

# A Psychological Approach to Changing Consumer Behavior Towards Environmental Issues in Emerging Countries: Exploring the Greenwashing Paradigm in the Context of Market Orientation

Nasser BOUCHARB<sup>1\*</sup>, Farouk SAHNOUNE<sup>2</sup>, Hasnaoui BALBAL<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> University of Ferhat Abbas Setif 1, Algeria

The Author's E-mail: [nbouchareb@univ-setif.dz](mailto:nbouchareb@univ-setif.dz)<sup>1</sup>, [farouk.sahnoune@univ-setif.dz](mailto:farouk.sahnoune@univ-setif.dz)<sup>2</sup>, [balbal.hasnaoui@univ-setif.dz](mailto:balbal.hasnaoui@univ-setif.dz)<sup>3</sup>

Received: 09/2023

Published: 01/2024

## Abstract:

The present model suggest that we should take the Greenwashing as psychological approach to changing consumer behavior on environmental issues in developing nations. The authors put forward greenwashing as a strategy for shifting towards ecologically-motivated market orientation with deliberate built-in obsolescence. Although greenwashing is seen negatively, the point is made that it can contribute greatly towards sensitization and promoting accountability among individuals towards this end. Nonetheless, they insist that Greenwashing does not offer a permanent solution hence needs governments' intervention through regulations and enforcement of ethics for sustainable change. Another objective of the research is to show how greenwashing works in shaping customer attitudes within emerging country's market orientation.

**Keywords:** Consumer attitudes, Consumer behavior, Environmental issues, Greenwashing, Green marketing.

## 1. Introduction

As consumer learn more about environmental issues, businesses are starting to realize that part of being competitive means being socially and ecologically responsible (Hayu Agustini, Suciarto Athanasius, & Bekt Retnawati, 2019). Therefore, many companies now have green products in their range and are looking for ways to make production less harmful (Richnák & Gubová, 2021;

Szymańska-Brałkowska & Malinowska, 2018). Sustainable practices are increasingly important for modern business strategies (Lim & Tsutsui, 2012).

However much the business models have shifted in recent years; they have left behind developing countries which continue producing using traditional methods without considering the impact on consumers or the environment around them, due their market orientation model. After all is said and done; executives only care about one thing: What's next? Their mantra being – “The business of business is business not sustainability” (Blackburn, 2007). So for them, business First. Market orientation significantly influences how companies respond to environmental pressures, making them more aware of such forces where it is stronger (González-Benito, 2008). This can be seen in the consumer sector which has witnessed an increasing adoption of green marketing strategies (Isabel, Andrés, & Matute Vallejo, 2009). It was discovered that when companies implement environmental marketing there is a positive effect on their operational and financial performance ultimately enhancing competitiveness as well as reducing ecological footprint (Fraj-Andrés, Martinez-Salinas, & Matute-Vallejo, 2008). Among factors affecting consumer behavior towards eco-friendly products; this one seems to have the greatest impact within the context of green advertising campaign (Smerichevskyi, Kniazieva, & Kolbushkin 2018). Companies operating in developing nations need to adjust their plans according to what customers expect from them particularly with regard to eco-marketing. When it comes down to these areas people may not be very much concerned about nature conservation hence businesses should step forward and take care of such matters instead.

To bring together ecological and economic worries, green marketing is one of the most well-known methods; this also helps to raise awareness about the environment (Alves, 2009). However, the situation with such a practice is not as simple as it seems in developing countries. Consumers in these countries tend not to buy environmental-friendly goods because they think that the latter are more expensive than their regular alternatives (D'Souza, Taghian, Lamb, & Peretiatkos, 2006). At this time there is a new type of communication starts spreading green acts which are misleading and known as Greenwashing. According to Lockard & Becker, (2009) and Przychodzeń, (2013), Greenwashing means any kind of intentional misrepresentation or promotion that gives false information about what is environmentally friendly for certain products.

## 2. Changing consumer's Behavior through the Greenwashing

The awareness of consumers toward environmental issues is more important than the official government policies (Chen & Chai, 2010). To prompt consumers into changing their ways of life and consumption behaviors for environmental benefits, it is important that these matters are made prominent among consumers (Miniero, Codini, Bonera, Corvi, & Bertoli, 2014). And this can be achieved through changing people's attitudes which in turn affects their actions too. In Fishbein's theory, Customers' beliefs about a product affect their attitudes towards it (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). Communicating greenwashing as an unreal attribute requiring new models of persuasion can present such like this. Companies engaging in Greenwashing reveal favorable environmental attributes which may give an overly positive impression about their overall environmental performance (Rahman, Park, & Chi, 2015).

Greenwash communication can take advantage of heuristic processing, where prior knowledge and experiences are reactivated from memory. Heuristics are summarized previous knowledge that consumers have about similar situations and the relation between situational cues and message agreement. like "NATURAL Always Mean SAFE" and green is natural, so "GREEN is SAFE".

The model suggests that in case of most companies in emerging nations will greenwash as cost-free communication with no liability, why not make everything green? They shall therefore make it a Green model for fashion that later becomes cutler of consummation where not only consumer attitudes but their behaviors also change. At this point in time customers will come to know about products called green ones which don't affect environment much. In this context, Greenwashing acts like a Vaccine towards lack of responsibility taken by such firms; introducing what seems bad so as to bring good. These enterprises can modify customer's attitude and behavior by showing positive environmental attributes and emphasizing eco-friendliness. Hence people will realize what is meant by green products and how they are less harmful to the surroundings. That is how Greenwashing serves as an antidote against negative impacts arising from companies neglecting their ecological duties

Once the customer's attitude is changed towards the green products, followed by green behavior, then it becomes necessary and inevitable for government to step in so as to ensure that they are put into practice. In a free business model, this

intervention usually comes in form of legislation and regulation. Companies need to stop Greenwashing and adopt real green practices as customers get more environmentally conscious and the law demands higher level of responsibility from corporations. Companies should respond with sustainable business models that benefit both their reputation and environment since this will be demanded by customers' needs coupled with legal pressures on them. By following these steps, companies will be able to gain the trust of their customers and contribute positively with the environmental issues.

### 3. Conclusion

Companies are taking up environmental-friendly measures in an effort to reduce their negative impact on nature as customers become more aware about sustainability. Greenwashing is an intentional strategy which seeks to communicate with consumers about ecological matters while also showcasing efforts made by organizations towards implementing ethical practices. Initially these standards will promote a positive outlook on green products hence moving away from old methods but not until later when such requirements start creating an atmosphere for greener marketing strategies where customers become more accountable and knowledgeable on issues concerning ecology.

### References

- [1] Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2000). Attitudes and the Attitude-Behavior Relation: Reasoned and Automatic Processes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 11(1), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14792779943000116>
- [2] Alves, I. M. (2009). GREEN SPIN EVERYWHERE: HOW GREENWASHING REVEALS THE LIMITS OF THE CSR PARADIGM. *Journal of Global Change & Governance*, 2(1).
- [3] Blackburn, W. R. (2007). *The sustainability handbook: the complete management guide to achieving social, economic and environmental responsibility*. Environmental Law Institute.
- [4] Chen, T. B., & Chai, L. T. (2010). Attitude towards the environment and green products: consumers' perspective. *Management Science and Engineering*, 4(2), 27.
- [5] D'Souza, C., Taghian, M., Lamb, P., & Peretiakos, R. (2006). Green products and corporate strategy: an empirical investigation. *Society and*

- Business Review*, 1(2), 144–157.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/17465680610669825>
- [6] Fraj-Andrés, E., Martínez-Salinas, E., & Matute-Vallejo, J. (2009). A multidimensional approach to the influence of environmental marketing and orientation on the firm's organizational performance. *Journal of business ethics*, 88, 263-286. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-008-9962-2>
- [7] González-Benito, Ó., & González-Benito, J. (2008). Implications of market orientation on the environmental transformation of industrial firms. *Ecological Economics*, 64(4), 752-762. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2006.07.012>
- [8] Hayu Agustini, M., Suciarto Athanasius, S., & Bekti Retnawati, B. (2019). Identification of green marketing strategies: perspective of a developing country. *Innovative Marketing*, 15(4), 42–56. [https://doi.org/10.21511/im.15\(4\).2019.04](https://doi.org/10.21511/im.15(4).2019.04)
- [9] Isabel, B. C., Andrés, E. F., & Matute Vallejo, J. (2009). The Influence of the Environmental Factor on Marketing Strategy: An Applied Study in the Consumer Industry. *EsicMarket*, 134, 129-154. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3420858>
- [10] Lim, A., & Tsutsui, K. (2012). Globalization and Commitment in Corporate Social Responsibility. *American Sociological Review*, 77(1), 69–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122411432701>
- [11] Lockard, V. D., & Becker, J. (2009). Greenwashing claims: how to avoid becoming an eco-fraud target. *Australian Product Liability Reporter*, 20(1–2), 7–14.
- [12] Miniero, G., Codini, A., Bonera, M., Corvi, E., & Bertoli, G. (2014). Being green: from attitude to actual consumption. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38(5), 521–528. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12128>
- [13] Przychodzeń, W. (2013). Greenwashing—Myth or Reality in the World of Business? *Management and Business Administration. Central Europe*, 123(4), 132–138. <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.7206/mba.ce.2084-3356.85>
- [14] Rahman, I., Park, J., & Chi, C. G. (2015). Consequences of “greenwashing”: Consumers’ reactions to hotels’ green initiatives. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 27(6), 1054–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2014-0202>

- [15] Richnák, P., & Gubová, K. (2021). Green and Reverse Logistics in Conditions of Sustainable Development in Enterprises in Slovakia. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 581. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020581>
- [16] Serhii Smerichevskyi , Tetiana Kniazieva, Yuriy Kolbushkin, Iryna Reshetnikova and Anna Olejniczuk- Merta (2018). Environmental orientation of consumer behavior: motivational component. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 16(2), 424-437. [http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.16\(2\).2018.38](http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.16(2).2018.38)
- [17] Szymańska-Brałkowska, M., & Malinowska, E. (2018). Improving company's environmental performance through Green Lean approach. *Ekonomia i Prawo*, 17(4), 433. <https://doi.org/10.12775/EiP.2018.031>