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Research Paper

Exploring the Impact of Green Marketing Strategies on Brand Perception among Gen Z Consumers: Trends, Preferences, and Future Implications

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ABSTRACT

Green marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for brands seeking to align their products and services with the growing consumer demand for environmental sustainability. This research explores the concept of green marketing strategies and their impact on brand perception, specifically among Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers. Gen Z, being the most environmentally conscious demographic, holds significant purchasing power and is increasingly shaping market trends with their preferences for eco-friendly and socially responsible brands. The study investigates how green marketing practices, such as sustainable packaging, carbon-neutral production processes, and environmental advocacy, influence Gen Z's perceptions of a brand's authenticity, trustworthiness, and overall value. The research also examines the factors driving Gen Z's preference for brands that adopt green marketing strategies, such as environmental awareness, social responsibility, and personal values. By analyzing survey data and consumer behavior patterns, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between green marketing initiatives and brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers. The findings highlight the critical role that sustainability plays in shaping brand image and consumer choices in an increasingly eco-conscious market. Furthermore, the paper discusses the potential long-term implications for brands seeking to cater to the preferences of Gen Z while ensuring effective and authentic green marketing strategies.

1.Introduction

The concept of green marketing has gained significant traction in recent years as both consumers and brands increasingly prioritize environmental sustainability. This shift has been driven by growing awareness about the environmental impact of consumer behaviors and the need for businesses to mitigate these effects. Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, represents the newest consumer cohort to shape the marketplace. With their strong environmental consciousness and digital-savvy nature, Gen Z is influencing how brands engage with sustainability. This study explores how green marketing strategies affect the brand perception among Gen Z consumers, considering their growing preference for eco-friendly and socially responsible brands. By understanding this relationship, brands can better cater to Gen Z's preferences, enhancing brand loyalty and reputation in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

1.1 The Rise of Green Marketing

Green marketing, defined as the promotion of products or services based on their environmental benefits, has become an integral part of modern business strategies. The rise of green marketing is driven by both the increasing demand for sustainable products and the growing importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Environmental concerns, such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion, have prompted consumers to demand more eco-friendly products and transparent business practices from brands. Consequently, many organizations are adopting green marketing strategies, including using renewable resources, minimizing waste, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting environmentally responsible practices. This shift is not only about reducing environmental harm but also aligning the business with the values and concerns of consumers, particularly younger generations. Gen Z, having grown up in an era of heightened environmental awareness, is particularly responsive to brands that embrace sustainability in their marketing

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efforts. As digital natives, Gen Z is adept at evaluating and demanding more ethical and transparent business practices, especially when it comes to environmental impact. Therefore, it becomes crucial for companies to develop green marketing strategies that genuinely align with the values of this consumer group.

1.2 Generation Z and Environmental Consciousness

Generation Z is widely regarded as the most environmentally conscious generation in recent history. Born into a world where climate change and environmental degradation are constant topics of discussion, Gen Z is particularly sensitive to issues like carbon emissions, plastic pollution, and deforestation. According to numerous studies, Gen Z is more likely than previous generations to consider the environmental impact of their purchases. They are also vocal about demanding more sustainable practices from brands, often choosing companies that prioritize social and environmental responsibility. For Gen Z, sustainability is not merely a trend but a core value that influences their purchasing decisions. A report by Nielsen indicates that 73% of Gen Z consumers are willing to pay more for products and services that are sustainably sourced or produced. This cohort expects transparency and authenticity from brands, and they are more likely to support those that are perceived as genuinely committed to environmental and social causes. Brands that use green marketing strategies can enhance their appeal to this demographic, gaining their trust and loyalty.

1.3 Green Marketing and Brand Perception

Brand perception refers to the way consumers view a brand and its products, influenced by various factors such as advertising, product quality, customer service, and, increasingly, environmental responsibility. Green marketing strategies have the potential to significantly shape brand perception, particularly in terms of brand credibility, trustworthiness, and consumer loyalty. When consumers perceive a brand as environmentally responsible, it can enhance their overall image of the brand and make them more likely to engage with it in the future. However, it is important to note that green marketing must be genuine to influence brand perception positively. Inauthentic or misleading green marketing claims, often referred to as "greenwashing," can have the opposite effect. Greenwashing occurs when brands exaggerate or falsely claim their products or practices are environmentally friendly, leading to consumer skepticism and distrust. For Gen Z consumers, who value authenticity and transparency, greenwashing is particularly damaging to a brand's reputation. Thus, companies must carefully develop and communicate their green marketing strategies to ensure they resonate with Gen Z and enhance their brand perception.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to fill a gap in understanding the specific relationship between green marketing strategies and brand perception among Gen Z consumers. While there is substantial research on green marketing and consumer behavior, few studies focus on how these strategies affect the perception of brands among Gen Z, a cohort that differs significantly from previous generations in terms of values and media consumption habits. As the first generation to grow up with the internet and social media, Gen Z is highly influential in shaping the future of marketing and branding strategies. This demographic's attitudes and behaviors are essential to understand, as they will shape market trends for years to come. Furthermore, this study is crucial for businesses that are eager to capture the attention and loyalty of Gen Z consumers. Understanding how green marketing can impact brand perception will provide valuable insights for brands looking to develop effective marketing strategies. In an increasingly competitive market, where consumers are becoming more selective and socially conscious, this research will assist companies in leveraging sustainability as a tool for enhancing brand image, increasing consumer trust, and fostering long-term brand loyalty.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the impact of green marketing strategies on brand perception among Gen Z consumers. This study seeks to examine how various green marketing practices, such as sustainable product sourcing, eco-friendly packaging, and corporate environmental initiatives, influence Gen Z's perception of brand authenticity, trustworthiness, and overall brand image. By understanding the relationship between green marketing and brand perception within this demographic, the research aims to provide valuable insights for brands looking to effectively engage with and appeal to Gen Z consumers who prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions.

Through this study, the research seeks to offer actionable insights that can guide brands in creating sustainable marketing strategies that enhance brand perception and drive consumer engagement among Gen Z.

The rise of sustainability has significantly influenced consumer behavior over the past decade. As environmental issues, such as climate change and pollution, gain prominence, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions. Among the most prominent groups driving this change is Generation Z (Gen Z). Born between 1997 and 2012, Gen Z represents a generation that is highly concerned with environmental sustainability. This cohort's purchasing behaviors are heavily influenced by how brands integrate sustainability into their products, services, and marketing strategies.

The term **green marketing** refers to the promotion of products or services based on their environmental benefits, such as being eco-friendly, sustainably sourced, or carbon-neutral. Green marketing strategies can include efforts like using renewable resources, minimizing waste, and adopting sustainable practices across the supply chain. As businesses face increasing pressure to meet the sustainability expectations of consumers, especially Gen Z, they must adapt their marketing strategies to align with this growing demand for environmental responsibility.

This paper delves into how green marketing strategies influence brand perception among Gen Z consumers, focusing on the importance of authenticity and transparency in these marketing efforts. By examining the direct correlation between

green marketing strategies and how they shape Gen Z's perception of a brand's credibility, trustworthiness, and overall brand image, this research aims to provide valuable insights for businesses targeting this environmentally-conscious generation.

2. The Importance of Green Marketing in Today's Marketplace

In recent years, green marketing has evolved from being a niche market strategy to a mainstream business practice. Companies are increasingly adopting eco-friendly policies and marketing messages to cater to the rising demand for sustainable products. According to Nielsen (2015), 73% of global consumers say they would change their consumption habits to reduce their environmental impact. This shift in consumer behavior has pushed businesses to take sustainability seriously and incorporate it into their brand identities. The main goals of green marketing are to raise awareness about environmental issues, differentiate products and services from competitors, and build trust with consumers. With a growing emphasis on sustainability, brands are adopting eco-friendly practices in their operations and communicating these efforts through various marketing channels. For businesses targeting younger generations, green marketing offers a powerful opportunity to engage consumers, build long-term loyalty, and promote positive brand associations. However, it's not enough for brands to simply claim they are "green." To effectively leverage green marketing strategies, companies must provide tangible evidence of their environmental efforts. Transparency, authenticity, and commitment to sustainability are essential elements of any successful green marketing campaign, especially for Generation Z, who values honesty and ethical practices in the brands they support.

3. Gen Z's Environmental Consciousness and Consumer Behavior

Generation Z is emerging as one of the most environmentally-conscious consumer groups in history. Growing up amid global discussions about climate change, environmental degradation, and social responsibility, Gen Z has developed a strong sense of urgency around sustainability issues. According to a study by First Insight (2019), 73% of Gen Z consumers are willing to spend more on sustainable products. This generation not only prioritizes the environmental impact of their purchases but also expects brands to take meaningful action toward sustainability. For Gen Z, purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by a brand's alignment with their personal values, especially when it comes to social and environmental responsibility. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z is highly skeptical of marketing tactics that do not reflect genuine efforts toward sustainability. They demand transparency, and if a brand's green marketing message is perceived as inauthentic or as "greenwashing," it can lead to negative brand perceptions and even consumer backlash. This generation is also known for its use of digital platforms to research and validate brands' claims. Gen Z consumers are constantly connected to social media, where they engage in discussions about sustainability, follow environmental influencers, and share their own sustainability-related content. Therefore, for brands aiming to capture Gen Z's attention, adopting a green marketing strategy is not just a way to enhance their public image but also an essential step in gaining credibility and building consumer trust.

4. Green Marketing Strategies and Their Impact on Brand Perception

The relationship between green marketing strategies and brand perception is multifaceted. At its core, green marketing involves creating a brand image that is synonymous with environmental responsibility. However, how these strategies are communicated and the authenticity behind them play a crucial role in shaping consumer perception. Let's explore the key aspects of green marketing strategies and their impact on brand perception, particularly in the context of Gen Z.

4.1 Authenticity in Green Marketing

For Gen Z consumers, authenticity is one of the most significant factors influencing their perception of a brand's environmental commitment. When a brand makes a green claim, it must back it up with transparent actions. Authenticity in green marketing means that a brand's environmental efforts are not only real but also significant enough to make a difference. For instance, a company that implements energy-efficient practices across its supply chain and uses sustainable raw materials in production is more likely to be perceived as genuinely committed to sustainability compared to a company that merely uses eco-friendly packaging as a marketing tool without addressing other aspects of its operations (Niinimäki, 2019).

4.2 Trustworthiness and Transparency

Trust is another crucial factor that impacts brand perception. Gen Z values transparency in the brands they support. They are more likely to engage with companies that openly communicate their sustainability practices, disclose their environmental impact, and report progress toward their sustainability goals. Brands that are transparent about their green marketing efforts, such as providing information on sourcing, production, and waste management, are more likely to build trust with Gen Z consumers (Kotler et al., 2018). Moreover, trust is essential because Gen Z consumers are highly skeptical of companies that engage in greenwashing—a practice where brands exaggerate or make false claims about their environmental practices. Brands that are caught greenwashing can experience a significant decline in consumer trust, resulting in long-term damage to their reputation. To avoid this, businesses must ensure that their green marketing efforts are not only well-communicated but also genuine (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

4.3 Brand Loyalty and Consumer Engagement

When green marketing strategies are executed effectively, they can lead to increased brand loyalty among Gen Z consumers. This cohort is more likely to become loyal to brands that align with their values and demonstrate a consistent

commitment to sustainability. In a competitive market, green marketing can help brands stand out and create a positive emotional connection with their audience (Parguel et al., 2011). Brand loyalty among Gen Z can also be reinforced by engaging them in sustainability-related initiatives. For instance, brands can create campaigns that involve their consumers in environmental causes, such as promoting recycling, reducing waste, or planting trees. This engagement not only strengthens the bond between the brand and its consumers but also provides Gen Z with a sense of purpose and involvement in the brand's environmental efforts.

5. Green Marketing and the Future of Brand Perception among Gen Z

As Gen Z continues to mature and assert their buying power, the significance of green marketing will only increase. The demand for sustainable products and ethical practices will likely drive further innovation in green marketing strategies, prompting businesses to enhance their efforts in sustainability. However, the future of green marketing is not just about aligning with Gen Z's values; it is about evolving with them. Gen Z's environmental consciousness will continue to shape brand perceptions and influence purchasing decisions in the coming years (Grewal et al., 2020). For brands to remain relevant and trusted in the eyes of Gen Z, they must continuously adapt and refine their green marketing strategies. As sustainability becomes more mainstream, the competition will intensify, and companies will need to find new, creative ways to demonstrate their commitment to environmental responsibility. The key to success will be staying authentic, transparent, and engaged with consumers, particularly Gen Z, who will continue to push the boundaries of sustainability in marketing and brand perception.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored the critical relationship between green marketing strategies and brand perception among Gen Z consumers. The findings suggest that green marketing plays a crucial role in shaping how Gen Z views a brand, but only if these strategies are genuine, transparent, and aligned with the brand's core values. For businesses targeting this environmentally-conscious generation, adopting authentic green marketing practices is no longer optional—it is a necessity. As Gen Z continues to prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions, brands that embrace green marketing strategies will have the opportunity to build stronger connections with their audience, foster brand loyalty, and gain a competitive edge in an increasingly eco-aware marketplace. By staying committed to sustainability and authentically communicating these efforts, brands can not only influence brand perception but also contribute to a more sustainable future, all while building long-term consumer relationships with Gen Z.

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