

Greenwashing in TV Advertisements: Measuring Audience Trust and Awareness of Misleading Eco-Claims

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ABSTRACT

Aim of Study: The researchers targeted the study to analyze how the greenwashing of advertising could affect the trust, brand credibility, the subjective integrity of advertisements promotion, and awareness of the audience, such as the ability to detect a claim and understand green knowledge.

Methodology: It was taken as a quantitative research design. A self-designed, close-ended, and five points of Likert scale questionnaire was employed to collect information on 239 respondents in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Data were analyzed in SPSS by applying correlation and linear regression.

Findings: Findings showed that there is a strong positive relationship that existed between greenwashing and audience trust as well as awareness. Greenwashing was powerful in affecting the media audiences in their belief in credibility of a brand followed by determining their knowledge on green claims. The results were consistent with the Agenda-Setting Theory, which indicates that public opinion and awareness on green messages is a trait that can be swayed by media presentation of the same.

Conclusion: Advertisement greenwashing lowered the level of belief by the consumer and caused misunderstandings that had an influence on brand attachment and message credibility. The research stressed on the significance of genuine green dialogue in ensuring that the people are confident and well informed.

Keywords: Greenwashing, Audience Trust, Brand Credibility, Environmental Advertising, Media Influence, Claim Detection.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era where digital screens impact almost every purchasing choice, the 'eco-friendly' label has evolved into an influential marketing tool-yet often, it masks misleading truths. Over the past two decades, the advertising landscape has experienced a dramatic transformation, shifting from traditional media to integrated campaigns across television, social media, and online platforms (Shabir et al., 2014; Shabir et al., 2017). With increasing global awareness around climate change, environmental degradation, and sustainability, brands have been bound to align their messaging with environmental values. However,

this configuration has not always been reliable. Instead, many companies have implemented a practice known as ‘greenwashing’, where they make misleading or exaggerated claims about the environmental friendliness of their product or service (Shabir et al., 2015; Shabir et al., 2015a; Safdar et al., 2015).

Greenwashing had gained importance since the 1980s, when the term was first used by environmentalists witnessing hotel campaigns that encouraged towel reuse as cost-saving measures masked as eco-conscious initiatives (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). A 2020 study by the European Commission exposed that 53% of green claims in advertising across the EU were unclear, misleading, or outright unsupported (European Commission, 2022). This statistic underlined how widespread deceptive “eco-friendly” messages had become, masking corporate inaction behind green imagery. Researchers have recognized the harmful effects of greenwashing on consumer trust and brand perception. Two experiments were conducted with US and German participants, comparing truthful environmental claims to vague and false ones. They found that false green claims, particularly when combined nature-evoking visuals, significantly reduced perceived credibility and tarnished brand image (Schmuck et al., 2018). Their study determined that this cognitive dissonance damaged consumers’ trust, even when they were unaware of the deception.

Researchers illustrated a comparative mechanism highlighting the role of perceived environmental performance in shaping purchase intentions.

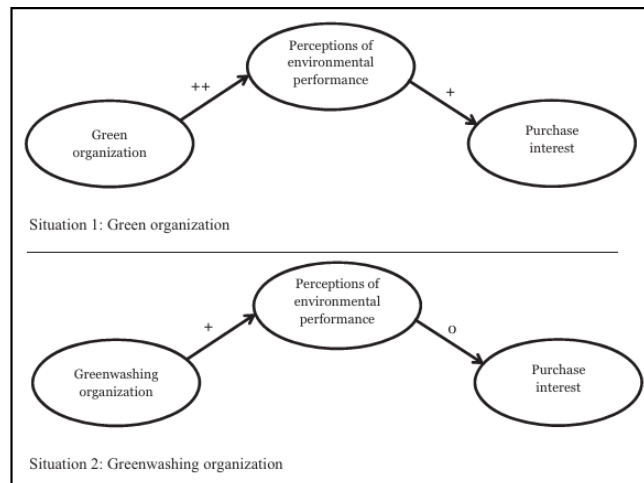


Figure 1: *Mechanism explaining Greenwashing’s Limited Impact on Purchase Interest*

This evaluation showed that even though greenwashing could impact environmental perceptions to some extent, it did not significantly boost purchase interest, unlike genuine green organizations that promoted from both perception and performance.

Further strengthening this trend, 300 consumers were surveyed across food, fashion, and hospitality industries. They found that greenwashing had a significantly negative effect on consumer trust (B= -0.68) and brand loyalty (B= -0.49), with trust mediating the relationship between deceptive claims and loyalty (Hossain et al., 2025). These findings highlighted that misleading environmental messaging did not merely cause short-term skepticism but it had lasting consequences for brand equity. Additional study presented that brands making false green claims suffered reputationally more than those remaining unbiased on environmental topics. Consumers punished companies that falsely portrayed themselves as sustainable even harsher than brands that made no environmental claims at all (de Jong et al., 2018). This emphasized a harsh reality: greenwashing was an aggressively damaging strategy, not a benign marketing mistake.

Organizations positioned themselves based on their environmental behavior and messaging, De Jong, Karen, and Harkink (2018) proposed a typology that characterized firms according to the presence or absence of actual environmental performance and external environmental claims.

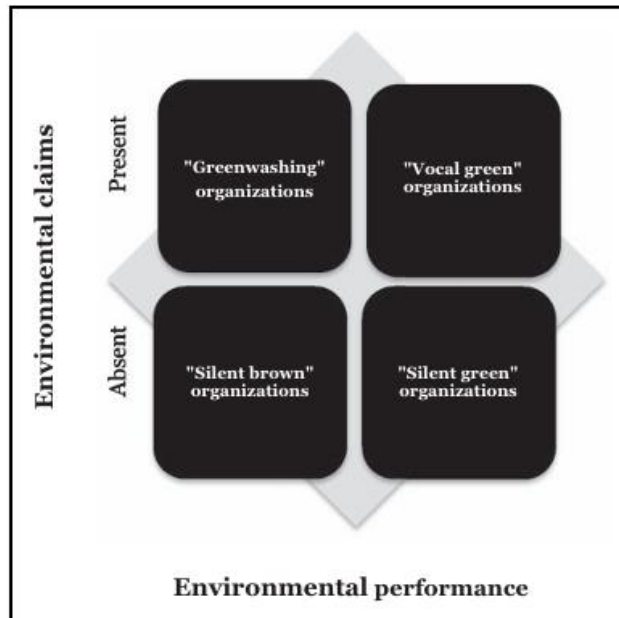


Figure 2: *Typology of Environmental Strategies (De Jong et al., 2018).*

This framework discovered that greenwashing occurred when companies publicly promoted environmental values without aligning them with honest practices and placing them in the quadrant of high claim but low performance.

A research examined consumer responses to green advertising design and quality. They revealed that emotionally rich and well-produced ads successfully reduced consumer skepticism, even in the absence of actual eco-friendly practices (Nyilasy et al., 2014). This combination of emotional appeal and professional aesthetic was found to be a powerful vehicle for misleading messaging. In Pakistan, greenwashing had become increasingly noticeable. In 2022, the Competition Commission of Pakistan issued show-cause notices to twelve cosmetic and personal care companies for marketing products as ‘organic’ and ‘chemical-free’ without third-party certification or evidence (Competition Commission of Pakistan, 2022). These brands had mostly used green packaging, plant imagery, and nature-themed graphics to attract eco-conscious urban consumers that revealed how greenwashing tactics had permeated developing markets.

Internationally, well-known conglomerates had faced major scrutiny. Nestles Pure Life advertised bottled water as “100% recyclable”, yet Greenpeace revealed in 2020 that most bottles remained unrecycled due to inadequate collection infrastructure (Greenpeace, 2020). Likewise, Coca-Cola was identified as the leading plastic polluter globally for four consecutive years, despite its recyclable bottle messaging (Break Free From Plastic, 2022). These campaigns demonstrated how deceptive advertising could obscure environmental harm. In these cases greenwashing has involved emotionally laden sloganism, misleading terminology, and evocative imagery, elements that shaped public perception while concealing corporate inaction or environmental harms.

Existing researches had shown that exposure to greenwashing in advertisements could significantly lower consumer trust, damage brand loyalty, and influence purchase decisions, misleading eco-claims had confirmed to be measurable variables in advertising, making them ideal subjects for quantitative study, this study was positioned to extend this body of research by measuring how audience exposure to

greenwashing ads, their trust in eco-claims, and ability to identify misleading claims interacted and together with the role of media literacy in controlling these relationships.

1.1 Research Questions

RQ1: What was the impact of greenwashing in advertisements on audience trust?

RQ2: How did greenwashing in advertisements affect brand credibility and perceived integrity?

RQ3: What was the effect of greenwashing in advertisements on audience awareness, including their ability to detect claims and recognize greenwashing tactics?

1.2 Problem Statement

In current years, advertising companies progressively used environmental messages to appeal eco-conscious consumers. However, many of these messages required substance and were found to be misleading or exaggerated, a practice generally known as greenwashing. These dishonest eco-claims created misperception among consumers and raised concerns about the credibility of green advertising. Although greenwashing became common in both global and local markets, limited research had quantitatively measured how such advertising influenced audience trust and awareness. Mostly, the effect of greenwashing on specific components of trust, such as brand credibility and perceived integrity remained underexplored. Similarly, there was a lack of clarity on whether consumers could detect misleading environmental claims or understand greenwashing tactics. This study addressed that gap by investigating how greenwashing in advertisements affected audience trust and awareness, focusing on its sub-dimensions.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research is noteworthy as it contributed to the understanding of how greenwashing influenced consumer attitudes in the context of advertising. By examining the effects of misleading eco-claims on trust and awareness, the study provided valuable insights for advertisers, regulators, and educators. It helped classify whether audiences perceived green claims as credible and whether they had the awareness to detect misleading content. The findings intended to support efforts to promote honest environmental communication, encourage accountable consumption, and improve media literacy among audience. Moreover, the research offered practical implications for policymakers to enforce transparency and accountability in environmental marketing practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fella & Bausa (2024) intended to explore consumer's ability to detect greenwashing in environmentally marketed products, particularly in contexts where green and misleading cues are intertwined. Drawing upon categorization theory, the research inspected whether consumers could distinguish between 'honest green', 'greenwashed', and 'non-green' products when presented with both visual and verbal cues. The researchers directed two experimental studies in Germany using convenience and panel samples (n=700+) using fabricated products like toilet cleaners and smartphones. The study found that consumers often failed to detect greenwashing when asked about purchase intentions alone. Greenwashed products, with vague or false claims and eco-friendly visuals, were often supposed as genuinely green. However, when participants were prompted to think about greenwashing, their detection accuracy enhanced. Visual cues had a stronger effect than verbal ones. The study concluded that consumer awareness of greenwashing can be improved through priming, and public policies should support efforts to educate consumers on recognizing misleading green claims.

Timmons et al. (2024) tested a greenwashing inoculation intervention to increase consumer recognition of misleading environmental claims. In a pre-test (n=206) and a full study (n=2000), contestants were divided into interventions, controlled, and no-contact groups. The intervention group received educational content on greenwashing, then rated six real advertisements. Results showed increased detection of greenwashing in ads from Coca-Cola and Ryanair, which reduced trust and purchase intentions.

However, participants also misjudged some genuine ads as greenwashed, especially when brands were unfamiliar. Despite this, the intervention improved confidence in identifying greenwashing and strengthened pro-environmental intentions. The study recommended that while such interventions are helpful, system-level regulations may be more operational in combating greenwashing.

Pham and Barretta (2024) examined how consumers evaluate environmental ads and develop green skepticism in response to greenwashing. Two experimental studies were conducted using Amazon MTurk participants (n=130 in study 1; n=140 in study 2). Study 1 compared vague versus regular ads, while Study 2 compared vague versus specific ads. Results displayed that vague ads increased skepticism and lowered willingness to pay (WTP) among strong-attitude consumers. Specific ads reduced skepticism and increase WTP in strong-attitude consumers. The studies determined that the effectiveness of green advertising depends on ad clarity and consumer attitude strength. The research underlined that vague green claims may backfire among environmentally committed consumers, emphasizing the importance of transparent messaging.

Senyapar (2024) discovered deceptive greenwashing strategies used by companies to falsely portray environmental responsibility. The objective was to study how such tactics affect consumer trust, environmental sustainability, and commercial accountability. This research employed thematic analysis of existing literature to categorize common greenwashing techniques, such as vague claims and misleading labels. The study found that greenwashing eroded consumer trust and hindered genuine sustainability efforts. The research underscored the potential of technologies like block chain and IoT to improve transparency. The research concluded that addressing greenwashing needs coordinated efforts focused on stricter regulations, corporate responsibility, and educating consumers to distinguish and resist misleading environment claims.

Liu (2024) analyzed how greenwashing performs in social media marketing influence consumer behavior within china's fast fashion industry. The study aimed to evaluate how perceived misleading sustainability claims affect customer trust and purchase intentions. Close-ended surveys were conducted with 400 consumers to explore their awareness of greenwashing and its behavioral impact. The research revealed that many fast fashion brands use green claims on social media to falsely uphold eco-friendly reputes. These tactics helped brands retain competitive standing, it also triggered consumer distrust once greenwashing was detected. Respondents reported reduced purchase intentions due to skepticism about brand credibility. The research concluded that despite strategic marketing, greenwashing damaged long-term consumer trust and affected brand-consumer relationships in China's active fast fashion market.

Tu et al. (2024) proposed a research on "Perceived Greenwashing and Its Impact on the Green Image of Brands", examined how several green marketing dimensions affect consumers perception of greenwashing and, in turn, effect the green brand image. Using qualitative interviews with (n=40) experts followed by a quantitative survey (n=325) respondents, the study utilized factor analysis and structural equation modeling to test the future hypothesis. The authors identified four key green marketing dimensions: products, and services, communication, relationships and interaction, and commitment and value. Results indicate that three dimensions including communication, relationships and interaction, and commitment and values are significantly reduced consumers perception of greenwashing, positively influencing the green brand image. The study concluded that reliable green marketing helps brands maintain credibility and build stronger eco-friendly reputations.

Lopes et al. (2023) conducted a research on "The Dark Side of Green Marketing: How Greenwashing Affects Circular Consumption?" to examine how greenwashing behavior affect consumers intentions toward circular consumption. The study employed a quantitative methodology and evaluated (n=826) valid responses from Portuguese consumers using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique. The study aimed to measure whether environmental concern and pro-circular information seeking mediate this relationship. Findings indicate that greenwashing, although typically viewed negatively, can inconsistently promote sustainability by triggering concern and curiosity among consumers. These

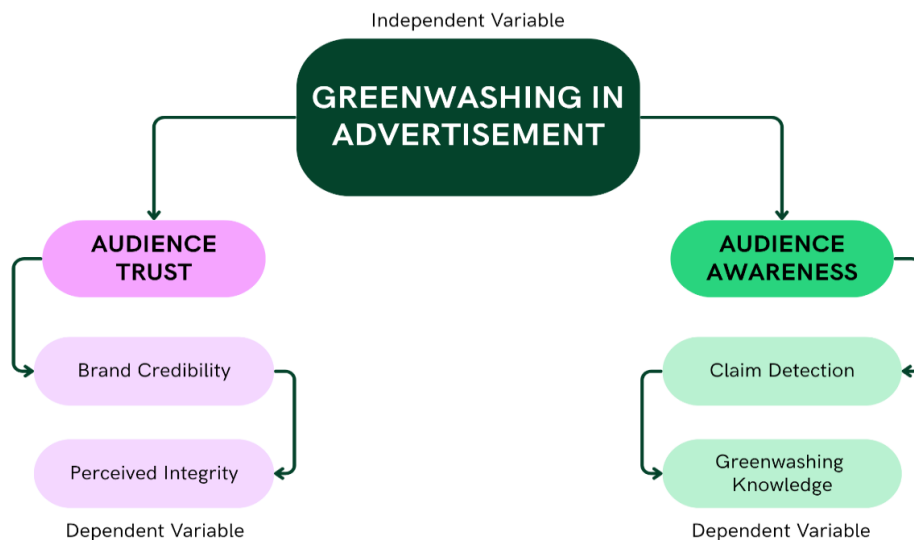
insights offer useful suggestions for firms and policymakers in developing effective circular economy strategies.

Butt et al. (2022), in their research “Impact of Firms’ Greenwashing Practices on Customer Green Trust and Green Brand Attachment: Pakistan’s Home Appliances Consumers’ Perspective”, meant to investigate how greenwashing influences green trust and brand attachment. Using a quantitative research design and deductive approach, data was collected through online and in-person surveys from (n=330) consumers of home appliances in Pakistan using non-probability sampling. The study applied Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test nine hypothesis. Findings revealed that greenwashing negatively affects Green Perceived Value (GPV) and Green Brand Image, while it positively influences Green Confusion. GPV positively affects Green Trust (GT), which in turn reinforces Green Brand Attachment (GBA). The research concludes that greenwashing damages consumer trust and attachment, advising firms to deliver genuine green values to strengthen brand relationships.

De Jong et al. (2018) studied the effects of greenwashing on consumer perceptions using a 4x2 randomized experimental design. The study compared consumer responses to greenwashing, silent green organizations across hedonic (perfume) and utilitarian (detergent) products. Results indicated that while greenwashing organizations created moderate impressions of environmental performance, they faced negative valuation of communication integrity. Furthermore, consumer purchase interest for greenwashing firms was as low as for silent brown ones, and particularly lower than for vocal or silent green firms. No changes emerged based on product type. The study determined that greenwashing offers least image benefits, challenges perceived honesty, and fails to produce any purchasing advantage, thus posing a significant threat to consumer trust.

Schmuck et al. (2018) explored how deceptive green advertising (greenwashing) influences consumer perceptions. Drawing from Affect-Reason-Involvement (ARI) model, they intended to examine how vague and false environmental claims, especially when paired with nature-evoking imagery, effecting attitudes toward ads and brands. Using two experimental studies with quota-based samples from the US (n=486) and Germany (n=300), they initiated that false claims increased perceived greenwashing, which negatively influenced brand and ad attitudes. Though, pleasant nature imagery activated effective responses that overcome negative perceptions. The research concludes that emotional appeal via nature imagery can dominate rational criticism, making greenwashing more convincing even for environmentally aware consumers.

Figure 3: Study Model



2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research was deal with Agenda Setting Theory, initially proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which suggests that the media doesn't tell people what to think, but rather what to think about. According to McCombs Shaw, "The mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of audience toward the political issues" (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In the setting of green marketing and greenwashing, this theory was relevant because media campaigns and brand communications significantly shape public attentions toward environmental issues and brand claims. Advertising companies, through strategic communication, attempted to set an environmental agenda in consumers' minds, often by exaggerating or falsely portraying eco-friendliness (greenwashing). This research explored whether such agenda-setting efforts by brands influenced consumers' perceptions of greenwashing and impacted the green brand image.

Through this study, the researchers tested the applicability and validity of Agenda-Setting Theory in today's corporate green communication landscape. The research examined whether brand-led green marketing still detained the power to influence public perceptions as proposed by the theory, or whether increasing public awareness and skepticism had reduced its impact.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research was directed to analyze the influence of greenwashing practices on consumer green trust and green brand affection. The researcher implemented a structured approach to systematically collect, analyze, and interpret the data to address the research objectives efficiently.

3.1 Research Design

There are three main types of research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approach. This research adopted quantitative research approach, which is frequently used for collecting numerical data and statistically examining relationships among variables. "Quantitative research is an inquiry approach useful for describing trends and explaining the relationship among variables by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods, particularly statistics" (Apuke, 2017). This approach was deemed appropriate for this research as it aimed to examine the relationship between organizations' greenwashing practices and consumer green trust and green attachment through measurable data.

3.2 Population

The population of this research involved the general public residing in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, two major urban centers in Pakistan. These cities provided a diverse representation of consumers exposed to greenwashing practices, allowing for a broader understanding of public perception regarding greenwashing.

3.3 Sample Frame and Size

The sample frame consists individuals aged 18 to 45 and above, cover a wide range of adult age groups probably to participate in consumer decision-making processes. The questionnaire was disseminated among 250 participants within Rawalpindi and Islamabad, out of which 239 valid responses were received and used for analysis. This produced a response rate of 95.6%, including high contestant engagement and reliability of data.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The researcher employed a non-probability sampling technique for data collection. According to researchers, "Non-probability is a technique in which samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chance of being selected" (Etikan et al., 2016). This method was selected due to its feasibility and convenience in reaching respondents in online environment.

3.5 Data Collection Tool

The data for this research were composed using a self-designed questionnaire, which contained close-ended questions. The questionnaire was grounded on a five-point Likert scale, extending from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. This scale helped to calculate the participant's level of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to greenwashing, green trust and its awareness.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

To evaluate the gathered data, the researcher used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science) software. Various statistical tests were applied based on the research objectives to analyze the relationships among variables. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to understand the data and draw conclusion. SPSS was predominantly useful for running reliability tests, correlation analysis, and regression, ensuring accurate understanding of the findings.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=239).

Sr. No	Statement	Options	f	%
1.	What is your age group?	18–24	56	23.3
		25–34	118	49.2
		35–44	30	12.9
		45 and above	35	14.6
		Total	239	100.0
2.	What is your gender?	Male	73	30.6
		Female	166	69.4
		Total	239	100.0
3.	What is your highest education level?	Matric	84	35.0
		Intermediate	34	14.2
		Bachelor's	96	40.4
		MPhil/PhD	25	10.4
		Total	239	100.0
4.	Which of the following best describes your media usage?	I regularly follow social media ads	68	28.3
		I occasionally notice ads online or on TV	136	56.7
		I try to avoid ads as much as possible	35	15.2
		Total	239	100.0
5.	Have you ever purchased a product because it claimed to be “eco-friendly” or “green”?	Yes	148	61.7
		No	91	38.3
		Total	239	100.0
6.	Have you ever felt a brand was exaggerating its environmental friendliness in its ad?	Yes	186	77.5
		No	53	22.5
		Total	239	100.0

The demographic character of the 239 respondents is shown in Table 1. The largest part (49.2%) of respondents was between 25-34 years old, and the majority of them (69.4%) were female. Most of them had at least a Bachelor degree (40.4%). In terms of media participation, 56.7 percent of them noticed advertisements occasionally. Of particular relevance, 61.7% reported purchasing environmentally friendly products, and 77.5% thought that some brands made false claims when it came to environmental issues, which implies that the effects of green marketing are becoming more evident.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix among Demographic, Greenwashing (IV), and Audience Trust & Awareness (DVs)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age	1	-.205**	.002	.547**	-.106	-.145*	.093	.063	.163*
Gender		1	.008	-.298**	.146*	.354**	-.206**	-.108	-.263**
Education Level			1	.028	-.054	-.036	-.090	-.057	-.056
Media usage				1	-.033	-.152*	.046	.019	.211**
PPC to be “eco-friendly” or “green”?					1	.017	.041	.044	-.056
BE environmental friendliness in ad?						1	-.010	.089	.010
Greenwashing (IV)							1	.746**	.615**
Audience Trust (DV)								1	.647**
Audience Awareness (DV)									1

** .01 level (2-tailed), * .05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table 2 confirmed, which indicated substantial interactions among the demographics, greenwashing (IV), and the variables of audience trust and awareness (DVs). Age is related positively with media usage and awareness, gender is related negatively with greenwashing, trust and awareness. There is a positive relationship between use of media and awareness. Most importantly, greenwashing possess a positive correlation with audience trust ($r = .746$) and awareness ($r = .615$) which were significant at 0.01 level implying that the perceived greenwashing has substantial influence on the degree of audience belief that involves audience trust and awareness on misleading eco-friendly marketing.

Table 3: Regression Analysis between Greenwashing in Advertisements and Audience Trust, Including Brand Credibility and Perceived Integrity

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.625	.953		4.853	.000
	IV_GW	.970	.056	.746	17.257	.000

The table 3 analysis to be applied included a regression to measure the effect of greenwashing (IV) on audience trust (DV) using the brand credibility and perceived integrity. Findings showed that there were significant positive associations ($\beta = 0.970$, $p = .000$), and there was strength in the standardized beta ($\beta = .746$), which implies that greenwashing was influential to the occurrence of trust-related issues. The statistical significance of the model of 17.257 t-value indicated the implication that with an increase in greenwashing, the audience trust influences of credibility and integrity were found to increase.

Table 4: Regression Analysis between Greenwashing in Advertisements and Audience Awareness, Including Claim Detection and Greenwashing Knowledge

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.289	1.352		1.693	.092
	IV_GW	.959	.080	.615	12.014	.000

The table 4 regression analysis explored the impact of greenwashing (IV) on audience awareness (DV), which includes claim detection and greenwashing knowledge. The unstandardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.959$) and significant t-value (12.014, $p = .000$) shows that there is strong positive relationship. The standardized beta ($\beta = .615$) also affirms that the greenwashing practices have a considerable effect on the

capability of the audience to recognize the deceptive claims and enhanced their awareness about the preventing false environmental marketing procedures.

5. DISCUSSION

With the current development of the environmentally focused economy, the growing concern about sustainability has prompted businesses to consist their marketing narratives with the aspect of sustainability. There has however been a rising issue over the misleading nature of green claims also known as the greenwashing where the information given to the consumer may be incorrect and makes the community lose faith in the actual efforts of sustainability. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of the greenwashing propaganda as applied during advertisements on the reliance, reputation of the brands, their perceived integrity, and general knowledge about any environmental advertising

In accordance with the findings, it was revealed that greenwashing positively affected trust towards audience to a high degree. Motivated by the observation of manipulation or exaggerations on the claims of the environment, the participants are less likely to spend their trust in the authenticity of the brand. Already present in the literature, the analysis on the data confirmed that there is indeed a clear connection between greenwashing and the deterioration of the level of trust since misrepresentations undermine the relationships between the consumer and the brand. This skepticism was not another doubt; this was the determination of the consumer regarding the ethical position of the brand and its future sustainability.

Besides, the research demonstrated that people did not evaluate the credibility of a brand and its moral responsibility exclusively on the emotional factor as trust, but expressed cognitive interest in perception. When consumers felt that a company had lied to them about its environmental practices, it led to the derailment of the perception of the company values as advertised by the company. The lack of presenting information about environmental activities in a transparent manner made brands much less credible which demonstrates that integrity is an essential part of audience assessment. These revelations proved that the existence of greenwashing in advertisement causes more adverse reputational losses, such that even consumers who had no prior stake may stop caring because they consider the advert in question to be unscrupulous.

The other noteworthy discovery was the part of greenwashing which was one of the factors determining audience awareness. Consumers who received misleading green ads began to be wary and more responsive of the reality behind green claims. Such increased awareness led to the increased capacity to spot fake narratives and to scrutinize marketing content better. Therefore, the result of the greenwashing transformed into a paradox since it made the consumers skeptically oriented, and thus, gave people more power to be smarter and informed on the issue of sustainability. Nevertheless, the increase of awareness was paid by brand loyalty because those who were initially deceived no longer had much chance to start bearing false companies.

A similar finding is in harmony with the previous scholarly studies. As an example, the study conducted by Butt, et al. was able to affirm that greenwashing negatively influences green perceived value which reflects negatively on green trust and green brand attachment. According to their research, the appearance of deceptive sustainability statements makes customers more disoriented and less emotionally involved with the brands; this fact correlates closely with the current study (Butt et al., 2023). In a similar way, Lopes et al. stated that despite the general perception of greenwashing as the negative phenomenon, it can paradoxically increase the level of environmental concern and trigger more informed information search among consumers. The present study partially substantiated this paradox, as consumers did show being more cognitively aware, but the overall effect continued to be a decline in the level of trust (Lopes et al., 2022). Tu et al. also emphasized that perceptions of greenwashing in consumers are influenced by their ability of the brand to communicate clearly and coherent at each point of contact. Their research found main dimensions that impact green brand image, such as communication, relationships and values, thus the failure in this aspect leads to rate of greenwashing and further loss of trust (Tu et al., 2022). This

chimes with the current evidence, which indicated that poor and mixed environmental messages lowered likelihood of green claims and led to long-term brand image harms.

The present work also contributes to this literature because the results are based on the local sociocultural situation of urban consumers in Pakistan. Most of the research that is already available revolved around western or European population; the study was conducted in South Asian population where the environmental awareness is showing up but is not proliferated so hard into institutions. Irrespective of the differences in cultures and market conditions, the outcomes related to the effects of greenwashing on the levels of trust and awareness were relatively same as the global research, which showed the phenomenon is universal in the sense.

Compared to the seemingly paradoxical results of Lopes et al., the current one has demonstrated that, although greenwashing can cause interest or awareness, it cannot impact positively the behavioral loyalty and the attachment level of emotions. The growth of informed consumers who were less loyal confirmed that being known does not mean being trusted, and this situation cannot become valuable customer relations in the long-term perspective. This implies that the expense of greenwashing, brand equity, and goodwill of the audience exceeds the possible visibility and engagement benefits in the case study (Lopes et al., 2022).

Comprehensively, this research gave very valid empirical support to the idea that greenwashing interferes with the emotional and logical aspects of the relationship between consumers and brands. Trust, credibility and awareness are not independent provisions, they are very closely connected and as soon as any of these are sacrificed using a false advertising, the future existence of the brand is put in danger. The rising complexity of the consumer also implies that superficial green statements are not enough anymore, people now want the brands to have an environmentally friendly behavior that is transparent, verifiable and consistent.

This study confirmed the findings of previous researches and expanded the knowledge into the impact of greenwashing in a new regional environment. Trade names in the eco-sensitive markets do not have the luxury of deceiving or exaggerating their environmental friendliness. Such action can lead to temporary exposure but will bring long term reputational destruction. Marketers and advertisers are thus compelled to tune their promotional activities with the factual sustainable activities in order to develop the real audience trust and awareness.

5.1 Theoretical Implication

The results of this study made a real step forward in terms of theoretical contribution to the study of media and communication because they confirmed the topicality of the Agenda-Setting Theory in regard to green advertisement. The findings indicated that repetition of greenwashing messages in advertisements was a strong factor that influenced the understanding of the people as far as trust among the audience and environmental consciousness are concerned. This proved the theory that any content in the media (true or false) has the capability of making people realize what is important to them. The study went a step further to demonstrate that consumers do lose trust and cognitive awareness due to deceptive environmental messages in advertisements, as established in the Agenda-Setting Theory, but applied in advertisements and advertising media. It confirmed that apart from news media, the environmental themes could be prioritized to form the agenda of the masses within the advertisements since they may be repeated numerous times in an advertisement and cause a perception about brand credibility and integrity to be established by the consumers. Additionally, the research enriched the knowledge of relationships between audience skepticism, brand perception, and issue awareness attained through the introduction of mediated green messages. Theoretically, this meant that Agenda-Setting Theory can be useful in the modern media context, at least, in terms of interpreting how the eco-related messages influence attitudes and trust towards a brand irrespective of the possible narratives manipulation.

6. CONCLUSION

This research examined how greenwashing in advertisements affects viewers, in regard to trust and cognizance. It was a fact that false environmental messages by brands affected the trust negatively and created perceptions of brand credibility and integrity. Also, audience awareness was influenced by the pitfall of greenwashing, which caused the confusion and doubt in the eco-friendly message. The study established that people became more skeptical and critical towards environmental messages when they contributed to a repetitive greenwashing information. Through these effects, the study helped for broader awareness of the effects of deceptive marketing in influencing the attitudes of consumers. It also confirmed the applicability of the Agenda-Setting Theory in influencing the worry of people based on the environment issues through mediated communication. In general, this research study became a useful contribution to the body of already established literature and provided future investigations with new avenues of media power, ethical marketing, and consumer trust.

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Conflict of Interest

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