



Embracing The Future: Unveiling The Role Of Sustainability In Innovative Branding

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of sustainability and branding is becoming increasingly important in modern business, as it impacts consumer behavior and company culture. In a world characterized by environmental awareness and economic advancement, companies must review their operations to comply with sustainable practices. Creative branding serves as a potent tool for firms to convey their dedication to ethical business practices and differentiate themselves in a crowded market. Integrating sustainability and branding requires a fundamental change in organizational culture and strategic thinking. Businesses need to create genuine stories that align with these values as consumers prioritize ethical considerations. This paper examines how integrating sustainability into a brand's core can act as a catalyst for creative strategies that further the global agenda of sustainable development. The impact of sustainable branding on consumer perceptions and brand loyalty is also examined, as building trust and establishing long-term relationships can be greatly influenced by a brand's genuine commitment to sustainability. The paper aims to further the discussion on the mutually beneficial relationship between creative branding and sustainability by analyzing the dynamic business ethics landscape, consumer demands, and worldwide obstacles.

Keywords: Sustainability, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Loyalty, Cost

Introduction

Earth's genesis dates back to around 4.5 billion years ago, with the first human-like species, Homo erectus, appearing in Africa around 2 million years ago. The theory of evolution suggests that early humans evolved from a common ancestor with apes and developed distinct physical and behavioral characteristics over time. Since ancient Greek times, humans have proposed that humans could alter climate on a global scale by chopping down trees, plowing fields, or irrigating deserts. Joseph Fourier proposed that energy reaching the planet as sunlight must be balanced by energy returning to space, but some of that energy must be held within the atmosphere, keeping Earth warm. In the early 1970s, global cooling concerns took hold, with some scientists theorizing pollution could block sunlight and cool Earth. However, warnings of Earth's cooling were dropped as temperatures resumed their upward climb. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 to gather and evaluate data related to climate change, and in 1998, the warmest year on record was the result of a strong El Nino and global warming.

The Industrial Revolution in the mid-18th century worsened the situation, leading to significant advancements in technology and transportation, leading to a shift from agrarian and manual labor-based economies to industrial and machine-based economies. Positive impacts included increased productivity and economic growth due to new technologies and production methods, new transportation systems, and faster information exchange. Global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, at a time when they need to be rapidly falling. The global surface temperature rises in tandem with greenhouse gas concentrations, exacerbating heat-related ailments and complicating outdoor labor. Rising temperatures cause more moisture to evaporate, exacerbating flooding and heavy rainfall, and increasing the frequency of catastrophic storms. The world is losing species 1,000 times faster than at any other point in recorded human history, which is exacerbated by climate change. There are one million species that could go extinct in the next few decades. Air pollution, disease, extreme weather, forced relocation, mental health strains, increased hunger, and inadequate nutrition in areas where food is scarce are just a few of the effects negatively affecting people's health.

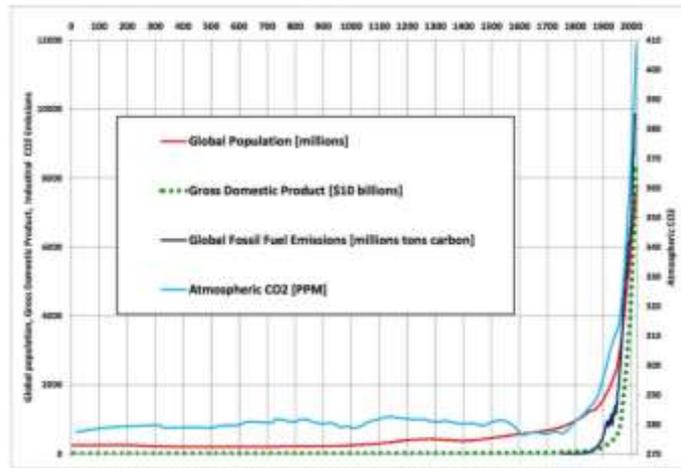


Fig. 1

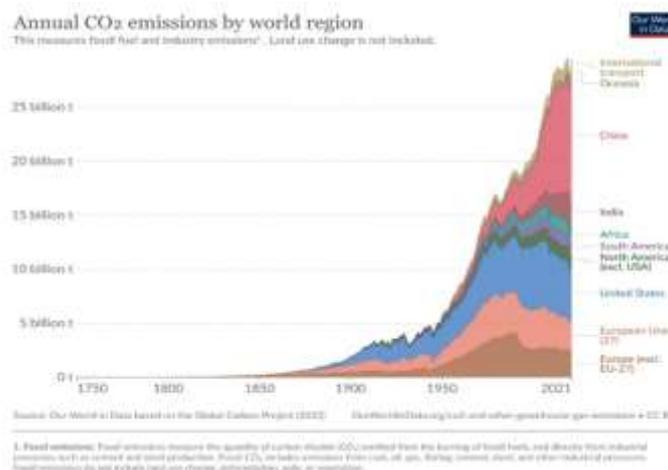


Fig 2

Manufacturing businesses face significant environmental risks due to their role in global production, accounting for one-fifth of carbon emissions and 54% of global energy consumption. As the global consumer market continues to grow, nations are grappling with resource waste and environmental pollution. The need for modernizing technological production and social behavioral patterns has led to the need for creative solutions that promote sustainability. Businesses can use eco-innovation to turn environmental limitations into opportunities. The intersection of environmental awareness and economic advancement is becoming increasingly evident. This research paper examines the complex relationship between innovative branding and sustainability, focusing on the impact on corporate identity, customer loyalty, and the bottom line. The paper also explores how integrating sustainability into a brand's core can stimulate creative strategies that promote sustainable development. The study also examines the impact of sustainable branding on consumer perceptions and brand loyalty. The paper aims to disentangle the complex ways in which sustainable branding can impact consumer behavior and boost a company's bottom line by examining case studies and market trends. It also discusses the opportunities and challenges faced by companies when incorporating sustainability into their branding strategies.

Review of Literature:

A collection of material and immaterial characteristics intended to establish awareness, identity, and a positive reputation for a good, service, person, location, or organization is known as a brand (Tanya Sammut-Bonnici, Brand and Branding, 2015). In addition to leaving a lasting impression on consumers, branding tells them what to expect from your company, which is why it is so important. It's a tactic to differentiate yourself from the competition by outlining precisely what it is that makes you the superior choice. Your brand is intended to accurately convey your company's identity and desired perception. Branding increases a business's worth. Branding is essential for attracting new business, and a strong brand can increase a company's worth by giving it more influence in the marketplace. Its established market position makes it an increasingly alluring investment opportunity. The final product of the branding process is the brand, which consists of the value and reputation that go along with it. A strong reputation translates into value when a brand is strong. Value can be

exemplified by influence, price premium, or mindshare. A corporate asset with inherent monetary value is the brand (Ali Batan, *The Importance of Branding*, 2021).

Customers view a brand as a special combination of emotional and functional qualities that provide value, make an experience stand out, and fulfill a promise (Lynch et al., 2004). It can represent interests beyond the brand itself and has a symbolic value distinct from anything available in reality (McEnnally et al., 1999). There is a great deal of interdependence between brands and consumers. In the same way that consumers shape a brand's growth and success, brands also influence and direct consumer behavior. Because branding allows consumers to express their interests, attitudes, preferences, and overall personality through the brands they use, it has become known as "the story of belonging and pervasion" (Olins, 2003, p. 14). Although the attitude-behavior gap—defined as the discrepancy between consumers' attitudes and actual buying behavior—has been identified in numerous studies (Carrington et al., 2010; Lippincott, 2007), consumers' expectations of brands have increased in tandem with their dramatic rise in interest in environmentally friendly alternatives (Mostafa, 2007). The relationship between mainstream brands and their customers has flourished to the point where consumers want much more for their money and work to gain access to all of the advantages offered by the company. For the companies, this entails acting morally and making contributions to a better cause. According to Unilever CEO Paul Polman, "Businesses cannot succeed in societies that fail." Liberty is accompanied by responsibility. Additionally, they are reliable information sources and excellent mediators in the education and employment of sizable consumer groups, which, when a brand community is formed, can be a very powerful force in society (Horlings, S.: *Marketing Sustainability: Bridging the Gap Between Branding, Sustainability and Consumer Demands – Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative 2010*).

The interest of consumers in environmentally friendly alternatives has increased significantly in the past few years (Mostafa, M.M.: *A hierarchical analysis of the green consciousness of the Egyptian consumer*, *Psychology & Marketing* 24, 445-473, 2007). 79% of shoppers are shifting their preferences for products based on environmental impact, inclusivity, or social responsibility. Additionally, COVID-19 has raised consumer commitment to and awareness of sustainable purchasing: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 67% of consumers stated they would be more cautious about the scarcity of natural resources, and 65% said they would be more aware of the effects of their overall consumption in the "new normal" (TOI, *Majority Indians now purchase items based on social responsibility, inclusiveness, and environmental impact*, 2020). Sustainable brands possess the history, aptitude, and motivation to make this a reality. Sustainable qualities are starting to matter more when valuing a brand. Integrating sustainability concerns into brand performance and image is increasingly being used as a key differentiator (Aleksandar Grubor and Olja Milovanov, *brand strategies in the era of sustainability*, *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems* 15(1), 78-88, 2017). This necessitates a radical change in direction of sustainable production and consumption, with brand management in particular and marketing in general playing an increasingly important role in these decisions. Given the speed at which technology, markets, and society are changing, some experts argue that branding is less important than it once was. However, other experts maintain that brands still have a big influence on society and markets today (Campbell and Price 2021).

As a strategy, sustainability invariably takes center stage in branding and overarching corporate policy, exhibiting a conscientious attitude towards the needs of humankind (Kakabadse, N.K.; Rouzel, C. and Lee-Davies, L.: *Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder approach: A conceptual review*). Furthermore, sustainable attributes are becoming more and more significant in brand valuation (Armstrong et al., 2011; Gordon, 2002). The severity of the environmental issues and the obstacles to global economic competitiveness has brought attention to the necessity of modernizing and reshaping current technological production and social behavioral patterns. This awareness could eventually spark creative solutions that lead to sustainability (Carrillo-Hermosilla, *Eco-Innovation*, 2009). It appears that adopting sustainable attitudes and behaviors through the use of sustainable brands can bring about more profound changes in people's lives and guarantee the balance between the competing interests of society, businesses, and consumers. Sustainability, sometimes called the "new megatrend in business," has grown to be a major organizational concern as businesses figure out how to integrate the creation of environmental, social, and cultural value into their operations and mission (Porter and Derry 2012). To successfully adopt sustainable principles holistically, this first entails viewing sustainability as a process that is integrated into all business processes. "Sustainability necessitates a new kind of knowledge that can provide clear communication, transparent business operations and processes, and no false claims—a potentially dangerous territory (Schultz, D. E. and Block, M. P.; *Beyond brand loyalty: Brand sustainability*, *Journal of Marketing Communications*).

The communications industry has been losing the fight to preserve the integrity of this idea as businesses, activists, and others use the term "sustainable" to allude exclusively to environmental concerns. On the other hand, emphasizing environmental aspects when branding sustainable businesses is a smart place to start. Nowadays, over 90% of CEOs believe that success depends on sustainability. The amount of focus businesses are placing on their sustainability strategies is indicative of the mindset of today's CEOs (Simonetta Lein, *Why Sustainable Branding Matters*, *YEC Council Post*, 2018).

Businesses often pursue sustainability as a socially conscious way to demonstrate their commitment to environmental responsibility. However, CEOs in the US and Europe often worry about the potential increase in expenses, lack of quick cash gains, and potential impact on their competitiveness. Comparing their operations to developing nations puts them at a disadvantage in creating sustainable products. Additionally,

suppliers often lack green inputs and transparency, and consumers may be reluctant to pay extra for environmentally friendly goods during economic downturns. However, sustainability can lead to technological and organizational innovations that provide both financial and non-financial benefits. As businesses revamp their offerings, they can position themselves for success in the post-recession era. (Ram Nidumolu, C.K. Prahalad, and M.R. Rangaswami, *Harvard Business Review*, 2009).

Nowadays, over 90% of CEOs believe that success depends on sustainability. The amount of focus businesses are placing on their sustainability strategies is indicative of the mindset of today's CEOs (Ms. Sarah Shilling, CMO at Unlimited Group). As a consequence of advances in the digitization process and increased consumer awareness of social, economic, and environmental issues, more and more companies are embarking on innovative and sustainable initiatives in response to these new demands (Antonio Marin Garcia, *Do innovation and sustainability influence customer satisfaction in retail?* 2021). Innovations that integrate the ecological, economic, and social aspects of innovation are commonly referred to as sustainable innovations. Conceptualizations of sustainable innovation can highlight outcomes that go beyond financial gain. Oksanen and Hautamäki, for instance, contend that sustainable development and well-being are far more significant than financial gains, which are only incidental. Furthermore, rather than focusing on optimizing specific features, the authors stress that sustainable innovations improve products on a fundamental or systemic level. However, because sustainable innovation has three facets, its effects are frequently quite complex (Lotta Ruippo, *Innovating for Sustainability: Attributes, Motivations, and Responsibilities in the Finnish Food Packaging Ecosystem*, 2022). "The implementation of a new process, product, or service, that adds value to a market and makes a positive impact on the environment and society—incrementally or transformationally" is how Maria Doloquin defines sustainable innovation in "Sustainable Innovation for the New Normal." She names cellular agriculture, renewable, clean energy, and the shift to circular economies as the three main areas that businesses should concentrate on. As the need to develop integrated models for the creation and implementation of sustainable brand management patterns focused on behaviourism in consumer shopping behaviour grows, consumers have a strong incentive to support environmental product innovation performance as well as to improve the implementation of this innovation. It is necessary to make room for the acquisition of new information and the formulation of new hypotheses based on methodical, multidisciplinary approaches, which serve as the foundation for sustainable development based on innovations that promote sustainable growth and do so through brands (Loucanová, E.; Nosalová, M. *Eco-innovation Performance in Slovakia: Assessment Based on ABC Analysis of Eco-innovation Indicators*. *BioResources* 2020, 15, 5355–5365).

Strong brands and an all-encompassing strategy are necessary for the appropriate integration of the sustainability concept into society in the context of branding. The most inspiring, influential, and capable of evoking widespread resonance and action are well-positioned, reliable brands. However, a well-thought-out strategy optimizes the impact of brands, best integrating "greenness" into consumers' lifestyles and igniting a much broader audience than just the green audience. In a similar vein, it adds value to an individual and informs customers of all the advantages of buying green brands (Danciu, V.: *Successful Green Branding, a New Shift in Brand Strategy: Why and how it works*, *The Romanian Economic Journal* 56, 47–64, 2015). Doloquin offers six recommendations for how businesses can match their innovation strategy to sustainability goals. Specifically, she advises businesses to evaluate how innovative their sector is and find chances for sustainable innovation, identify their current assets and what organizational adjustments are required, set up structures and processes that support innovation, and measure the results using both hard and soft metrics (Tammy McCausland, *Innovating for Sustainability*, 2021). Five crucial organisational practices—technology super-scouting throughout the value chain, search heuristics favouring radical sustainability solutions, integration of sustainability performance metrics in product development, championing the value chain to build demand for radical sustainability oriented product innovation, and leveraging the benefits of open innovation—are identified in an in-depth case study of a sustainability-oriented innovation process for a radical new product within a multinational life sciences company, DSM (*Radical Innovation for Sustainability: The Power of Strategy and Open Innovation*).

Methodology:

The study's focus is exclusively conceptual. It has incorporated both primary and secondary data. Interviews on environmental challenges and issues were conducted with a variety of NGOs and environmentalists. The secondary data came from a number of reports, journals, and websites.

Objective:

- 1) To analyse the concept of innovative branding and its alignment with sustainability
- 2) To discuss the policy framework for the effective role of innovative branding toward sustainability
- 3) To examine the impact of sustainable branding on consumer perceptions and brand loyalty

Discussion

Consumer attitudes, actions, and spending patterns are ever-changing. Customers are growing more conscious of environmental issues and how their purchases affect the environment. Consequently, the ecological consumer now prioritizes quality of life and environmental preservation above all else. Consumers prefer doing business with companies that care about the environment. Global warming is one of the effects of environmental degradation, which has increased public awareness of the need for sustainable development. Customers' worries regarding eco-consumption and how it affects their everyday purchasing decisions have grown as a result. This growing awareness of and propensity for sustainable consumption is likely to have an impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Sellers of such products must comprehend customer preferences to effectively promote them, as different customers have varying preferences regarding the features and innovation of ecological products. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate alternative factors that could account for the indirect relationship between consumer awareness of social and environmental issues and pro-environmental behaviour. A study conducted revealed, that there was a positive correlation found between higher literacy rates and higher pollution levels in cities and awareness levels of sustainable brands. Surprisingly, though, millennials from larger cities exhibit lower levels of sustainable consumption and sacrifice readiness than do their counterparts from smaller cities. In addition, younger millennials are more conscious of how their consumption affects the environment, while older millennials are more interested in sustainable consumption. Additionally, women tend to be more aware of their consumer behaviors than men, according to gender segregation and their consumption patterns.

Consumer decision regarding sustainable brands is based on three connections; namely, 1) Consumer and Environmental Sustainability, 2) Brand and Environmental Sustainability, 3) consumer and brand. Consumer acceptance and positive attitudes towards sustainable brands depend on available green information, individual processing, sustainability fit within the brand scheme, consumer motivation, and strength of relationship with the brand. Consumer motivation is driven by their concern for environmental issues and belief that their contribution makes sense. Convincing and sound communication are essential for the process, as familiarity with the company's vision and tangible action plan is the basis for motivating consumers. Emotional connection created through green positioning provides three types of values for consumers: 1) a feeling of well-being; 2) auto-expression benefits; and 3) nature-related benefits. Harnessing social influence is one of the most effective ways to elicit pro-environmental behaviors in consumption. Telling online shoppers that other people were buying eco-friendly products led to a 65% increase in making at least one sustainable purchase. Making sustainable behaviors more evident to others, making people's commitments to eco-friendly behavior public, and using healthy competition between social groups can turbocharge social influence. Companies can use design features to eliminate negative habits and substitute positive ones. One of the benefits of encouraging consumers to form desirable habits is that it can create positive spillover: people like to be consistent, so if they adopt one sustainable behavior, they are often apt to make other positive changes in the future. Research has found that hope and pride are particularly useful in driving sustainable consumption. Companies still strive to communicate their brands' sustainability to consumers in ways that heighten brand relevance, increase market share, and fuel a shift toward a culture of sustainable living.

In a case study conducted in the industry or manufacturing, some of the business professionals' opinions on Sustainable Products, are depicted in the following charts.

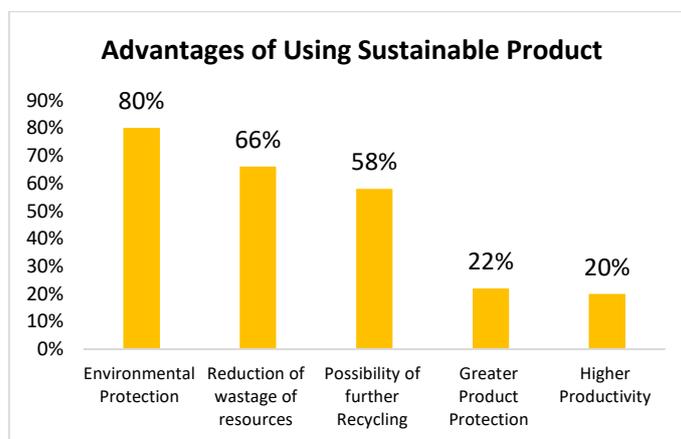


Fig. 3

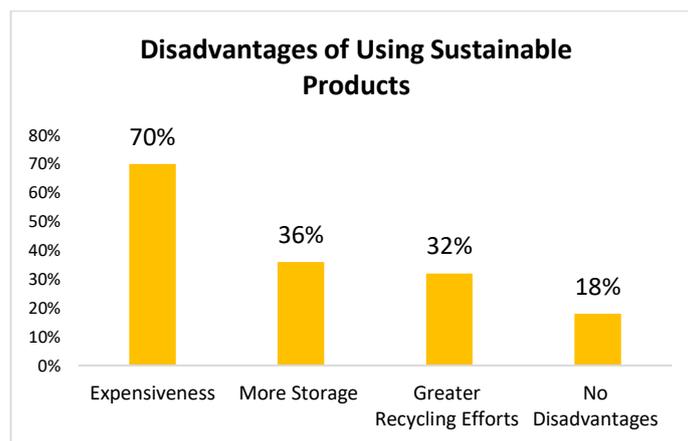


Fig. 4

Key Learnings:

Support for sustainable business is rising in both developed and developing economies, according to recent research. Many consumers think that governments and brands have equal responsibility for bringing about positive change. Companies need to pledge to preserve the environment and natural systems. According to a survey, 66% of participants overall and 75% of millennial respondents stated they take sustainability into account before making a purchase. 41% of Chinese consumers claim to be interested in eco-friendly products. Furthermore, the voice of younger generations will only heighten the demand for sustainability as social media channels continue to proliferate. There are undoubtedly increasing market opportunities for businesses willing and able to react, particularly those offering eco-friendly products or speaking out against weakening, as customers are now willing to switch products or services when a company violates their values.

Apart from concentrating on distinct consumer reactions concerning brands and sustainability, scholars could additionally investigate the mechanisms of cooperative sustainable value generation as a crucial component of sustainable brand administration. How the principles that underpin sustainable brands are developed and applied may be a crucial topic of discussion. In this context, it's also important to investigate consumer and brand community perspectives on sustainability.

Fans of a brand are prepared to embrace the messages and way of life that the brand espouses, as well as to identify with the brand values. "Brands they trust, brands that stand out from the competition, brands that are innovative, brands that evoke strong feelings in the user, and brands whose parent company behaves well" are what entice them. For any company with a long-term perspective on business, understanding their customers, going green with their brands, and motivating a large audience to adopt sustainable behaviour should become their mission. Numerous factors, both internal and external, are driving the need for more sustainably designed innovation. There is an internal understanding that ecoefficiency, cleaner production, and technology replacement are examples of sustainability innovation practises that demonstrate how cleaner and more efficient production can improve business performance. As an illustration, compared to conventional methods, the energy savings employed have nearly doubled, lowering production costs and emission levels. There appears to be more external pressure, particularly in light of growing consumer and regulatory demand for sustainable and innovative products.

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