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# Misleading Environmental Claims in Marketing: An Empirical Study of Green washing and Consumers

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**Abstract--** In today's corporate practices, environmental sustainability has emerged as a major problem. As consumers become more environmentally sensitive, businesses are using more and more green marketing techniques. However, a lot of businesses make false or unsupported environmental claims, which is known as "Green washing." This study investigates the idea, origins, and manifestations of "Green washing" and assesses how it affects customer confidence and purchase patterns. The report also emphasizes how consumer knowledge and laws can help stop Greenwashing.

**Keywords--**Environmental Claims, Corporate Ethics, Consumer Trust, Sustainable Marketing, and Green Washing

## I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental sustainability has become a central theme in modern marketing strategies due to increasing awareness of climate change, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity. Consumers today prefer products that claim to be eco-friendly and socially responsible. In response, firms actively engage in green marketing to enhance brand image and competitive advantage. However, the increasing use of environmental claims has also resulted in deceptive practices known as greenwashing.

Greenwashing involves misleading or unsubstantiated environmental claims that create a false perception of environmental responsibility. Such practices not only mislead consumers but also undermine genuine sustainability efforts and ethical marketing. Therefore, an empirical investigation into misleading environmental claims and their impact on consumer behaviour is essential.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Delmas and Burbano (2011) identified regulatory gaps and competitive pressure as key drivers of greenwashing. Peattie and Crane (2005) emphasized that misleading environmental marketing reduces consumer confidence and credibility of green products. Lyon and Montgomery (2015) observed that symbolic environmental initiatives often replace substantive sustainability actions due to weak enforcement. Recent studies suggest that increased consumer awareness and transparency significantly reduce the influence of greenwashing on purchasing decisions.

## III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite growing environmental consciousness, consumers often face difficulty in distinguishing genuine eco-friendly products from misleading environmental claims. Vague terminology, lack of standardized certifications, and inadequate monitoring encourage firms to exaggerate sustainability efforts. This creates confusion, reduces consumer trust, and distorts market competition. The present study aims to empirically examine the effect of misleading environmental claims on consumer behaviour.

## IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the nature and forms of misleading environmental claims in marketing.
2. To analyze consumer awareness of greenwashing practices.
3. To study the impact of greenwashing on consumer trust.
4. To examine the influence of misleading environmental claims on purchasing behaviour.
5. To suggest measures to curb greenwashing practices in marketing.

## V. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- **H<sub>01</sub>:** Misleading environmental claims have no significant impact on consumer trust.
- **H<sub>11</sub>:** Misleading environmental claims have a significant impact on consumer trust.
- **H<sub>02</sub>:** Greenwashing does not significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour.
- **H<sub>12</sub>:** Greenwashing significantly influences consumer purchasing behaviour.
- **H<sub>03</sub>:** Consumer awareness has no significant effect on identifying greenwashing.
- **H<sub>13</sub>:** Consumer awareness has a significant effect on identifying greenwashing.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Research Design*

The study adopts a **descriptive and empirical research design**, suitable for analyzing consumer perceptions and behavioural responses.

*Sources of Data*

- **Primary Data:** Collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale.
- **Secondary Data:** Collected from journals, books, reports, government publications, and websites.

*Sampling Design*

- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience sampling
- **Sample Size:** 100 respondents
- **Sampling Area:** Urban consumers

*Tools for Data Analysis*

- Percentage analysis
- Mean score analysis
- Chi-square test
- Correlation analysis (SPSS was used for statistical analysis)

VII. DATA INTERPRETATION

**TABLE 1:  
RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

CRONBACH'S ALPHA	NUMBER OF ITEMS
0.82	12

*Interpretation:* The Cronbach's Alpha value of **0.82** indicates **high internal consistency** of the questionnaire. Hence, the data collected is reliable for further statistical analysis.

**TABLE 2:  
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

Particulars	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	52	52%
	Female	48	48%
Age	Below 25	28	28%
	25-40	46	46%
	Above 40	26	26%
Education	UG	40	40%
	PG	60	60%

*Interpretation:* The respondents represent a balanced demographic profile, ensuring diversity in age, gender, and educational background.

**TABLE 3:  
AWARENESS OF GREEN WASHING**

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	36	36%
Moderate	44	44%
Low	20	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Interpretation:* A majority of respondents (**44%**) have **moderate awareness** of green washing, indicating partial understanding of misleading environmental claims.

**TABLE 4:  
MEAN SCORE ANALYSIS**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Misleading Environmental Claims	3.74	0.68
Consumer Trust	2.91	0.72
Purchase Behaviour	3.12	0.65
Consumer Awareness	3.58	0.70

*Interpretation:* The high mean score for **misleading environmental claims (3.74)** reflects the perceived prevalence of greenwashing. The lower mean score for **consumer trust (2.91)** indicates reduced trust due to misleading claims.

**TABLE 5:  
CHI-SQUARE TEST – GREEN WASHING AND CONSUMER TRUST**

Chi-square	Df	Sig.(p value)
12.46	4	0.014

*Hypothesis*

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Misleading environmental claims have no significant impact on consumer trust.

**H<sub>11</sub>:** Misleading environmental claims have a significant impact on consumer trust.

*Interpretation:*

Since the **p-value (0.014)** is less than **0.05**, the null hypothesis is rejected.

There is a **significant relationship** between misleading environmental claims and consumer trust.

**TABLE 6:**  
**CHI-SQUARE TEST – GREENWASHING AND CONSUMER PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR**

Chi-square	Df	Sig.(p value)
10.83	4	0.028

*Hypothesis*

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Misleading environmental claims do not have a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour.

**H<sub>12</sub>:** Misleading environmental claims have a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour.

*Interpretation:* Since the p-value (0.028) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H<sub>02</sub>) is rejected. This indicates that misleading environmental claims significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour.

**TABLE 7:**  
**CORRELATION ANALYSIS-CONSUMER AWARENESS AND IDENTIFICATION OF GREENWASHING**

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig.
Awareness & Identification	0.61	0.001

*Hypothesis*

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Consumer awareness does not significantly influence the identification of greenwashing practices.

**H<sub>13</sub>:** Consumer awareness significantly influences the identification of greenwashing practices.

*Interpretation:* The correlation coefficient (0.61) shows a strong positive relationship between consumer awareness and identification of greenwashing. Higher awareness enables consumers to detect misleading claims effectively. Since the p-value (0.001) < 0.05, the null hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>) is rejected.

**TABLE 8:**  
**REGRESSION ANALYSIS – EFFECT OF AWARENESS ON IDENTIFICATION OF GREENWASHING**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Sig.
Awareness → Identification	0.61	0.37	0.001

*Interpretation:* The regression results show that consumer awareness explains 37% of the variation in the identification of greenwashing practices, confirming its significant influence.

**TABLE 9:**  
**HYPOTHESIS TESTING SUMMARY**

Hypothesis	Result
H <sub>01</sub>	Rejected
H <sub>02</sub>	Rejected
H <sub>03</sub>	Rejected

*Overall Interpretation*

The SPSS results confirm that misleading environmental claims significantly affect consumer trust and purchasing behaviour. Increased consumer awareness reduces the effectiveness of greenwashing practices.

**VIII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

- Consumers perceive the prevalence of misleading environmental claims in marketing communications.
- Greenwashing significantly reduces consumer trust in brands.
- Purchasing behaviour is negatively influenced by deceptive environmental claims.
- Higher consumer awareness enhances the ability to identify greenwashing.

**IX. SUGGESTIONS**

- Enforcement of stricter environmental advertising regulations.
- Mandatory third-party certification for environmental claims.
- Adoption of transparent and standardized sustainability reporting.
- Consumer education and awareness campaigns.
- Ethical marketing practices and corporate accountability.

**X. CONCLUSION**

The present empirical study examined misleading environmental claims in marketing, with specific reference to greenwashing and its impact on consumer behaviour. The findings clearly indicate that greenwashing has emerged as a significant concern in contemporary marketing practices. While environmental claims play an important role in influencing consumer decisions, misleading and exaggerated claims erode consumer trust and negatively affect purchasing behaviour in the long run.

The empirical results reveal a statistically significant relationship between greenwashing practices and consumer trust, confirming that deceptive environmental communication weakens brand credibility.



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The study also establishes that consumer awareness plays a crucial role in identifying greenwashing practices. Consumers with higher levels of awareness are better equipped to evaluate environmental claims critically and are less likely to be influenced by misleading marketing messages.

From a managerial perspective, the study highlights that greenwashing may offer short-term promotional benefits but poses serious long-term risks to corporate reputation and customer loyalty. Ethical marketing and genuine sustainability initiatives are therefore essential for building lasting consumer trust. From a policy perspective, the findings emphasize the need for stricter regulatory frameworks, standardized environmental disclosures, and effective monitoring mechanisms to prevent deceptive environmental claims.

Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the impact of misleading environmental claims on consumer behaviour in the Indian context. It underscores the importance of transparency, accountability, and consumer education in promoting sustainable marketing practices. Future research may extend this study by focusing on specific industries, larger sample sizes, or comparative studies across regions to gain deeper insights into greenwashing practices.

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