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Consumer perception of corporate sustainable marketing strategies for environmental sustainability: A systematic review of empirical evidence and corporate best practices

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Abstract

As environmental degradation intensifies stakeholder pressure on business, sustainability has moved from a peripheral concern to a strategic imperative in marketing. This study systematically reviews empirical evidence on consumer perception of corporate sustainable (green) marketing strategies and benchmarks the environmental initiatives of leading global enterprises, with the aim of identifying the antecedents, outcomes, and boundary conditions of favourable consumer responses to sustainable marketing. A systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 protocol. Peer reviewed empirical studies published between 2012 and 2025 that examined consumer perception of sustainable or green marketing were screened against explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, yielding a final sample of 18 empirical studies spanning ten countries and a combined sample of more than 6,100 consumers. The review is complemented by a multiple case analysis of the ten highest ranked enterprises in the Forbes (2024) Net Zero Leaders list, drawing on corporate sustainability reports and disclosures. The synthesis indicates that environmental knowledge, awareness, and concern are the dominant antecedents of favourable consumer perception; that favourable perception translates into green purchase intention, willingness to pay a price premium, satisfaction, loyalty, and positive electronic word of mouth; and that price sensitivity, low income, limited environmental literacy, and greenwashing scepticism attenuate these effects, particularly in emerging economies. Case evidence shows that leading corporations increasingly anchor marketing claims in verifiable, science-based

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commitments such as net zero targets, circularity, and renewable energy sourcing. The study integrates two streams that are usually examined separately, namely consumer side perception research and firm side sustainability practice, into a single conceptual framework, and derives research propositions, managerial implications, and an agenda for future research.

Keywords: Sustainable Marketing, Green Marketing, Consumer Perception, Environmental Sustainability, Corporate Sustainability Practices, Systematic Literature Review

JEL Classification: M31, M14, Q56

1. Introduction

The opening decades of the twenty-first century have been marked by environmental problems—resource depletion, climate change, and global warming—that are, to a considerable degree, direct consequences of corporate activity and its impacts on the economy, environment, and society (Martin & Schouten, 2012; Kumar et al., 2013). Growing concern surrounds the collapse of ecosystems, and the effects of resource depletion are increasingly visible. If humanity continues on its current growth trajectory, at least two planets would be required to supply the resources needed to sustain life on Earth (Danciu, 2013).

Figure 1. World Ecological Footprint

Source: Global Footprint Network, National Footprint Accounts, 2018 Edition; Espace Mondial l'Atlas (2018), www.footprintnetwork.org

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The implementation of sustainability represents both a practical response to these contemporary challenges and a reorientation of the Enlightenment project (Sneddon et al., 2006). The Global Footprint Network reported that on 2 August 2017—designated "Earth Overshoot Day"—human consumption of ecological resources had already exceeded the Earth's annual regenerative capacity. The scale of the human ecological footprint has led environmental scientists to declare the arrival of a new geological epoch, the *Anthropocene*. Monsaingeon (cited in Espace Mondial l'Atlas, 2018) observes that human waste—whether solid, liquid or gaseous, concentrated or dispersed—leaves detectable traces in water, in soil, and in the air, bubbles recovered from ice cores, and has therefore become "tangible proof of the influence of human activities" on the composition of the planet's uppermost layer. The Brundtland Commission of the United Nations (1987) urged the integration of sustainability into every sphere of human endeavour and defined *sustainable development* as development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Since then, the concept has evolved, urging market participants—consumers, sellers, and policymakers—to respect future generations either by reducing their negative impact on environmental resources or by increasing their positive impact on communities and society (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Peterson et al., 2020). The mounting pressure on the Earth's carrying capacity has made sustainability one of the defining research topics of the twenty-first century, with particular emphasis on preserving natural ecosystems (Liu et al., 2022).

Within business marketing and management, sustainability has emerged as a crucial differentiator in competitive markets. Consumers increasingly seek sustainable options and are prepared to support businesses that demonstrate genuine commitment to environmental responsibility; firms that deploy sustainable marketing techniques can therefore capture a growing market segment and secure competitive advantage (Rathore, 2017). Sustainability has penetrated the vocabulary of many disciplines, and marketing is no exception (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019), although what sustainability means, both within and beyond marketing, remains subject to deliberation (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Lim, 2016). The incorporation of sustainability into marketing strategy is no longer optional, the very idea of marketing is expanding to encompass the needs of future generations rather than merely the wants of present individuals (Van Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996; Obermiller et al., 2008; Kumar et al., 2012). Environmental degradation has been a global concern of citizens, enterprises, and institutions for more than three decades (Papadopoulos et al., 2010) and is considered vital in today's economic environment (Garrod & Chadwick, 1996; Vani, 2022; Reddy et al., 2023; Camilleri et al., 2023). Schlegelmilch et al. (1996) demonstrated the significance of environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour in pro-environmental purchasing, showing that attitudes are the most reliable predictor of consumers' purchase decisions and that environmental consciousness can materially influence those decisions. Sustainability discourse has, in turn, reshaped the expectations of investors, consumers, employees, business partners, governments, and the public at large (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020).

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Despite this momentum, the consumer-side evidence remains fragmented. Individual studies are dispersed across countries, product categories, and methodological traditions, and firm-side best practice is rarely examined alongside consumer perception. This study addresses that gap by pursuing three research objectives:

> **RO1.** To systematically synthesise empirical evidence (2012–2025) on consumer perception of corporate sustainable/green marketing strategies.
>
> **RO2.** To benchmark the environmental sustainability initiatives of leading global enterprises and examine how these initiatives are embedded in marketing and corporate communication.
>
> **RO3.** To integrate the consumer-side and firm-side evidence into a conceptual framework and derive propositions, implications, and directions for future research.

Correspondingly, the study is guided by three research questions:

> **RQ1.** What are the principal antecedents of favourable consumer perception of sustainable marketing?
>
> **RQ2.** What behavioural and relational outcomes follow from favourable consumer perception, and under what boundary conditions are they attenuated?
>
> **RQ3.** How do leading enterprises operationalise environmental sustainability in ways that can credibly support marketing claims?

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the conceptual foundations of sustainable marketing. Section 3 details the methodology. Section 4 presents the systematic review of empirical studies, and Section 5 the multiple-case analysis of corporate best practices. Section 6 discusses the integrated findings and presents the conceptual framework, Section 7 develops implications, Section 8 acknowledges limitations and outlines future research, and Section 9 concludes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Marketing

The significance of sustainable marketing has been recognised by the academic community since the 1970s (Tosun, 2017), yet the concept, in its full sense, still lacks extensive research (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Some confusion persists between *sustainable marketing* and *green marketing*, which several authors use interchangeably (Kumar et al., 2013; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). The most widely accepted articulation of the term is attributed to Belz and Peattie (2012), who, in *Sustainability Marketing: A Global Perspective* (2nd ed.), define sustainability marketing as "building and maintaining sustainable relationships with customers, the social environment and the natural environment"—distinguishing it from marketing that builds long-lasting customer

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relationships without any particular reference to sustainable development. Aligned with environmental preservation, Praude and Bormane (2013) and Rathore (2017) describe sustainable marketing as the incorporation of environmental awareness into marketing strategies and practices with the goal of reducing adverse environmental effects while preserving business viability; it entails creating and promoting goods and services that use fewer resources, produce less waste, and generate better environmental and social outcomes.

2.2 Sustainable Marketing and Consumer Perception

Customer satisfaction is crucial for the long-term success and competitiveness of any business (Müller, 1991; Fornell et al., 2010; Park et al., 2019; Gong et al., 2023). Satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and, in turn, become brand advocates, contributing to positive word-of-mouth and brand reputation (Sudirjo et al., 2024). Driven by changing market demands and regulatory requirements, businesses large and small are modifying their production processes to supply environmentally friendly commodities; in this transition, the shift toward more sustainable production and consumption is determined largely by consumers themselves (Negash et al., 2021). Consumers worldwide are increasingly aware of the negative impacts of non-eco-friendly products on health and the environment, leading to rising demand for environmentally friendly products (Zsidisin & Siferd, 2001; Jain & Mehta, 2016), and most enterprises have consequently begun incorporating sustainability into their operations (Rastislav & Petra, 2016).

2.3 Corporate Practices in Sustainable Marketing

Sustainable marketing has gained prominence both as corporate practice and as an area of academic study (Varey, 2010; Hunt, 2011; Winston, 2019). Business corporations must consider sustainability not only for financial reasons and potential economic opportunities but also because of stakeholder demands (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2020). According to Chattopadhyay (2019), enterprises and marketers must integrate sustainability goals into their overall strategy rather than merely complying with environmental laws. Firms have become increasingly pragmatic about the impact of business activity on society and the environment, and sustainable practice has consequently become core corporate policy for advancing sustainable development (Bebbington & Larrinaga, 2014; Jianu et al., 2015). The implementation of green (sustainable) marketing strategies has been shown to enhance a firm's return on assets (Leonidou et al., 2013). Nevertheless, implementation faces substantial barriers: the considerable costs involved, constrained resources, weak governmental support and environmental regulation, a limited base of green consumers, and political instability may all underlie a firm's low effort in adopting sustainable marketing strategies (Braik et al., 2024).

2.4 Sustainable marketing and the natural environment

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Climate change and environmental pollution pose serious contemporary challenges (UNEP, 2010). The rapid development of societies has affected many species; tropical forests alone have been estimated to lose 137 species per day (Danciu, 2013). The preservation of natural ecosystems is therefore a major concern prompting many firms to incorporate sustainable management strategies (Garrod & Chadwick, 1996). In the marketing context, sustainability means integrating environmental awareness so as to reduce negative environmental consequences while preserving profitability—creating and promoting goods and services that consume fewer resources, generate less waste, and deliver better social and environmental results (Rathore, 2017). Sustainable marketing not only addresses environmental concerns but also improves brand reputation, customer loyalty, and long-term economic sustainability (Sheth et al., 1991; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2006). From an ethical perspective, enterprises must minimise their harmful influence on the environment and society, given limited resources and the compelling need to address climate change; sustainable marketing can reduce resource consumption and waste creation while enhancing social and environmental outcomes, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable society (Hart, 1997; Freeman, 2010; Rathore, 2017).

3. Methodology

This study adopts a two-stage research design. Stage 1 is a systematic literature review (SLR) of empirical studies on consumer perception of sustainable/green marketing, conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). Stage 2 is a multiple-case analysis of the environmental sustainability initiatives of leading global enterprises, drawing on corporate sustainability reports and public disclosures. An SLR was preferred over a narrative review because it employs a transparent, replicable, and auditable protocol that minimises selection bias and supports evidence-based conclusions (Tranfield et al., 2003).

3.1 Stage 1: Systematic Literature Review

3.1.1 Search Strategy

The search was performed in reputable scholarly databases—Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar—covering the period January 2012 to June 2025. The search string combined keywords and Boolean operators applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords:

> (“sustainable marketing” OR “green marketing”) AND (“consumer perception” OR “customer perception” OR “consumer attitude” OR “purchase intention”) AND (“environment*” OR ”eco-friendly” OR ”green product*”)

Backward and forward citation chaining (snowballing) of the initially retrieved articles was used to identify additional relevant studies not captured by the database search.

3.1.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

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Explicit criteria (Table 1) were specified a priori to ensure the credibility, relevance, and academic rigour of the evidence base.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Systematic Review

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and full conference papers indexed in reputable databases	Editorials, opinion pieces, blogs, non-refereed reports
Time frame	Published 2012–2025 (to reflect contemporary practice and evolving perception)	Published before 2012
Study design	Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) with primary data on consumer perception	Purely conceptual/theoretical papers without primary data
Focus	Consumer/customer perception of sustainable, green, or eco-friendly marketing, products, or practices	Studies on unrelated dimensions of sustainability (e.g., purely financial or supply-chain studies without a consumer-perception construct)
Language	English	Non-English publications
Quality signal	Preference given to studies with substantive citation counts, indicating broader academic recognition	Studies that could not be quality-appraised

3.1.3 Screening and Selection

Records retrieved from the three databases were exported to a single reference library and de-duplicated. The remaining records were screened at title and abstract level against the criteria set out in Table 1, and those that did not address consumer or customer perception of sustainable, green, or eco-friendly marketing were removed at this stage. Reporting followed the PRISMA 2020 flow (Page et al., 2021) in which full texts of the surviving records were then retrieved and assessed for eligibility; studies were excluded at this stage where they reported no primary data on consumer perception, fell outside the 2012–2025 publication window, were not available in

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English, or could not be quality-appraised. Records identified through backward and forward citation chaining were subjected to the same screening sequence. The process yielded a final evidence base of 18 empirical studies, spanning ten countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America, with a combined reported sample exceeding 6,100 consumers (Table 2).

3.1.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis

For each included study, a structured extraction form was used to code: (i) author(s) and year; (ii) country/context; (iii) sample size and characteristics; (iv) data collection and analysis methods; and (v) key findings on consumer perception. Because the included studies are heterogeneous in constructs, measures, and analytical techniques, a narrative (thematic) synthesis was adopted rather than a meta-analysis; findings were grouped inductively into three themes—antecedents of perception, outcomes of perception, and boundary conditions—which structure the discussion in Section 6.

3.2 Stage 2: Multiple-Case Analysis of Corporate Best Practices

To address RO2, the ten highest-ranked enterprises in the Forbes (2024) Net-Zero Leaders list were selected as information-rich cases (purposive sampling; Yin, 2018). For each case, publicly available secondary evidence—sustainability reports, environmental policies, impact reports, and official press releases—was reviewed and coded for: stated emission-reduction targets (Scopes 1, 2, and 3), target years, circularity and waste commitments, water and energy initiatives, and the manner in which these commitments are communicated to the market. Reliance on published corporate disclosures ensures traceability of the evidence, although the possibility of favourable self-presentation is acknowledged as a limitation (Section 8).

3.3 Analytical Procedure

Findings from the two stages were triangulated: the consumer-side themes emerging from the SLR were juxtaposed with the firm-side practices emerging from the case analysis to construct the integrative conceptual framework presented in Figure 6 and the propositions offered in Section 6.3.

4. Systematic Review of Empirical Evidence on Consumer Perception

4.1 Profile of the Reviewed Studies

Consumers' decisions to purchase eco-friendly items are heavily influenced by environmental concern and knowledge (Saeednia & Valahzaghard, 2012; Kumar et al., 2017). Exposure to environmental degradation makes customers prepared to pay a premium for green commodities (Yam-Tang & Chan, 1998; Rakesh & Nagesh, 2014; FuiYeng & Yazdanifard, 2015; Kirmani & Khan, 2018; James, 2021). However, in certain nations—especially emerging and low-income economies—consumers refrain from purchasing green products because of their high cost (Sharadhi et al., 2023). Nonetheless, customers who favour sustainable and green marketing

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outnumber those who do not (Biswas & Roy, 2016). Consumers' ambivalent and sceptical behaviour remains complicated and challenging to comprehend (Sharma, 2021), which underscores the value of a systematic synthesis.

Table 2 summarises the eighteen empirical studies included in the review. Figures 2–5 profile the evidence base by geography, publication year, sample size, and selected consumer-response indicators.

Table 2. Synthesis of Empirical Studies on Consumer Perception of Sustainable/Green Marketing (2012–2025)

SL. No.	Author(s), Year	Country/Context	Sample & Respondents	Method & Analysis	Key Findings
1	Awan & Raza (2012)	Sweden (Västerås, Eskilstuna, Stockholm)	Energy consumers	Survey questionnaire	Swedish consumers—especially women—are environmentally conscious and willing to pay more for green energy; a large segment of non-users would adopt green energy at lower prices
2	Saeednia & Valahzaghard (2012)	Iran	283 valid responses (of 300 distributed)	19-item questionnaire; quantitative analysis	Environmental concern is the major driver of satisfaction with green products and of green customer loyalty
3	Kumar et al. (2017)	India (leading management school)	235 postgraduate	Online survey	Attitude toward buying environmentally

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			& doctoral students		sustainable products is largely shaped by environmental knowledge
4	Sun et al. (2018)	China & South Korea	457 young middle-income Chinese + 315 Korean customers (sports apparel brand)	Survey; SPSS & fsQCA	Sustainable marketing efforts positively influence customer-equity drivers
5	Vafaei et al. (2019)	Iran/Hungary context	276 participants	Questionnaire; Pearson correlation & linear regression (SPSS)	Perceived sustainable marketing policies increase green customer satisfaction; transparency of green strategies is recommended
6	Anitha & Vijai (2020)	India (Bengaluru)	520 respondents	Survey; SPSS	Consumers exhibit a positive attitude toward green marketing and green products
7	Nadaf & Nadaf (2021)	India	200 respondents	Survey	64% aware of green/sustainable marketing; 61% agree green products are valuable to customers and

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					society; majority support green packaging and associate green products with health and safety
8	James (2021)	India	114 respondents	Survey	84.2% believe green products are worth the money; 77% willing to pay a premium; 77.2% aware of green products/marketing; 69.3% would pay extra out of environmental-protection responsibility; 62.3% repeat green purchases; 49.1% would recommend green products
9	Wang et al. (2021)	Denmark	224 participants across four studies (organic wine, cotton, toys)	Experiments; ANOVA	71% preferred organic-labelled toys; label effects significant for organic cotton ($F(1,57)=36.13$, $p<.005$, $\eta p^2=0.39$; $F(1,29)=15.48$, $p<.005$, $\eta p^2=0.35$); participants consistently willing

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					to pay more for organic cotton
10	Halim et al. (2022)	Egypt (Seoudi Market)	453 respondents (261 female; mean age 29)	Survey; correlation analysis	Environmental concern correlates positively with perception of green products (r=0.541); perception correlates with purchase intention (r=0.534); purchase-intention indicator 0.692
11	Sharadhi et al. (2023)	India (FMCG sector)	200 respondents	Survey	Majority aware of green marketing; 78.9% report that green-marketing initiatives influence buying behaviour; high price deters a minority of consumers
12	Satir (2023)	Turkey	517 participants	Survey; SPSS	Sustainability perception positively affects e-WOM and purchase intention; environmental protection, climate concern, and waste reduction jointly reinforce these effects

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13	Nazir et al. (2024)	Pakistan	359 green-aware respondents	Survey; SPSS-AMOS v25 (SEM)	Eco-labelling correlates positively with consumer perception and attitude toward environmental consciousness
14	Biswas & Roy (2016)[a]	India	Consumer survey	Quantitative survey	Consumers favouring sustainable/green offerings outnumber those who do not; documented willingness to pay for green attributes
15	Baltaci, Durmaz & Baltaci (2024)	Türkiye (seven universities, four regions)	638 Gen-Z university students; 590 valid responses	Online survey; SEM	Green marketing activities and green brand awareness positively influence purchase intention; TPB dimensions (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control) strengthen and mediate these relationships
16	Wu & Long (2024)	China (eastern cities)	686 urban consumers	Survey; SEM & multi-group analysis (SOR + TAM)	Social-media marketing significantly boosts eco-friendly purchase intention; green trust is a stronger mediator than perceived

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					information usefulness (0.306 vs. 0.122); effects strongest among women and middle-to-high income/education groups
17	Rehman (2025)	United States	353 consumers	Cross-sectional survey; SEM	Perceived greenwashing damages brand attitude and purchase intention; green scepticism mediates; environmental knowledge moderates the relationships
18	Tan, Fauzi & Harun (2025)	Online consumer survey (green circular-economy context)	412 responses (purposive sampling)	PLS-SEM	Perceived green product quality positively associated with green purchase intention; price sensitivity does not diminish intention (contrary to hypothesis); environmental concern moderates the quality–price-sensitivity link with limited practical significance

[a] Included through citation chaining as a foundational willingness-to-pay study within the review

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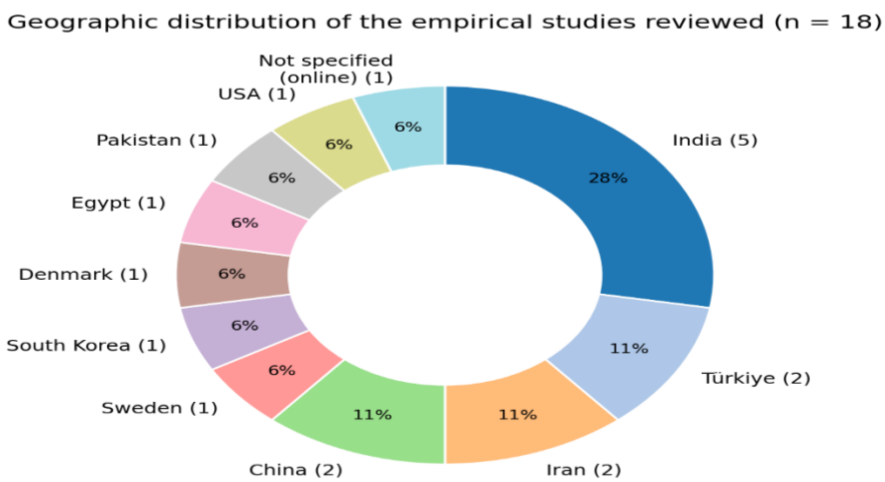
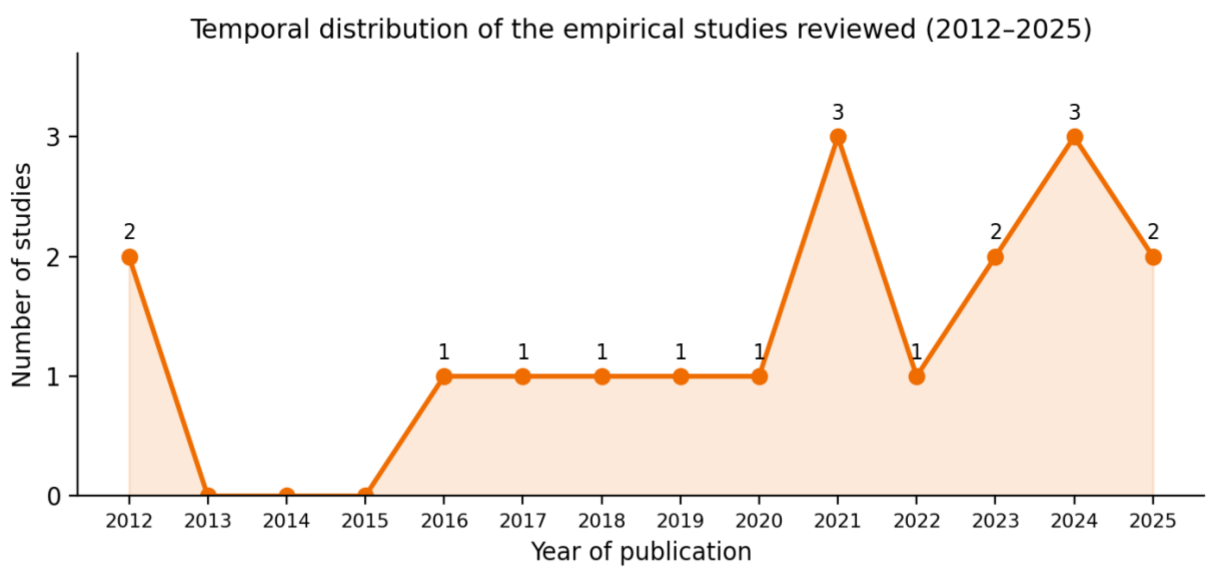
window.

Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of the Reviewed Empirical Studies (N = 18)



Source: authors' compilation

Figure 3. Temporal Distribution of the Reviewed Empirical Studies, 2012–2025



Source: authors' compilation

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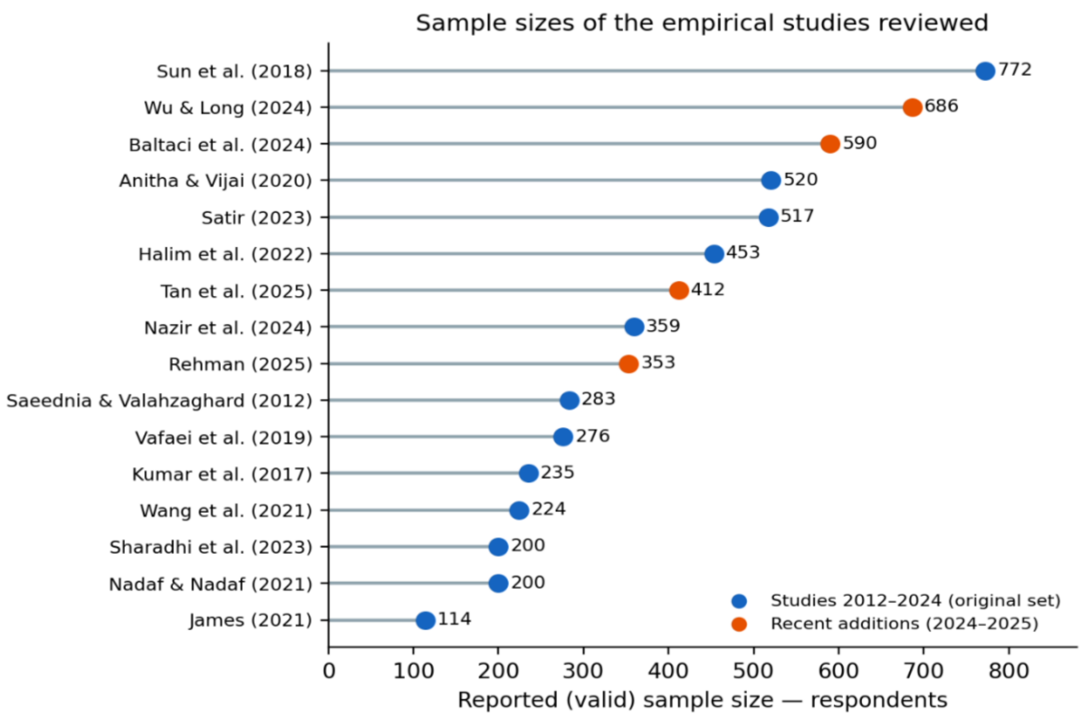
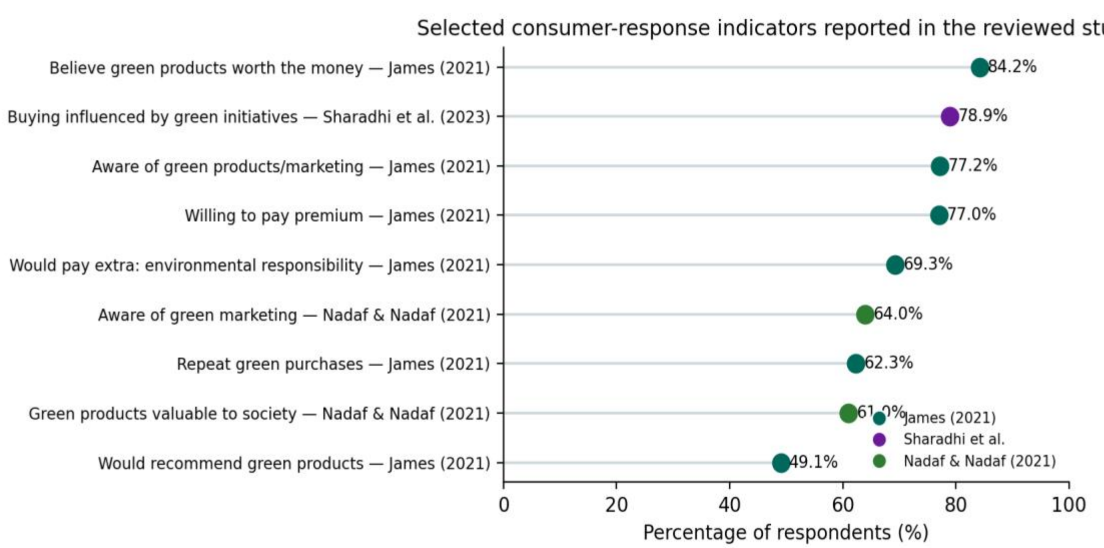
Figure 4. Reported Sample Sizes of the Reviewed Empirical Studies



Source: authors' compilation

Figure 5. Selected Consumer-Response Indicators Reported in the Reviewed Studies (Percentages of Respondents as Reported by the Original Authors)



Source: authors' compilation from Nadaf & Nadaf (2021), James (2021), and Sharadhi et al. (2023).

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4.2 Thematic Synthesis

Three themes emerge from Table 2.

Theme 1: Antecedents of Favourable Perception

Environmental knowledge, awareness, and concern consistently emerge as the strongest antecedents of favourable consumer perception (Saeednia & Valahzaghard, 2012; Kumar et al., 2017; Halim et al., 2022). Firm-controlled signals—eco-labelling, transparent green policies, and credible sustainability communication—reinforce these consumer-side antecedents (Vafaei et al., 2019; Nazir et al., 2024). The most recent evidence extends this antecedent set in two directions. First, green brand awareness and green marketing activities operate through the classic theory-of-planned-behaviour pathway—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control mediate their effect on purchase intention among Generation-Z consumers (Baltaci et al., 2024). Second, digital channels have become a distinct antecedent: social-media marketing significantly raises eco-friendly purchase intention, with green trust emerging as the dominant mediating mechanism—stronger than perceived information usefulness (path coefficients 0.306 vs. 0.122)—and with effects concentrated among women and middle-to-high income and education groups (Wu & Long, 2024).

Theme 2: Outcomes of Favourable Perception

Favourable perception translates into green purchase intention and willingness to pay a premium (62–84% of respondents across the Indian studies; James, 2021), satisfaction and loyalty (Saeednia & Valahzaghard, 2012; Vafaei et al., 2019), customer-equity gains (Sun et al., 2018), and positive electronic word-of-mouth (Satir, 2023).

Theme 3: Boundary Conditions

Price sensitivity and low disposable income attenuate green purchasing, particularly in emerging and impoverished economies (Sharadhi et al., 2023); limited environmental literacy weakens the knowledge–attitude pathway (Pradeep & Kuckian, 2016; Firdiansyah et al., 2021); and consumer scepticism toward green claims (perceived greenwashing) remains a persistent brake on conversion from favourable attitude to actual purchase (Sharma, 2021). Recent evidence sharpens both boundary conditions. On the sceptical side, Rehman (2025) demonstrates with US consumer data that perceived greenwashing damages brand attitude and purchase intention, that green scepticism mediates this damage, and that environmental knowledge moderates the relationships—confirming that credibility, not merely visibility, of green claims determines consumer response. On the price side, Tan et al. (2025) report the counterintuitive finding that price sensitivity does not necessarily diminish green purchase intention when perceived green product quality is high, suggesting that the price barrier documented in earlier emerging-market studies can be offset by strong quality signals.

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Overall, sustainable green marketing is a strategy widely adopted by firms to promote environmental sustainability for people, animals, and the planet (Rajeshkumar, 2012), yet practical research on the subject remains limited (Purani et al., 2014) even as environmentally conscious consumers become a dynamic force behind enterprise operations. The numerous studies synthesised above indicate that consumers are, on balance, supportive of buying green products.

5. Corporate Best Practices in Environmental Preservation: Multiple-Case Evidence

The adoption of sustainability in business operations is a pressing need, owing to the rapid environmental degradation caused by human—and particularly corporate—activity. Humans require natural resources for survival and prosperity; the concern lies in identifying the optimum level of extraction that can sustain living standards while minimising negative environmental effects. Concerned nations have introduced environmental laws, although in low-income economies the implementation of green processes can impose significant financial burdens. Nonetheless, green processes remain the ultimate mechanism for ensuring sustainability. Table 3 profiles the ten highest-ranked enterprises in the Forbes (2024) Net-Zero Leaders list and their headline environmental commitments, compiled from the companies' own sustainability disclosures.

Table 3. Environmental Sustainability Commitments of the Forbes (2024) Net-Zero Leaders (Top 10)

Rank	Enterprise	Industry	Headline environmental commitments (as disclosed)	Key target years
1	Philip Morris International (USA)	Packaged goods	Low-Carbon Transition Plan (LCTP); carbon neutrality in direct operations (Scopes 1+2); net-zero across the entire value chain (Scopes 1+2+3), advanced 10 years ahead of the previous 2050 goal	2025 (Scopes 1+2); 2040 (value chain)
2	Johnson & Johnson	Drugs & biotechnology	100% renewable-electricity sourcing; emission reductions across	2045 (net-zero value chain)

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			global operations; net-zero across the value chain	
3	Tesla	Automotive	High-performance electric vehicles; energy-conserving technologies; reduced water consumption; batteries designed for 200,000+ miles; renewable-energy sourcing (Impact Report 2023)	Ongoing
4	Moody's	Diversified financials	GHG-emission reduction plan; procurement of eco-friendly materials; reduce–reuse–recycle waste programme	2025 (waste/procurement); 2040 (GHG)
5	HP (Hewlett-Packard)	Electronics	"Full-circle" service-based product approach; net-zero GHG by 2040; carbon neutrality and zero waste in operations by 2025; 75% circularity for products and packaging by 2030; zero deforestation for HP paper and packaging	2025; 2030; 2040
6	Microchip Technology	Semiconductors & electronics	Compliance with environmental law; wastewater recycling and water conservation; energy-use minimisation; employee environmental-responsibility programmes (2023 Sustainability Report)	Ongoing

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7	Colgate-Palmolive	Packaged goods	Four-pillar programme: (1) eliminate plastic waste; (2) zero-waste facilities; (3) "Net Zero Water"; (4) accelerated climate action through carbon-footprint reduction	Ongoing
8	Southern Company	Utilities	Scope 1 GHG emissions reduced 49% vs. 2007 baseline; 400+ CNG fleet vehicles cutting urban pollutants by up to 90% and GHG by up to 21% vs. conventional fuels; natural-gas infrastructure positioned for net-zero transition	Net-zero pathway
9	Alliant Energy	Utilities	GHG emissions reduced 50% since 2005; elimination of all coal from the generation fleet by 2040; aspiration of net-zero GHG from utility operations	2040 (coal exit)
10	NRG Energy	Utilities	~50,000 MW generation serving ~3 million customers; 50% GHG reduction by 2025; net-zero by 2050; 100% electrification of company-owned light-duty fleet by 2030	2025; 2030; 2050

Source: Forbes (2024) Net-Zero Leaders [https://www.forbes.com/lists/net-zero-leaders/] and the respective corporate sustainability reports, environmental policies, and press releases cited in the reference list.

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According to Forbes (2024), Philip Morris International (PMI) holds first position globally for net-zero carbon-emission leadership. PMI's Low-Carbon Transition Plan showcases ambitious sustainability targets: recognising the urgency of the climate crisis, the LCTP brings forward PMI's aim of carbon neutrality in direct operations (Scopes 1+2) by five years to 2025 and commits to net-zero emissions across the entire value chain (Scopes 1+2+3) by 2040—ten years earlier than its previous 2050 goal. Johnson & Johnson, ranked second, anchors its environmental positioning in the words of its Chief Sustainability Officer, Paulette Frank: "At Johnson & Johnson, we care for the planet like our collective health depends on it … because it does." The company commits to sourcing 100% renewable electricity, reducing emissions across global operations, and reaching net-zero emissions across its value chain by 2045.

Tesla, at the forefront of environmental sustainability in the automotive sector, ranges from deploying energy-conserving technology to developing high-performance electric cars; its 2023 Impact Report documents reduced water consumption, battery designs supporting more than 200,000 miles of driving, and renewable-energy sourcing. Moody's, in third position, has committed to reducing GHG emissions by 2040 and to purchasing eco-friendly materials and implementing reduce–reuse–recycle waste practices by 2025. In electronics, HP leads in manufacturing lower-carbon products through a "full-circle" approach in which service-based solutions deliver customer value while reducing environmental impact and capital costs; its April 2021 press release commits HP to net-zero GHG by 2040, carbon neutrality and zero waste in operations by 2025, 75% circularity for products and packaging by 2030, zero deforestation for HP paper and paper-based packaging, and counteracting deforestation for non-HP paper used in its products and print services by 2030.

Microchip Technology's 2023 Sustainability Report documents actions to conserve natural ecosystems and comply with environmental law, including wastewater-recycling mechanisms, energy-use minimisation, and programmes to inculcate environmental responsibility among staff. Colgate-Palmolive has formulated four major actions for a healthier future: eliminating plastic waste, leading with zero-waste facilities, conserving water toward "Net Zero Water", and accelerating climate action by cutting its carbon footprint. Southern Company has reduced Scope 1 GHG emissions by 49% relative to its 2007 baseline—Scope 1 comprises roughly 69% of its emissions profile, with Scope 3 accounting for approximately 31%—and operates more than 400 CNG fleet vehicles that cut common urban pollutants by up to 90% and greenhouse-gas emissions by up to 21% relative to conventional fuels. Alliant Energy has reduced GHG emissions by 50% since 2005, intends to eliminate all coal from its generation fleet by 2040, and aspires to net-zero GHG emissions from utility operations. NRG Energy—an American energy company generating approximately 50,000 MW for nearly 3 million customers—aims to become the leading green-energy producer in the Americas, targeting a 50% GHG reduction by 2025, net-zero emissions by 2050, and 100% electrification of its company-owned light-duty fleet by 2030.

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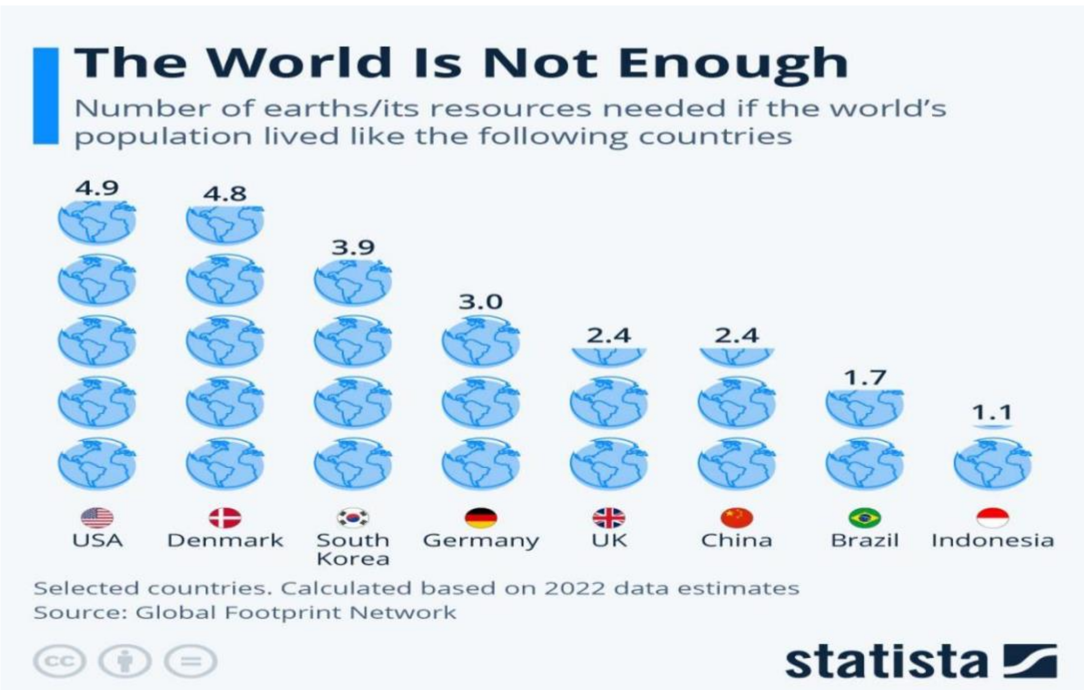
Sustainability-management practice in the corporate world has garnered considerable attention, though the discussion has centred largely on sustainability marketing, production, and operations management (Sharma et al., 2010). The concept of sustainability practice fundamentally links business and environment (Holliday et al., 2002), and marketing has always been concerned with identifying environmentally sensitive consumers and developing techniques to target them (Ellen et al., 1991; Peattie & Crane, 2005). Incorporating sustainability into marketing is a matter of necessity rather than choice (Ghosh, 2019).

6. Discussion

6.1 Integrating Consumer Perception and Corporate Practice

Sustainable marketing strategies that focus on environmental protection are fundamentally congruent with consumers' environmental concern.

Figure 6. Illustrative Representation of Environmental Pressure from Economic Activity (as in the Original Manuscript)



Knowledge and awareness of ecosystem conservation motivate consumers to subscribe to environmentally friendly products. In impoverished nations, however, where income levels are low and educational attainment limited, demand for green products remains weak. At the same time, the stress on the Earth's carrying capacity from environmental resource depletion constitutes a major threat to humanity, and most consumers—as the studies reviewed demonstrate—respond positively to green and sustainable commodities out of concern for climate change and environmental degradation. Indeed, it may not be long before corporations are unable to operate

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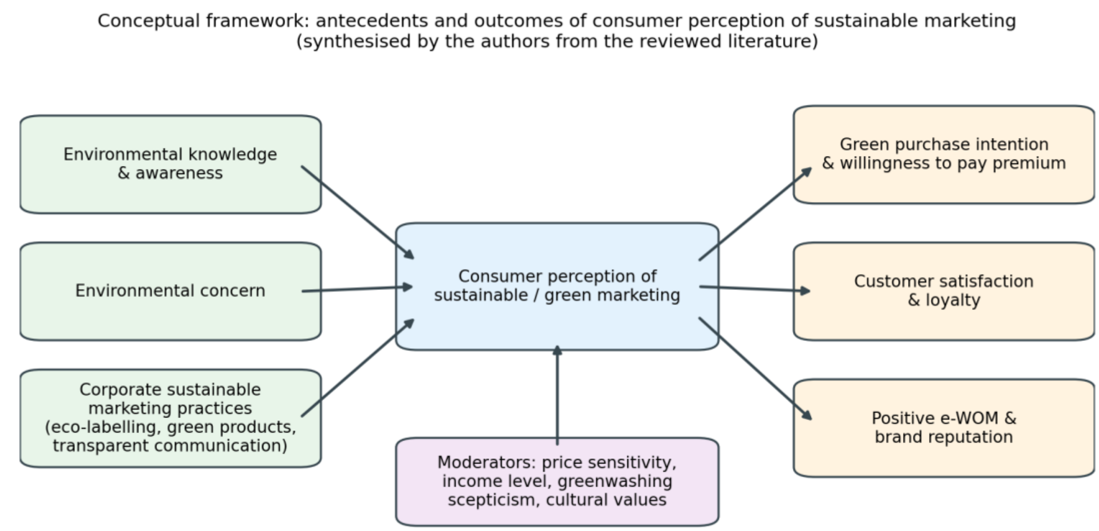
at all owing to the unavailability of natural resources. Mahatma Gandhi's famous observation—"The world has enough for everyone's need, but not everyone's greed"—rings true of recent human activity in the service of unsatisfied wants. The rapid expansion of the corporate sector has pushed the Earth's carrying capacity into a red zone. Robust environmental law is indeed a weapon against resource depletion; nevertheless, corporations should voluntarily take the initiative to introduce green commodities and green processes. Societal influence and cultural values also play their part, as individuals are more likely to adopt sustainable behaviours that align with prevailing norms of environmental conservation.

6.2 Conceptual Framework

Triangulating the consumer-side themes (Section 4.2) with the firm-side case evidence (Section 5) yields the integrative framework in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Conceptual Framework: Antecedents and Outcomes of Consumer Perception of Sustainable Marketing



Source: synthesised by the authors from the reviewed literature.

Environmental knowledge, environmental concern, and corporate sustainable-marketing practices (eco-labelling, credible green products, and transparent communication anchored in verifiable commitments such as science-based net-zero targets) jointly shape consumer perception of sustainable marketing; favourable perception, in turn, drives green purchase intention and willingness to pay a premium, satisfaction and loyalty, and positive e-WOM and brand reputation. Price sensitivity, income constraints, greenwashing scepticism, and cultural values moderate these relationships, while the most recent studies position green trust as the pivotal mechanism through which marketing communication—especially on social media—is converted into purchase intention (Wu & Long, 2024; Rehman, 2025).

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6.3 Research Propositions

The framework suggests the following testable propositions:

P1. Environmental knowledge and awareness are positively associated with favourable consumer perception of sustainable marketing.

P2. Environmental concern strengthens the relationship between corporate sustainable-marketing practices and favourable consumer perception.

P3. Favourable consumer perception of sustainable marketing is positively associated with (a) green purchase intention, (b) willingness to pay a price premium, (c) customer satisfaction and loyalty, and (d) positive e-WOM.

P4. Price sensitivity and income constraints attenuate the perception–purchase relationship, with the attenuation stronger in emerging and low-income economies.

P5. Verifiable, science-based corporate commitments (e.g., net-zero targets, third-party-assured disclosures) reduce greenwashing scepticism and thereby strengthen the perception–purchase relationship.

7. Findings, Implications and Recommendations

7.1 Key Findings

The implementation of sustainable marketing strategy has evolved over time (Kumar et al., 2012). Determining environmental policies that work in every situation is never easy; a contributing obstacle is consumers limited environmental knowledge, which leads businesses to advertise goods or services in markets where buyers do not believe the offerings are ecologically benign (Pradeep & Kuckian, 2016; Firdiansyah et al., 2021). Businesses nevertheless continue to invest in sustainable management practices because of the urgency of sustaining economic, social, and environmental growth (Thevanes, 2018). Practising sustainable marketing fosters customer loyalty, attracts investors, and enhances corporate reputation (Rathore, 2018); organisations that embrace a green strategy are more resilient, inventive, future-oriented, and frequently more lucrative than those that do not (Boiral, 2002). Sustainability is making inroads into holistic marketing, and its consideration in building a comprehensive marketing strategy and marketing mix can never be understated (Kumar et al., 2012). Sustainable marketing strategy is likewise a contemporary instrument for acquiring competitive advantage by developing a desirable, differentiated, and defensible market position (Obermiller et al., 2008; Rathore, 2017; Kelleci & Yıldız, 2021).

The scarcity of natural resources is driving many corporate enterprises toward alternative energy sources. The 3Rs agenda (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) has strongly influenced corporate operations, while the switch to alternative energy is widely practised as a principal means of mitigating the corporate carbon footprint. GHG mitigation has become a general corporate response to climate

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change, and scientific waste management—or outright waste reduction—has become the operating motto of most leading firms, as the case evidence in Section 5 demonstrates.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

First, by synthesising eighteen empirical studies across ten countries, the review consolidates a fragmented evidence base and confirms the centrality of the knowledge–concern–perception–behaviour pathway in green consumer research. Second, by integrating firm-side case evidence, the study extends perception research beyond consumer psychology to the credibility infrastructure—science-based targets, assured disclosures, circularity programmes—on which persuasive green claims increasingly depend. Third, the propositions in Section 6.3 provide a structured agenda for hypothesis-testing research, including cross-national comparisons of the moderating effects of income and environmental literacy.

7.3 Managerial and Policy Implications

Marketing strategy should voice the corporate agenda of promoting and preserving the natural environment through genuine green intervention. Green processes admittedly impose additional costs, but businesses should invest in research to produce commodities and processes that are sustainable and economical across all dimensions. Indigenous methods of green processing should be incorporated scientifically; doing so is also a means of earning customer support and loyalty. Managers should (i) anchor green claims in verifiable commitments to pre-empt greenwashing scepticism (P5); (ii) use eco-labelling and transparent communication, which the evidence links directly to favourable perception (Vafaei et al., 2019; Nazir et al., 2024); (iii) address the price barrier in emerging markets through affordable green lines and value communication (Sharadhi et al., 2023); and (iv) segment by environmental knowledge, prioritising consumer-education investments where literacy is low. For policymakers, the findings support environmental-education programmes and incentive structures (eco-label certification, green subsidies) that lower the cost and credibility barriers to green consumption. Basic natural endowments such as air and water are no longer free commodities—their scarcity is a result of human-induced environmental degradation—and business should treat the natural environment as a primary stakeholder in all operations.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that temper its conclusions and open avenues for further inquiry. First, the review is confined to English-language studies published between 2012 and 2025 and, despite systematic search and snowballing, some relevant studies may have been missed; publication bias toward significant, positive findings cannot be excluded. Second, the heterogeneity of constructs and measures across the included studies precluded meta-analytic aggregation; future research could pursue a meta-analysis as the evidence base standardises. Third, the case analysis relies on corporate self-disclosures, which are susceptible to favourable self-

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presentation; future work should triangulate disclosures with independent audits, third-party ESG ratings, and objective emission data. Fourth, most included studies employ cross-sectional surveys, which limit causal inference and are vulnerable to social-desirability bias and the well-documented green attitude–behaviour gap; longitudinal, experimental, and behavioural-data designs are needed. Finally, future research should test the propositions in Section 6.3—particularly the moderating roles of income, environmental literacy, and greenwashing scepticism—across developed and emerging markets, and examine how emerging tools (e.g., digital product passports, blockchain-verified eco-labels) reshape consumer perception.

9. Conclusion

The world is passing through a phase of environmental crisis in which business corporations risk being shunned by global citizens who perceive the corporate sector as the enemy of the environment. As organisations traverse the intricacies of today's economy, incorporating sustainability into marketing strategy is no longer an option but a strategic necessity for a robust and ethical future. Sustainable marketing must be seen as an integral part of the organisation's basic values, mission, and daily operations rather than a stand-alone endeavour. Achieving sustainability goals requires a comprehensive strategy that prioritises openness, accountability, and continuous improvement, and that takes into consideration every step of the value chain—from raw-material sourcing to end-of-life disposal. It is equally critical to understand and address the demands and ideals of environmentally concerned consumers.

The evidence synthesised here shows that consumers respond favourably to credible sustainable marketing—demonstrating awareness, willingness to pay premiums, loyalty, and advocacy—while leading corporations increasingly compete on verifiable environmental commitments. The convergence of these two forces suggests that firms which treat the natural environment as a principal stakeholder, and which communicate genuine green intervention transparently, will be best positioned to meet consumer expectations and to spur business growth while contributing to the preservation of the planet.

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