

GREEN MARKETING IMPACT ON PERCEIVED BRAND VALUE IN DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

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Abstract

In today's world, there is more and more discussions of high production and sales volumes and the abundant global consumption it generates. At the international level, environmental consciousness is beginning to escalate both among businesses and among ordinary consumers. Thus, to find out what marketing activities can help attract different consumers to build a green brand, the research problem arises: what impact does green marketing have on the perceived value of the brand by consumers? Research object: the impact of green marketing on the perception of the brand value of X and Y generation consumers in Lithuanian market. Research aim is to theoretically analyze the concept of green marketing, its components, development, and previous research on the impact of green marketing on the perceived brand value of consumers and to conduct an empirical study to develop green marketing mix recommendations making an impact on perceived brand value of X and Y generations in Lithuania. To achieve the set goals and test the set hypotheses, the research will use two research methods: a questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview with green marketing experts and green business representatives. Three research hypotheses were made: price is the factor, influencing consumers of generation X more, than generation Y; generation Y consumers are more interested in green products; environmental awareness of brands has less influence on generation X than to generation Y.

Keywords: *environmental consciousness; green marketing; greenwashing; brand value; sustainability.*

JEL Codes: *M11, M31.*

Introduction

Today's world is experiencing rapid and uninterrupted growth in production and sales, which in turn is driving growth in worldwide consumption. This is the cause of significant damage to nature, as natural resources are being wasted, leading to climate change, and affecting the health and well-being of all flora and fauna on the planet. According to Statista.com, between mid-20th century and 2019, carbon emissions from production and fossil fuels grew exponentially to 36.44 billion tons. In 2020, with the onset of a global pandemic, declining pace of life and declining production capacity, pollution also declined for the first time (Statista n.d.).

Environmental issues have been increasingly discussed in recent years and not only activists, but also ordinary people are starting to care about and talk about environmental issues. It is noticeable that consumers are more likely than ever to buy environmentally friendly products, so businesses, considering the changing needs of consumers and the changing environmental situation, shape their marketing strategies and position themselves as environmentally friendly companies. In this way, businesses can find a way to attract larger markets to meet the needs of consumers to encourage them to choose more environmentally friendly products and services.

This article briefly examines how the concept of green marketing has changed, and analyzes research conducted in the areas of green marketing and its impact on consumer behavior. An empirical study examining the impact of green marketing on perceived brand value in the case of X and Y and providing recommendations on how to increase perceived brand value to the consumer through green marketing is described and conducted. **Research problem:** What impact does green marketing have on the perceived brand value of different generation consumers? **The object** of this research is the impact of green marketing on the perception of the value of X and Y generation consumers in Lithuania. **The aim** of the research is to theoretically analyze the concept of green marketing, its components, development, and previous research on the impact of green marketing on different generation consumer perception of the brand and to conduct an empirical study to form a green marketing complex influencing the X and Y generation brand perception. To achieve the set goals and test the set hypotheses, the research uses two research methods: a questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview with green marketing experts and green business representatives.

Theoretical background

The concept of green marketing is not as new as the popularity of this concept in society. One of the first definitions of this topic dates back to 1976 - Kinnear and Henion in their book „Ecological Marketing“ distinguish the concept of eco-marketing as the science of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities related to pollution, energy depletion or non-energy depletion (Henion, Kinnear, 1974). Later, Polonsky (1994) described eco-marketing as green marketing and defined it as any activity that creates or facilitates any exchange designed to meet human desires or needs with minimal impact on the natural environment (Polonsky, 1994). Kotler and Armstrong (2008) argue that green products must meet acceptable environmental standards, including recyclable or reusable packaging,

advanced pollution control techniques, and energy efficiency in production. Other authors define the concept of green or organic marketing as a holistic management process that is responsible for identifying and meeting the needs of consumers and society in a profitable and sustainable way (Kärnä, Steineck, & Juslin, 2001). Coddington (1993) presents green marketing as a marketing activity that cares about the environment and is responsible for business development and growth opportunities.

It is argued that green marketing is one of the indicators that shows whether an organization is market-oriented and behaves responsibly. This is based on the assumption that market change requires organizations to have a positive response to consumer concerns about the link between climate change and human consumerism (Sheth, Sethia, & Srinivas, 2011). Green marketing is practiced by businesses in a variety of ways, one of which is providing consumers with a variety of organic, everyday products. Green products are generally distinguished by the fact that, for example, they contain more recycled or less toxic substances or ingredients, have less packaging or biodegradable packaging, their production processes emit less carbon dioxide, and so on. The most common characteristics of green products are: resource efficiency, reduction in size and weight, use of environmentally friendly materials, use of recyclable materials, products are easy to reuse, easy maintenance, product service, eco-labeling, use of biodegradable materials, easy renewal (Ghazali et al. 2021).

However, such points of differentiation may lead to consumers perceiving lower quality or inadequate prices of green products compared to conventional, analogous products (Rex, Baumann, 2007). Consumers may choose not to reduce consumption, but are more selective in their purchases, preferring products with environmentally friendly elements. Studies show that some consumer segments are more likely to care about climate change, environmental issues, and certain product characteristics than others (D'Souza, Taghian, & Khosla, 2007). Research shows that “green”-minded

consumers are more likely to change their consumption habits and actively contribute to activities that conserve nature by making responsible choices about which products to use (Tobler, Visschers, & Siegrist, 2011). Businesses also tend to include the environmental impact of a product in the criteria for evaluating the products they purchase (Thompson, Anderson, Hansen, & Kahle, 2010).

As public concern about pollution problems grows, businesses are beginning to change their behavior to address the problems and concerns of consumers. This can be incorporated into the concept of social responsibility, which creates a long-term or medium-term positive image of the company in its relationships with stakeholders (Kolk, 2016). Some organizations can quickly integrate issues such as environmental management systems or waste reduction and environmental issues into all of an organization's activities. Ecology-oriented marketing fundamentally changes perceptions and deep-rooted ideas in business culture, as well as in traditional marketing. Green marketing, unlike traditional marketing, primarily raises consumer awareness, which determines its importance in today's organizations. One of the issues that should be addressed when using green marketing and its concepts is the high cost and potential impact of government policies, but this, according to Zamfir (2014), should not prevent organizations from gaining their competitive advantage through green marketing and its governance models, which are based on market research and available knowledge.

The value created by green marketing is subjective and each consumer may perceive the value differently. This can be influenced by different factors, such as demographics (for example gender or age). To ensure the brand's high perceived value, it is critical to consider green marketing. This is seen as a direction of socially responsible brand communication that is targeted at certain groups that can be categorized by generation (age), in which people have similar requirements for the

characteristics of the products sold (Nadanyiova, Gajanova, & Majerova, 2020). Demographic indicators such as age and gender indicate differences in consumer behavior regarding environmentally friendly products (Hervé, Mullet, 2009). According to some researchers, older people are generally more sensitive to changing consumption patterns, are strongly influenced by the price of the product (Slaba, 2019), and are more concerned about environmental issues than younger consumers (Morrison, Beer, 2017). However, findings from other researchers suggest that older consumers are less likely to take action to improve the environment because of certain established cultural norms or habits, making it more difficult to influence their perceptions of value (Wiernik, Ones, & Dilchert, 2013). The younger generation is seen as willing to try innovative solutions that contribute to environmental sustainability (Vistharakula, Kaushik, 2021), so younger generations create more value from innovative solutions applied in the company. Thus, although researchers have studied the impact of green marketing on consumer buying behavior and perceived brand value in different national markets, the results often vary, so it is important to explore individual markets and apply marketing decisions based on the results obtained.

Research methodology

Due to the differing opinions of scientists on the relationship between the perceived value of the green brand and consumer demographics, such as age, this suggests that consumer perceptions in different markets may be radically different, and there is need to model research results solely for marketing activities in that market. An examination of cases in other countries shows that older consumers in the Czech market are generally more sensitive to changing consumption patterns and prices (Slaba, 2019), but consumers in the United States are less inclined to act on environmental awareness and are less

sensitive to changing habits due to established norms and habits (Wiernik et al. 2013). The results of a study conducted in Lithuania showed that the most important factors motivating consumers to choose a green product are the organization's concern for the environment knowledge and awareness, such indicators as price are no longer as important when buying environmentally friendly products (Bernatoniė and Liobikiėnė, 2017), but these older studies were not disaggregated by consumer age. Since a relatively little research has been conducted on the topic of green marketing in the Lithuanian market, linking different generations' approaches to green brands in this study is relevant to clarify consumer attitudes and create a model that will help green brands reach their target consumer and create greater brand value. The study aims to determine the impact of green marketing decisions on consumer behavior and the value it creates for consumers of different age groups. Not only the consumer's point of view is important in the research, but also its demographic indicators, because the results of the research reveal the differences in the views of different generations of consumers, compare them and apply the obtained results to further research.

Research tasks:

1. Design and verify a consumer survey questionnaire.
2. Analyze the results of the survey to reveal the purchasing habits of the Lithuanian population in relation to green products and what factors of the green marketing complex affect different generations (X and Y).
3. Form and conduct semi-structured interviews with green marketing experts and green business representatives.
4. Analyze the insights gained during expert interviews on the impact of green marketing on consumer behavior and compare the results obtained with the results of the consumer survey.
5. After comparing and analyzing the results of both studies, reveal the purchasing habits of the Lithuanian population in relation to green products and

what factors of the green marketing complex affect different generations (X and Y).

Based on the theoretical part of the work and the research objectives, the following research hypotheses are formed:

1. Generation X consumers have a greater influence on the choice of green products than Generation Y consumers. The prevailing view is that green products are expensive (Vijai, 2020), and one of the barriers to consumers' choice of green products is higher cost and lower product availability (Nguyen et al., 2017), older people are generally more sensitive to changing consumption patterns. they are affected by the price of the product (Slaba, 2019), and younger consumers have a deeper understanding of environmental issues, and such consumers agree to pay more for environmentally friendly services or products (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014). Thus, from these statements, it can be hypothesized that for Generation X, the price of the product has a greater impact than for the younger generation.

2. Consumers of Generation Y are more interested in green products. According to McDonagh and Prothero (2014), younger consumers have a deeper understanding of environmental issues, and younger consumers tend to try innovative solutions that contribute to environmental sustainability (Vistharakula and Kaushik, 2021), thus it can be hypothesized that consumers of Generation Y are more likely to be interested in eco-friendly products, delving into their features and brand characteristics.

3. Generation X has less interest in the environmental awareness of brands than Generation Y. Older consumers tend to follow certain cultural norms and habits (Wiernik et al. 2013), so the values they create, such as environmental awareness, may have less of an impact on their perception of value.

To achieve the set goals and test the set hypotheses, the research will use two **research methods:**

Questionnaire. This method was chosen to obtain accurate results that reflect the attitudes of X and Y users. First, a questionnaire was developed based on the literature analyzed in the theoretical part and

the hypotheses raised. The questionnaire was distributed anonymously to ensure the security of respondents' data. The introductory part of the questionnaire presents a survey of who is conducting the survey, the respondents are introduced to the purpose of the survey and where the data collected will be used. The survey consists of 20 closed-ended questions to assess consumers' attitudes towards green products and marketing activities, using the Likert scale, with respondents rating between 1 for 'strongly disagree' and 5 for 'strongly agree'. The wording of the questions was chosen to reveal the attitudes of consumers and the difference between the attitudes of the X and Y generations. This questionnaire was conducted from October 2021 to April 2022. The study included 392 respondents who corresponded to age-relevant age indicators based on Williams and Page (2011) and Grail Research (2011), defined as follows: Generation X: people born in 1965-1977. Generation Y: people born in 1977-1999.

Semi-structured interviews with experts and business representatives. This method was used to interview green marketing experts. In the study, it was decided to consider marketers working in the Lithuanian market for at least 2 years and representatives or owners of green business who have been operating in Lithuania for at least 2 years as experts. Experts and business representatives involved in the study were provided with pre-prepared specific questions in the order in which they were presented. In the absence of a clear answer to the question, the respondent is asked additional or clarifying questions. The chosen method provided an opportunity to obtain information relevant to the research from primary sources, to analyze the problems of the research in more depth and to compare the obtained results with the results of the consumer survey. Interview questions are chosen in an open type to provide a more accurate and complete answer to the question. The interview questions for green marketing experts and green business representatives are

essentially the same, only the first question differs - green marketing experts are asked how long they have been working in the field of green marketing, and the question of business representatives or their activities can be considered green, and how long is in progress. This semi-structured expert interview took place in March and April 2022. Data collection lasted four weeks. The survey involved 8 respondents: 4 green marketing experts and 4 representatives of green business. The data obtained during the research were processed by means of interview processing and the method of qualitative-content analysis was applied: repeated reading of the text, systematization of data according to essential and non-essential features, justification of interpretation.

Study period and course:

1. A questionnaire is drawn up. The questionnaire consists of 25 questions divided into the following subgroups: a. Questions about demographics. Respondents are asked only those questions about their demographics that are relevant to the survey results. b. Questions to identify consumer behavior and attitudes to find out which elements of green marketing influence consumers' purchasing decisions and what influences their perception that a product or service is environmentally friendly.

2. Respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire on social networks. Questionnaire survey data are collected from October 2021 to April 2022.

3. The reliability of the questionnaire is tested.

4. A questionnaire for a semi-structured interview shall be developed based on a consumer survey.

5. Expert interviews with informants are conducted. Data are collected for 4 weeks, in March 2022 and April 2022.

6. Comparison of the insights of experts and business representatives with the results of a consumer survey is made.

Research results and recommendations for the green marketing complex influencing the perceived brand value in different generations

The results of the study are summarized in Table 1. The table shows which, according to the results of the study, are the most important criteria that create higher brand value for X and Y generation consumers. Consumers in both generations are concerned

about the composition of products, but Generation Y is more concerned about the composition and origin of non-food products and the corporate social responsibility. Thus, based on these results, brands can form a recommendation to clearly present the composition of products to both generations in any case, both in physical form, such as on a label or leaflet, and in e-commerce channels.

Table 1. Recommendations of the green marketing complex affecting the perception of the value of the brand for X and Y generation

	Has a great impact on Generation X	Has a great impact on Generation Y
Food product ingredients	X	X
Non-food product ingredients		X
Environmental impact		X
Impact for health	X	
Brand environmental awareness		X
Eco-labeling		X
Price	X	
Quality	X	X
Recyclable packaging		X
Educational communication	X	X
Locality communication	X	X
Global issues in the advertising campaign		X
Local issues in the advertising campaign	X	X

Generation X is significantly more concerned about the impact on health, as evidenced by both the results of the consumer survey and the expert survey. Of course, health is also prone to concern for Generation Y, but there is a marked gap. Generation Y, meanwhile, is more likely to be interested in environmental impacts, and experts note a direct link between greater concern for the environment and the younger generation - the younger the generation, the more they tend to care for the environment and take an active role in tackling environmental issues. For the younger generation, the involvement of brands in the same active activities that are relevant to themselves can create greater brand value. Generation Y tends to pay more attention to brand environmental awareness.

The study found that Generation X is more reliable and less likely to delve into brand environmental awareness, except in cases where it becomes a widespread escalating scandal, but Generation Y is more likely to delve into brand environmental awareness and be less affected by green brainwashing.

It is observed that environmentally friendly products do not in themselves create a better brand image if the core communication of the brand itself is not related to it. This is stated by both experts and authors in the literature review - if consumers are skeptical about a company's motives, green sponsorship may turn against the organization itself. The publicity created can even encourage users to be more critical of an organization because of its other, less

environmentally friendly activities (Polonsky and Rosenberger, 2001).

Eco-labeling is also noticeably more important for Generation Y, as it is more likely to differentiate between certified eco-labeling because of research. Generation X also identified eco-labeling as one of the key elements in choosing an eco-friendly product in a consumer survey, but experts note that Generation X is more reliant on false eco-labeling and often becomes a victim of greenwashing, so it is useful to educate consumers about certified eco-labeling, and if eco-labeling is used in marketing activities, it must be certified.

Price is seen to be important for both generations, but Generation X perceives the price of green products and services as higher than it actually is. For Y times, price itself is not as important, but pricing is important, especially if paying for the product can make an additional contribution to green initiatives. Thus, in both cases, pricing communication is important to increase consumer perceived brand value, but to attract a Generation X consumer, a potentially appropriate solution would be to reduce costs by creating a lower price for the consumer.

The quality of green products is equally important for both generations, but there is a noticeable gap in quality perception between the X and Y generations. Because Generation X equates product quality with convenience, the marketing campaign can highlight product features that are user-friendly for Generation X and address not only the environmental issue but also the consumer's own.

Recyclable packaging is seen as more important for Generation Y, but experts say that this generation is more likely to buy products without packaging when bringing their reusable packaging, so this choice can create more value for the Generation Y consumer at the point of sale in a hygienic way, thus reducing pollution. Meanwhile, X-recyclable packaging can create more value, but the 'no packaging' format can be inconvenient and unacceptable to them.

Both generations have important local problems that they can feel and see next to them, such as deforestation, the extinction of native species or polluted roads, but Generation Y is more likely to pay attention to global environmental issues, such as: declining ocean biodiversity or tropical deforestation due to high demand for palm oil. Thus, communication of local environmental problems can affect both generations, but Generation X is less sensitive to global problems than local ones, so it is important to take this into account when choosing a target audience. It is noticeable that local communication is especially important for Generation X due to a certain habit and belief that a Lithuanian product, especially when it comes to food, is better than an imported one. Generation Y also values locality, but the perceived value of a local product creates a lower carbon footprint in the environment and raises the country's economy, so if a brand operating in Lithuania is Lithuanian, communication can be a very important element in creating a greater perception. brand value for both X and Y generation consumers.

Conclusions

1. Examining the questionnaires of 392 respondents and comparing the answers of different respondents, it can be stated that the differences between green marketing perceptions and green purchasing behavior are often less significant in the X and Y generations, but there are some differences that can help brands use marketing more effectively. elements of the complex to reach audiences of different ages. It has been found that eco-labeling and product composition are the most common factors in both generations' perceptions of the environmental friendliness of a product. Generation X is more important for the product's point of sale, brand, its communication and advertising campaign, Generation Y is more important for product packaging and feedback from other people.

2. Most consumers are concerned about environmental issues, but consumers

need a business incentive to educate consumers in this way. Clear information and education through green marketing channels in the Lithuanian market is often lacking for the 10th time. At a better standard of living, the consumer can also buy more expensive products, but it is observed that the perceived price of the X generation is higher than the perceived price of the Y generation, so lower consumer costs are one of the factors allowing the X generation consumer to create more value for the green brand. As both experts and consumers survey Generation X perceives eco-friendly products as more expensive and excludes price as a determinant of purchasing, this confirms the hypothesis that Generation X is more price sensitive when choosing green brands than Generation Y.

3. Environmental awareness is more important for Generation X according to consumer survey data, but experts say Generation Y is more likely to delve into brand awareness, various activities and sustainability reports, and Generation X is more likely to trust written information. Generation Y consumers are more likely to be interested in environmental awareness than Generation X consumers, which confirms the hypothesis that Generation Y is more interested in green products, as well as the hypothesis that Generation X is less affected by brand environmental awareness.

4. To create more value for a green brand, one way to differentiate consumers and communicate with them is through age. Based on the results obtained during the research, we can see that the lower price, product convenience and durability, clear and natural product composition, convenient point of sale, recyclable packaging, and Lithuanian communication in the Lithuanian market create X times higher brand value. Education is also important for this generation, but to attract the attention of Generation X users, it is useful to note that local issues are more relevant to this generation than global ones, and communication must be concise and clear. A socially responsible business model, social brand accountability, as well as brand elements such as certified eco-labeling or social initiatives create more value. Generation Y, it is noticeable, tends to look more closely at brand information, so communication must be done with caution, as misused green marketing can be perceived as green brainwashing and undermining brand value.

5. Although this study shows Generation X's increased concern for environmental issues, additional observations of consumer behavior could be made to further investigate Generation X and Y users, as there is a potential gap in consumer attitudes and behavior.

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