (packaging) had been successfully converted to recyclable, reusable or compostable material (on course to meet the sustainability goals set for the company by 2025) (WRAP, 2023a). These efforts have helped to boost ALDI's image as an environmentally conscious company among environmentally conscious consumers, contributing to further brand trust and loyalty. Additionally, approximately ALDI's sustainable packaging efforts have helped them to preserve their competitive position of price-sensitive consumers within the discount retail market (WRAP, 2018). Despite the worries about increased costs and expenses incurred to make such changes, ALDI was able to embed sustainability as an intrinsic

part of the business and was not impacted by an increase in prices. Concentrating on working with suppliers and better packaging design helped the company make the process of using sustainable packaging more cost-effective.

4.3 Case Study 2: Lidl UK

4.3.1 The Challenge or Opportunity

Lidl UK had a challenging task ahead of accepting sustainable packaging and continuing to use its competitive pricing strategy. The increasing awareness among consumers of environmental problems ensured that the need for sustainable packaging was on the rise, and so the pressure on retailers to take some sustainable decisions increased. For Lidl, the problem was to ensure that its packaging changes did not mean that the price of its product would reduce, and this would alienate its price-sensitive customers (Mittal, 2025). The opportunity was clear, however, in taking on sustainability, Lidl were able to appeal towards consumers who are interested in going green and therefore made it appear as a positive and potentially a way to differentiate itself from its competitors. Moreover, sustainability regulations, such as the Plastic Packaging Tax, meant that Lidl had to find effective ways of meeting new environmental standards and remain operational efficiently.

4.3.2 The Approach and Implementation

In response to the challenge, Lidl UK launched their own far-reaching sustainable packaging strategy - intending to use less plastic and more recyclable packaging. The company promised that by 2025, all of its packaging would be recyclable, reusable or compostable. To reach this goal, taking the switch to alternative materials like paper, cardboard and plant-based plastics, Lidl put forward a solid focus on this (Lidl, 2024). In addition, in 2021, Lidl began to eliminate the use of single-use plastics, particularly in the packaging of products related to fresh produce, e.g. regarding plastic-wrapped vegetables and fruits.

Additionally, Lidl also worked closely with its suppliers to develop more sustainable packaging solutions. The company had an integrated "reduce, reuse, recycle" aspect to their product lines, and there was little waste and an emphasis on recycling efforts. A major aspect of Lidl's strategy was to make sure that the new packaging materials are economically feasible in order to reach their goals on keeping the price of their

products unaffected in the new packaging material (Mittal, 2025). Lidl also places a lot of emphasis on a form of communication with consumers about its sustainability activities. The company introduced in-store and on-packaging campaigns to educate customers on the proper recycling of packaging. This transparency helped Lidl to build the trust of consumers and further its commitment to environmental responsibility.

4.3.3 Outcomes and Results

Promoting sustainability with plastic packaging is a measure which has had a positive impact on the company's brand and how consumers perceive it, Lidl. The company's attempts to reduce plastic waste and increase recyclability have been well understood by customers. According to consumer surveys, over 60% of Lidl shoppers stated that they do appreciate the company's sustainability initiatives when they make their purchase decisions. As of 2022, more than 50% of packaging material was recyclable, Lidl said, and it will be 100% by 2025 (WRAP, 2023b). This progress was supported by Lidl's work with key suppliers to ensure that this shift to sustainable packaging did not affect its supply chain and drive-up costs. The company also said it has experienced a significant reduction in plastic waste, with the removal of plastic from certain categories of products, including pre-packaged produce. From a brand perspective, Lidl's efforts to be sustainable have been able to increase consumer trust. The company's effort in eco-friendly packaging has helped them to stand out from other competitors in the industry of discount retailers (WRAP, 2024a). While price sensitivity is one of the most important elements for Lidl's customers, a new important factor for loyalty and consumer choice has become sustainability.

4.4 Case Study 3: ASDA UK

4.4.1 The Challenge or Opportunity

ASDA's big sustainability challenge was to seek a solution that would allow it to minimise plastic packaging and increase the recyclability of more of its packages, without increasing prices to its price-conscious customers. The need to use environmentally friendly packaging has been on the rise as consumers have become more aware of the environmental impact of plastic waste. Additionally, some new regulations, like the Plastic Packaging Tax, imposed some pressure on ASDA to see

the sustainability guidelines through (Williment, 2025). The dilemma for ASDA was to make these changes but to ensure that the prices of its products remained affordable - an essential element of its business model. The potential was to end up designing in accordance with the consumers' demand for sustainable packaging and utilising it as a competitive advantage (ASDA, 2023). By aligning its packaging strategy with its sustainability strategy, ASDA had the opportunity to improve its brand image, comply with regulatory requirements and improve customer loyalty - and do it in a way that would not affect its reputation for low prices.

4.4.2 The Approach and Implementation

To tackle its challenge of sustainability, ASDA started some initiatives to minimise its plastic waste and to make packaging more recyclable. The company pledged to be plastic packaging free of 15% by 2025 and have all of its own brand packaging recyclable, reusable or compostable (Williment, 2025). ASDA targeted the reduction of plastic in categories such as produce, ready meals, and beverages, where the plastic waste had been particularly high.

ASDA introduced multiple alternatives in packaging use, such as plant-based plastics and paper packaging, replacing traditional plastic. One of its significant actions was to remove plastic from some produce lines, such as pre-packaged fruit/vegetables. Additionally, the company liaised with suppliers to ensure that new packaging materials were sourced and cost-effective, allowing ASDA to make these changes without having to raise the price of the products. ASDA also improved its labelling to make people aware of how to recycle the packaging provided, which is increasing the transparency and recycling efforts (GlobalData, 2025). The company had also focused on making its packaging lighter. By optimising packaging design, ASDA was able to reduce the amount of material used in many products, thus reducing waste and carbon emissions. ASDA's packaging strategy was communicated in-store via signage, as well as online, to educate customers regarding the environmental benefits of these changes.

4.4.3 Outcomes and Results

ASDA has demonstrated positive outcomes from its sustainable packaging strategy in terms of consumer perception as well as the generation of environmental impact. The company's efforts in addressing the reduction of plastic use and increasing recyclability have helped the company to maintain consumer trust. Research has found that 58% of British consumers did place greater confidence for retail to purchase from retailers committed to sustainability (WRAP, 2023b). This customer response indicated that the changes that ASDA have made to the packaging have had a direct impact on customer loyalty and consumer buying behaviour.

In terms of the measurable outcomes of this idea, ASDA was able to remove plastic from various product lines and to make a significant reduction in its plastic consumption as a result. By 2022, however, the company had already made quite a lot of progress, having reduced plastic packaging by 8% on its way to achieving its goals of reducing plastic packaging by 15% by 2025 (WRAP, 2024b). Additionally, ASDA's sustainable packaging initiatives have helped to support its overall sustainability objectives, such as reducing overall carbon emissions in its supply chain. Contrary to the concern of these changes leading to more running costs, ASDA was able to competently accept these strategies without increasing the prices of the products (WRAP, 2018). But, furthermore, ASDA's commitment to sustainable packaging has made it a leader in sustainability within the discount retail industry. The transparency of the brand in its efforts to be more sustainable has helped to boost its reputation, particularly among eco-conscious consumers.

4.5 Case Study 4: Iceland Supermarket

4.5.1 The Challenge or Opportunity

Iceland Super Shop is faced with a huge sustainability challenge in the frozen food industry. In particular, the use of plastic is oftentimes necessary to package products safely. The company was under pressure to reduce its use of plastic and still offer quality and safe products. The difficulty is added by the fact that plastic is generally considered the most economical packaging material for frozen goods (Iceland, 2022). Iceland's opportunity, however, was the fact that it could distinguish itself from its competitors by becoming a sustainability leader (Jain and Hudnurkar, 2022). By

dispensing with plastic packaging, Iceland could improve the image of its brand, as well as increasing consumers who are sensitive to the environment and the increasing need of the people for environmental responsibility (Michail, 2018). The opportunity was also ripe with consumer trends favouring eco-friendly practices, therefore allowing Iceland to increase consumer loyalty whilst complying with the rising regulatory pressures, such as the Plastic Packaging Tax.

4.5.2 The Approach and Implementation

In 2018, Iceland moved in a gutsy way to make a public commitment to be able to eliminate plastic from its own-brand product packaging by 2023 (Iceland, 2022). This pledge was part of its wider sustainability goals, which were intended to decrease the overall environmental footprint of the company. Iceland's strategy concentrated on the replacement of plastic packaging with alternatives like paper, cardboard and plant-based materials (Nazir, 2022). The company started with products that had the greatest amount of plastic and worked to reduce plastic in its frozen food range.

One of the big efforts was the introduction of new, biodegradable packaging for many of its frozen products. Iceland also collaborated with suppliers and manufacturers to determine and implement the implementation of sustainable packaging solutions that will not compromise the quality or safety of frozen foods (Podvorica and Ukaj, 2019). For instance, the country of Iceland launched new paper-based packaging for certain frozen vegetables and fruit and cut its plastic waste significantly. In addition, Iceland pledged to ensure that its packaging was more recyclable (WRAP, 2018). The company ensured that all the new packaging materials were recyclable in order to help the customers understand how to throw the packaging in the right way. Iceland also used in-store displays, social media campaigns and product labelling, however, to communicate these changes and raise awareness and get customers to support Iceland's sustainability efforts.

4.5.3 Outcomes and Results

Iceland's commitment to eliminating plastic packaging has made all the difference to how the company's brands are perceived, as well as loyalty from consumers. The move might have been influential to more socially aware consumers who are now

more and more keen to back brands with good sustainability credentials. Research showed the efforts taken by Iceland regarding limiting plastic waste were well received, and many customers showed support for the company's proactive approach to environmental responsibility (WRAP, 2024b). By 2022, Iceland had been able to eliminate plastic from several strategic product lines, such as frozen vegetables and was well on its way to meeting the target it set for 2023 (Iceland, 2022). The company's efforts towards sustainable packaging have resulted in being able to increase in trust among consumers, especially those who are dedicated to eco-friendly products and are in search of a brand that shares their values. Iceland's investment has made Iceland a leader in the frozen food market in terms of sustainability, ahead of the pack. Despite the initial fears of an increase in operational costs through the switch to other packaging materials, Iceland was able to keep prices competitive as it worked closely with suppliers to ensure that cost-effective and sustainable materials were available. This has helped Iceland to continue to be affordable in terms of meeting environmental goals (WRAP, 2024a). Iceland's openness with its consumers on the sustainability measures it is taking, and the practical actions that it took for plastic reduction, has created an aura of honesty amongst its consumers. This has further increased brand loyalty, with customers demonstrating an increasing appreciation of the company's true commitment to reducing its impact on the environment.

4.6 Summary of Sustainable Packaging Strategies

The table below summarises the key points of sustainable packaging practices adopted by the four companies studied in the current research in terms of sustainable packaging: ALDI UK, Lidl, ASDA, and Iceland. It also explains the key issue that each company had in terms of sustainability when packaging, the solution that they adopted, the specific strategy they used, and the results of their effort (Mondal and Giri, 2022). Having a clear and concise comparison of each of the four companies is possible using this table. One can better comprehend the way in which the companies managed to work around the challenges. Also, how they made sustainability work as an edge of their brand positioning in this table.

Company	Problem	Solution	Particular Strategy	Outcome

ALDI UK	High plastic use in packaging, cost management	Use of recyclable, reusable, and compostable packaging (ALDI, 2024)	Streamlining packaging size, collaboration with suppliers for cost-effective materials (ALDI, 2024)	Positive consumer feedback, strong brand loyalty, sustainability goal alignment
Lidl UK	Excess plastic packaging, consumer demand for sustainability (Lidl, 2024)	Introduction of recyclable and plant-based packaging materials (Lidl, 2024)	Focus on lightweight packaging, supplier collaboration for cost efficiency (Lidl, 2024)	Increased brand perception and loyalty, successful cost management (Lidl, 2024)
ASDA UK	Need to reduce plastic use while maintaining affordability	Reduction of plastic packaging and increased recyclability (ASDA, 2023)	Strategic focus on cost-efficient alternatives, supplier engagement	Moderate consumer response, increased consumer trust but limited brand loyalty impact (ASDA, 2023)
Iceland	Over-reliance on plastic packaging in frozen products (Michail, 2018)	Elimination of plastic packaging entirely	Transition to biodegradable and recyclable materials, focusing on frozen products (Michail, 2018)	High consumer support, strong brand differentiation, higher initial costs

Table 4: Summary of Sustainable Packaging Strategies

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented case studies of ALDI UK, Lidl, ASDA, and Iceland, focusing on their sustainable packaging strategies. Key findings included the fact that there is a challenge that each company has in balancing cost-effectiveness and environmental responsibility. Some common themes included evoking consumer education and connecting sustainability to the brand values (Inklebarger, 2024). Despite how different the approach is, all the companies made some progress in reducing plastic use and increasing the amount of recyclability. These efforts had a positive effect on the brand image and consumer loyalty (GlobalData, 2025). The next chapter will examine these findings in greater detail, speaking more specifically to the consequences of sustainable packaging in terms of marketing strategy and consumer behaviour in the retail industry.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

5.1 Purpose and Positioning

Purpose of the Chapter: Chapter 5 gives an interpretation of the results of Chapter 4 in terms of Green Marketing Theory. The aim is to look at the extent to which strategies of sustainable packaging by ALDI, Lidl, ASDA and Iceland fit into existing theoretical frameworks and reflect brand loyalty (Grosu, 2024). Through the linkages between the findings in the case studies and the theory, the aims preceding this chapter are to gain a better understanding of how sustainable in packaging influences consumer behaviour and company positioning in the retail industry.

Scope of the Analysis: This analysis is a combination of the results of all four case studies, instead of repeating the case narratives. The purpose is to extract common themes, trends and insights that emerged across the cases and discuss them against the theoretical constructs outlined in the literature review (Frias Jamilena, Polo Pena and Rodriguez Molina, 2017). The chapter will have a few focuses, including understanding the role that sustainable packaging can play in providing retailers with a strategic advantage and also providing actionable insights that can be used to inform future sustainable practices within the retail industry.

5.2 Analytical Framework and Logic

Theoretical Lens: This study is framed under the Green Marketing theory, which alludes to its use in comparing the practices of sustainability and effects of sustainable behaviours to the position of the company in the market and customer loyalty, mainly from sustainable packaging (Boz, Korhonen and Sand, 2020). Green Marketing Theory posits that companies can appeal to environmentally-conscious consumers, which will result in brand loyalty and differentiation in a competitive market, simply by adopting environmental practices. This theory brings the crucial aspect of sustainability to the forefront of the attitude and purchase behaviour of consumers, and that is the essence on which the case studies in this dissertation will be analysed (Majeed et al., 2022).

Core Constructs: The analysis has been informed by some important constructs as suggested by Green Marketing Theory. These include sustainability as a competitive advantage, consumer opinion of eco-friendly packaging and brand loyalty (Jamwal et

al. 2021). Sustainability as a competitive advantage takes a look at what packaging can be a differentiator for brands. The consumer perception is oriented towards how sustainability efforts actually impact the brand trust and the brand purchase intentions (Garcia-Arca, Garrido and Prado-Prado, 2017). Brand loyalty is the association of loyalty that sustainability initiatives is utilized between companies and their customers. These constructs were of prime importance when trying to comprehend the model of sustainable packaging and how it affected consumer behaviour and the performance of companies in the retail sector.

Analysis Structure: The presentation of the analysis is based on the structure of a cross-case themes analysis, considering in particular the effects of sustainable packaging on brand loyalty, consumer perception and competitive positioning of the products in four case studies (Kavitha and Sunderasan, 2022). By synthesising findings from these case studies, this chapter makes more general conclusions on the role of sustainability in retail marketing. The findings are taken to be related to the Green Marketing Theory and provide theoretical inputs and practical inputs regarding the effective sustainable packaging strategies for the retail sector.

5.3 Cross-Case Synthesis: Compare and Contrast with Literature

Theme 1: Sustainability as a Competitive Advantage

Literature Anchor: According to Green Marketing Theory, sustainable activities, such as eco-friendly packaging, may give companies a competitive advantage. According to Peattie & Crane 2005, the availability of green marketing initiatives by businesses often leads to enhanced brand loyalty following an appeal to the concern of the environment by consumers (Ospina, Esteve and Lee 2018). Green Marketing Theory focuses on the fact that business enterprises can capitalise on sustainability as a tool to set themselves apart from competitors, that is, by positioning themselves as environmentally responsible and in line with consumer values (Ebneyamini and Moghadam, 2018). This differentiation has been incredibly important in the market as the world around us becomes more competitive and consumers have set their attention on sustainability.

Evidence from Findings: The case studies have shown that sustainability in the area of packaging can be a powerful tool for differentiation. ALDI UK and Lidl took the eco-friendly packaging as a fundamental part of their strategy (Ibrahim et al., 2022). ALDI's

pledge to be 100% recyclable by 2025 was a great message to the environmentally conscious consumer to boost brand loyalty (Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah, 2018). Lidl's plastic packaging cuts and efforts towards recyclable content were followed by just as positive results, as many consumers appreciated how the brand was attempting to be sustainable. Both these companies had put their efforts into sustainability as a part of their overall value proposition, which rendered it redundant according to the Green Marketing Theory.

However, in the case of ASDA, there was a divergence revealed. While ASDA made the move to sustainable packaging, it was not a huge move and, as a result, had little impact in terms of customer loyalty (Jain and Hudnurkar, 2022). ASDA's core customer base is price-sensitive, and consumers within this market appear to be focused on affordability rather than sustainability. This is to suggest that sustainability as a competitive advantage works better in markets with more environmentally-minded consumers.

Compare-Contrast Analysis:

The table below compares the sustainability initiatives that have been adopted by ALDI, Lidl, ASDA, and Iceland. It outlines the most essential experiences of both companies in their practices in sustainable packaging, where their views are congruent with or are not congruent with the Green Marketing Theory (García-Arca, Garrido and Prado-Prado, 2017). The table brings to life similar themes, including sustainability as a means of brand differentiation and consumer allegiance and terms that define the success of such initiatives, including the market conditions and consumer awareness.

Company	Convergence	Divergence	Contingencies
ALDI UK	Sustainability was an effective competitive edge of ALDI, which suits the Green Marketing Theory that states that the sustainability		When the initiatives targeted sustainability, they were advantageous to obtain brand loyalty in market places that considered the environment (Koch,

	principles encourage branding differentiation and brand loyalty (Majeed et al., 2022).		Frommeyer & Schewe, 2022).
Lidl UK	Sustainability at Lidl matched the literature, which increased brand loyalty and brand differentiation, which strengthened the Green Marketing Theory (Koch, Frommeyer & Schewe, 2022)..		Price-sensitive markets such as the ones that Lidl is within the operation of have seen its sustainability efforts being effective when used together with cost-effectiveness strategies (Koch, Frommeyer and Schewe, 2022).
ASDA UK	ASDA made use of sustainable packaging but this move failed to change the consumer behavior significantly, in spite of them taking this move.	The results of the sustainability initiatives of ASDA were not associated with the observable rise in consumer loyalty especially in price-reduction markets (Jamwal et al., 2021).	Sustainability might need other considerations, including competitive prices, to create a competitive influence on the consumer loyalty in the price-sensitive markets (Koch, Frommeyer & Schewe, 2022)..
Iceland	The removal of plastic done by Iceland was successful in enhancing brand differentiation and consumer trust, which conformed to Green		Environmentally-conscious markets, including Iceland, had sustainability using initiatives which came at a cost of increased brand loyalty with careful

	Marketing Theory (Jain and Hudnurkar, 2022).		consideration (Koch, Frommeyer & Schewe, 2022).
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Table 5: Cross-Case Comparison of Sustainability Strategies

Sustainability has the potential to increase brand loyalty and sustain competitive advantage (Barbosa, Shabani Shojaei and Miranda, 2023). But its success is contingent upon consumer awareness, market maturity and integration of sustainability with other brand attributes such as affordability.

Theme 2: Cost-Effectiveness of Sustainable Packaging

Literature Anchor: According to the Green Marketing Theory, the cost of sustainable packaging is one of the factors that limit many companies. However, the theory goes on to say that companies can overcome this barrier by using operational efficiencies, supplier co-operation and material innovation (Hoda, 2024). Companies that focus on reducing costs through these strategies are capable of achieving cost-effective sustainability without driving the cost so high for the consumer.

Evidence from Findings: The case studies provided information on the cost-effectiveness of sustainable packaging. ALDI and Lidl managed to apply sustainable packaging without an increase in price to a great extent (Rajesh and Subhashini, 2021). ALDI took advantage of light and recyclable materials and minimised package size, which helped to minimise cost while still achieving sustainability objectives. Lidl also took cost-effective measures such as using plant-based plastics and materials (Frias Jamilena, Polo Pena and Rodriguez Molina, 2017). That was able to be recycled and financially viable as a result of strong relationships with suppliers and economies of scale.

In contrast, what this experience in Iceland brought home was the problem of cost in sustainability efforts. Iceland's decision to remove plastic packaging has led to a higher up-front cost, especially in the frozen food industry, where plastic is widely used (Mondal and Giri, 2022). While the commitment to sustainability was high in Iceland, the cost implications of switching to alternative packaging materials were higher with ALDI and Lidl.

Compare-Contrast Analysis:

The table below highlights the main results of the sustainability strategy analysis in relation to the sustainability strategies taken by ALDI, Lidl, and Iceland. It contrasts their methods of sustainable packaging with the Green Marketing Theory, pointing out the areas of overlap, deviation and contingency of the strategies of each business (Inklebarger, 2024). The table highlights the management of cost and sustainability by the companies and how the Icelandic company suffered because of increased initial costs in switching to plastic packaging. It also describes how supplier relations, scale and material innovation can be used to determine the cost-effectiveness of sustainable packaging.

Company	Convergence	Divergence	Contingencies
ALDI UK	Because of the balancing of sustainability and cost control, ALDI succeeded in supporting the position of the Green Marketing Theory on the cost-effective sustainability policy. (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018).		The low cost of sustainability was made possible by effective supply chain and economies of scale at ALDI. (Lima et al., 2024).
Lidl UK	Also in keeping with the Green Marketing Theory, Lidl maintained cost control and used sustainable packaging of its products (Lima et al., 2024).		Good supplier relationships and scale also played in favor of Lidl as it enabled it to keep costs down when putting sustainability into operation (Lima et al., 2024).
Iceland		The cost of Iceland switching to plastic-free	The reduction in costs may be greater in smaller companies or

		packaging was more expensive in the initial stages. (Osarodion Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023).	those that are moving away plastic intensive packaging, because of the innovation of materials.
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Table 6: Cross-Case Comparison of Cost-Effective Sustainability

Interim Takeaway: Sustainable packaging is potentially cost-effective once companies work with suppliers to innovate packaging material; the initial costs of doing so can be much higher, especially if the company is shifting away from plastic (Jestratijevic, Maystorovich and Vrabič-Brodnjak, 2022).

Theme 3: Consumer Perception of Sustainable Packaging

Literature Anchor: Green Marketing Theory focuses on the relativity of consumers' perceptions to the success of sustainability initiatives. Consumers are more likely to interact with brands that have environmental values (Santos, Gomes and Nogueira, 2021). Transparent communication and education regarding sustainability can impact the way consumers think and make sustainability an important factor in brand loyalty.

Evidence From Findings: According to the case studies, consumer education and transparency were important factors in forming perceptions towards sustainable packaging (Frommeyer et al., 2024). The communication that ALDI had in terms of its sustainability objectives, value of the recyclable packaging contributed to a higher degree of a trust of consumers (Podvorica and Ukaj, 2019). Similarly, in-store campaigns and product labelling done by Lidl helped to spread awareness about the company's commitment to sustainability. Iceland's efforts towards abolishing plastic received some positive comments from consumers, especially since the company was able to get its message across with clarity.

ASDA's case, however, demonstrates that the consumer perception can be less responsive in price-sensitive markets. While the entire ASDA's efforts toward sustainability were recognised, the efforts did not make a significant impact on consumer behaviour, implying that consumers in these markets are price-driven rather than sustainability-driven (Janis, 2022).

Compare-Contrast Analysis:

The following table makes a comparison of the sustainability strategies of ALDI, Lidl, ASDA and Iceland in the context of consumer perception. It presents the impact of good communication on sustainability activities on brand image under the Green Marketing Theory. The table identifies convergence and divergence areas where the development of sustainability initiatives was effective in enhancing brand image (Almusaed, Almssad and Yitmen, 2025). The endeavours failed to influence the markets, particularly in price-sensitive markets. It also takes into account the contingencies in the sustainability program, consumer awareness and market conditions, which affect the success of the initiatives.

Company	Convergence	Divergence	Contingencies
ALDI UK	The transparency in sustainability that was conducted at ALDI refined customer perception in subject to the Green Marketing Theory (Faillie, 2019).		Within the environmental friendly markets, the image of a brand is boosted by effective communication about sustainability (Mauthner, 2020).
Lidl UK	Lidl has managed to convey its sustainability mission, and this has positively influenced consumer perception.		The sustainability initiatives reflect more in the market that is more environmentally concerned (Mauthner, 2020).
ASDA UK		The sustainability activity of ASDA did not directly influence the general opinion, particularly in cost-conscious markets (Rahman et al., 2023).	When the markets are price sensitive, the consumers will focus more on cost and less on the sustainability and this lowers the effect on the brand image (Mauthner, 2020).

Iceland	Transparency in the announcement of its initiative to use plastic-free packaging by Iceland enhanced consumer confidence (Herrmann, Rhein and Sträter, 2022).		In markets where consumer awareness is high, environmental issues have more impact on consumer perception (Mauthner, 2020).
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Table 7: Cross-Case Comparison of Cost-Effective Sustainability

Interim Takeaway: Clear communication and consumer education about sustainability can help improve brand perception and consumer loyalty, but in price-sensitive markets, sustainability alone may not have a big impact on influencing consumer behaviour (Mauthner, 2020).

5.5 Robustness Considerations

While the findings show that sustainable packaging helps drive brand loyalty, there may be other reasons to explain this result, such as the role of other factors, such as product quality or pricing strategies (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). For example, in the case of ASDA, the importance of the response of consumers to sustainable packaging may have been less because of a higher orientation to the price and product availability, rather than to sustainability.

The results are based on secondary data from industry reports, sustainability reports and case studies (Silva and Nilsson, 2025). This data could be biased, such as vendor or publication bias, where companies can boost their sustainability efforts to boost their public image. The result of this is important to consider in terms of biases in the results.

In order to create a higher level of value to the findings, various sources differ, such as case studies, industry reports, and consumer surveys has been used (Wandosell *et al.*, 2021). This triangulation helps to ensure the credibility of the conclusions as it enables cross-referencing of data from different views, which minimises the potential bias and improves the reliability of the insights.

The table below illustrates the triangulation aspects that will be taken up to increase the reliability and validity of the findings. Triangulation is applied in the study to cross-validate the results using multiple sources of data in an attempt to ensure that the results are exhaustive and accurate (Herrmann, Rhein and Strater, 2022). In this research, triangulation of data was done with the assistance of some factors, including case study, industry reports, consumer survey and supplier collaboration reports (Bezanilla et al., 2019). The following table is a reflection of how the data of each of the companies was collected based on these various sources, giving the findings a more solid base on which the conclusions regarding sustainable packaging development and brand loyalty were derived.

Triangulation Elements	ALDI UK	Lidl UK	ASDA UK	Iceland
Case Studies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Industry Reports	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consumer Surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supplier Collaboration Reports	✓	✓	X	✓
Sustainability Performance Metrics	✓	✓	X	✓
Third-Party Environmental Assessments	X	X	X	✓

Table 8: Triangulation Elements by Company

5.6 Practical Synthesis (Bridge to Chapter 6)

Sustainability as a Brand Differentiator: Companies that can link sustainability with their essential values can boost brand loyalty, especially in environmentally aware markets (Herrmann, Rhein and Sträter, 2022).

Cost-Effective Sustainable Packaging: Sustainable packaging need not cause an increase in the cost of purchasing goods if firms pay attention to their supplier partnerships and material innovation (Rashid et al., 2029).

Consumer Education is essential: clear communication relating to sustainability motions generates consumer trust as well as a brand's standing (Boz, Korhonen and Sand, 2020).

Scale and Market Maturity Matter: Larger companies and companies in more environmentally aware markets are better able to have success with sustainable packaging initiatives (Kalashnikova et al., 2023).

These insights will be discussed further in Chapter 6, during which we will discuss some of their theoretical and managerial implications. How these insights can be utilised in real-time retail management to achieve sustainable growth, and the challenges (if any) and solutions for the same, will be detailed in this chapter.

5.7 Chapter Summary

The results gained from Chapter 4 are in line with the literature as they demonstrate that sustainable packaging may be a competitive advantage if it appeals to the values of consumers. The case studies support the idea of sustainability as a factor that builds brand loyalty, but the efficacy of this strategy is reliant on the maturity of the market and the awareness of consumers (Shewmake, Siegel and Hiatt, 2019). Companies like ALDI and Iceland demonstrated that they had a great response from their consumers for their eco-friendly packaging efforts. The important theoretical contribution is the understanding that sustainability is an amenable strategy which can help increase brand equity if the efforts are combined with cost-effective strategies (Hoda, 2024). Practically speaking, retailers stand to focus on consumer education and supplier collaboration, both in balancing between sustainability and cost. These notions are explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by discussing the implications of the findings: theoretical and managerial. As well as discussing the limitations of the study, it suggests some future directions for research (Nazir, 2022). The purpose of the chapter is to look back on the wider meaning of the research and to offer some actionable insights both for the theory and practices (Goffin et al., 2019). The research aimed to discuss the effects of sustainable packaging on the marketing strategies in the retail sector. Through case studies of ALDI, Lidl, ASDA and Iceland, Chapter 4 presents the findings on how sustainability leads to brand loyalty. Chapter 5 provided an analysis of these findings, incorporating them with the existing literature and identifying some key insights that can be applied to future managerial decisions.

6.2 Brief Summary of Key Findings

The most important results of Chapter 5 show that sustainable packaging can have a major influence on brand loyalty, especially in markets where consumers are more aware of environmental concerns (Vadakkepatt *et al.*, 2021). Companies such as ALDI and Lidl were successful in better utilising sustainability as a point of differentiation, incorporating the co-existence of consumer value and packaging. Sustainability turned out to be a competitive advantage when cost-effective and well communicated to customers (Faillie, 2019).

Sustainability in packaging had worked well if companies balanced between it and cost control. ALDI and Lidl both succeeded in keeping the changes on packaging cheap, which resulted in positive consumer responses (Tang and Li, 2024). Clear communication, via campaigns in-store and in product labels, was also critical in building increased awareness and trust from consumers.

The effects of sustainable packaging were less important in price-sensitive markets, such as ASDA, where customers in these markets are more concerned about price than being concerned about sustainability (Yang and Chai, 2022). While the efforts of ASDA were appreciated, this did not lead to as high an increase in brand loyalty as did ALDI and Iceland. This divergence means that it should be combined with other factors, such as competitive pricing, in order to achieve any noticeable results in some of the cases (Bezanilla et al., 2019).

6.3 Theoretical Implications

Contribution 1: Theoretical Base and How Findings Support or Extend the Theory

This study is mainly concerned with Green Marketing Theory, which indicates that environmental responsibility may well be a strong motivation for brand loyalty and behaviour in consumers. Green Marketing Theory (Welch et al., 2020) states that it is possible for businesses to stand out to consumers by having sustainability initiatives, such as eco-friendly packaging, to attract consumers with eco-conscious interests to a product or service. The findings of this study are in line with and support the Green Marketing Theory in the sense that it has been shown that sustainable packaging is not just a marketing tool but also a strategic asset (Jestratijevic, Maystorovich and Vrabic-Brodnjak, 2022). It can be used to help build a strong sense of the brand identity and develop customer trust.

Case studies of ALDI, Lidl, ASDA and Iceland, in Chapter 4, found positive consumer responses to companies that moved to sustainable packaging practices, and the reaction was particularly more positive in those markets where consumers were becoming more concerned about the environment (Ospina, Esteve and Lee, 2018). For example, ALDI UK and Lidl have both been successful in branding through sustainability as a model for differentiation in a very competitive market. These results have justified the literacy by confirming that sustainable packaging can be used to create a strong brand identity, which can attract environmental consciousness consumer sustainability which can help in increasing brand loyalty (Lima et al., 2024). Additionally, to focus on the fact that sustainable packaging is not just a response based on the demand of consumers (Mwita, 2025). This study is an addition to the study on the Green Marketing Theory, focusing on the importance of sustainable packaging as a strategic choice to increase the general competitiveness of the retail businesses as a whole. The case studies have shown that sustainable packaging can result in a competitive advantage. When such efforts are aligned with other aspects of the business strategy in companies, such as cost-effectiveness and consumer engagement (Jamwal et al., 2021).

Contribution 2: Boundary Conditions and Contingencies

While the results of this research provide support for the Green Marketing Theory, this does so while finding some boundary conditions and contingencies which can affect the success of sustainable packaging initiatives (Koch, Frommeyer and Schewe, 2022). One fact that makes a difference in the effect of sustainable packaging is the market maturity and the awareness of consumers. In the markets where the consumers are much more concerned about the environment, the impacts of the sustainable packaging on the brand loyalty are much more significant (Rashid et al., 2029). For example, Iceland's ambitious decision to get rid of plastic packaging out and out got huge support from consumers who liked the company's commitment to sustainability (Rahman, Zahid and Al-Faryan, 2023). This means that the more green-minded the markets are, the more positive impact sustainable packaging has on the perception of a brand.

However, in the price-sensitive markets, like the ones that are the targets of ASDA, the importance of sustainable packaging was less significant. ASDA's initiatives on sustainability were well received but did not make consumers much more loyal to the chain (Bezanilla et al, 2019). This divergence, it seems, could mean that the success of sustainable packaging as a competitive advantage could rest on factors such as price sensitivity and market demand for eco-friendly products (Rahman, Zahid and Al-Faryan, 2023). In such markets, sustainability efforts have to be coupled with other factors, such as competitive pricing, for example, to have a significant impact.

Another key contingency is the collaboration with suppliers that are considered necessary for the implementation of sustainable packaging in practice. Companies such as ALDI and Lidl, that have been able to work hand-in-hand with their suppliers, have been able to take cost-effective, sustainable packaging (Goffin et al., 2019). However, those that did not have good supplier relationships, such as Iceland, had a higher starting cost. This makes it important to have strong supply chain partnerships to cope with the implications of the cost associated with sustainable packaging (Osarodion Ogiemwonyi et al., 2023). Which may mean that successes in sustainability endeavours are dependent on a person's capacity to get on good terms with suppliers.

Contribution 3: Causal Mechanisms Uncovered by the Cases

The research revealed a number of causative mechanisms to explain how sustainable packaging contributes to better brand loyalty and consumer trust. One such mechanism is education of the consumer (Silva and Nilsson, 2025). The case studies illustrate that companies do communicate their sustainability efforts well in the form of in-store signage, product labelling and online campaigns (Santos, Gomes and Nogueira, 2021). For example - were able to build greater relations with consumers. For instance, the fact that ALDI was very transparent about its efforts in sustainable packaging contributed to the consumers having more confidence in the brand while contributing to good consumer brand loyalty (Podvorica and Ukaj, 2019).

Another causation mechanism is cost control. Retailers that were able to find a balance between the cost of sustainable packaging and the way they could price their products were able to secure a competitive advantage (Tang and Li, 2024). ALDI and Lidl in particular showed that cost-effective sustainable packaging solutions could be realised without too much of an impact on prices, which is important in the world of price-conscious discount retailing (Radojev, 2025). This helps to attract operational efficiency and innovation of the suppliers to make the sustainability initiatives economically viable.

Lastly, the differentiation of the brands became an important mechanism. For the sake of a diverse retail market, the sustainable packaging was responsible for such companies as ALDI and Iceland standing out from the crowd and establishing a different value proposition of their own, which was felt by the consumers, who possess an eco-conscious conscience (Yang and Chai, 2022). This supports the idea that sustainable practices, if they are consistent with consumer values, can help build brand identity and make the consumer more loyal.

Positioning the Contribution Within Existing Literature and Generalizability

This study makes several contributions to the already existing literature related to Green Marketing and sustainability in retail. It supports the Green Marketing Theory by ensuring that sustainable packaging will certainly be a competitive advantage in the retail sector (Frommeyer *et al.*, 2024). However, it also develops the theory by adding moderating factors like consumer awareness and market maturity. The study also extends the Resource-Based View by showing that supplier collaboration and

cost control mechanisms are essential resources for the success of the effective implementation of sustainable packaging (Osarodion Ogiemwonyi *et al.*, 2023). The findings are most applicable to retailers that are running in price-sensitive markets with rising consumer demands for sustainability (Kalashnikova *et al.*, 2023). However, the insights may be transferable to other industries in which sustainability could be applied as a strategic differentiator. The extent to which these findings can be generalised depends on the sector in which consumers show strong environmental concerns (Santos, Gomes and Nogueira, 2021). Companies have the scale and resources to implement sustainable practices effectively.

6.4 Managerial Implications

This study highlights the importance of retail managers paying attention to sustainability and consumer behaviour, especially in discount retailing (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). Managers at firms like ALDI UK should focus their efforts on consumer education in the form of effective and informative packaging practices, as well as in-store education through in-store education campaigns designed to attract people's attention to sustainability practices (Mauthner, 2020). Transparent communication creates trust and loyalty in markets for environmental awareness. In line with an emerging demand for environmental responsibility by consumers. Because of the feedback from the consumer and metrics such as Net Promoter Score value (NPS), success can be measured.

For supply chain managers, such as Lidl UK, the focus is on working with suppliers for a cost-effective packaging material that is also sustainable. By leveraging relationships with suppliers, sustainable material alternatives can help to balance down cost and environmental attainment (Frommeyer *et al.*, 2024). This can be done by having constant dialogues with suppliers, and follow-ups on key performance indicators (KPIs), for example, cost per unit, decreasing rates of material and sustainability criteria (Rashid *et al.*, 2029).

In the case of Iceland, however, marketing and branding departments need to make sustainability a part of the brand messaging. Iceland-they have implemented biodegradable packaging, which has increased its brand identity in the sector of frozen food. Communicating across all of the marketing platforms is an effective way to build consumer trust and increase the brand's strength. Some of the success metrics

include monitoring the perception of the brand and consumer sentiment related to environmental efforts (Jestratijevic, Maystorovich and Vrabic-Brodnjak, 2022).

Dealing with a cost-conscious market, ASDA UK will have to balance between the cost and the sustainability of the packaging (Hoda 2024). Focusing on recyclable, low-cost and consumer-friendly packaging can prove to be a solution for both the sustainability goals, without putting off the cost-conscious customers (Jain and Hudnrkar, 2022). Smaller packaging designs can help control expenditure while being able to maintain environmental goals. Monitoring operational cost savings and tracking consumer engagement will be important to determine the efficacy of sustainability as an area of market differentiation.

In summary, there are specific things retail managers in these companies need to do to ensure that sustainability needs are met in line with consumer expectations (as these are the companies that need to use the same packaging to advertise their products), from transparent packaging to supplier collaboration to obvious and clear brand messaging (Kashif, Zarkada and Ramayah, 2018). Monitoring the appropriate success metrics for such efforts can ensure that they are achieving the goals of consumers and developing brand loyalty.

6.5 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Limitations: There are various limitations of this study. The major limitation is the use of secondary sources, reports, industry publications and consumer surveys. Which, although credible and trustworthy, have limitations in their own right. Like bias from vendors or selective reporting, as the generalisability of results is affected (Herrmann, Rhein, and Strater, 2022). Additionally, the research only focuses on four different discount retailers in the UK (Wandosell et al., 2021), so the findings are not necessarily representative of the wider industry and different geographic markets. Sustainability programs can vary by industry, company size, and the maturity of the market, so the results may not be universal. Also, the consumer perception was assessed in general surveys, which may not be accurate predictors of actual buying behavior as it can be worth-based on factors like price, quality or availability (Welch et al., 2020).

Future Research: For future research, a longitudinal approach could contribute more understanding of the long-term effect of sustainable packaging on brand loyalty and sales (Silva and Nilsson, 2025). Extending this scope beyond the UK to other

industries would, for example, in fashion and in electronics, allow identifying industry-specific challenges and opportunities (Michail, 2018). Multi-industry comparison could possibly also experiment with the elaborated propositions on diverse market conditions (Nazir, 2022). Thus, an additional foray into alternative packaging solutions, such as biodegradable material or reusable material, will give a more comprehensive understanding of packaging sustainability.

6.6 Closing Statement

This research study has identified additional value to the Green Marketing Theory by highlighting that sustainable packaging in marketing can obtain enhanced brand faithfulness as well as act as a means of competitive edge. The results have shown that, in accordance with the consumer values of sustainability actually strengthens brand perception and establishes long-term relationships with customers (Silva and Nilsson 2025). These insights have the greatest relevance to retailers playing in markets where the environmental consciousness of the consumer is high (Ospina, Esteve and Lee, 2018). The results prove especially relevant to discount retailers, who are interested in finding a combined solution on sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

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