GREEN ADVERTISING STRATEGIES FOR CONSUMER-PACKAGED GOODS: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW & CASE STUDY

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BACKGROUND

- Green marketing techniques incorporate environmental aspects into marketing activities to satisfy consumer concerns regarding the state of the natural environment. [1, 2, 3] Enhanced environmental consciousness has become an integral part of a product's market competition. [4]
- Advertising plays a significant role in the communication of a firm's environmental image to consumers as they not only have to be green, but they need to be perceived as green. [3, 5] Green advertising can be defined as marketing material promoting an organization's environmental efforts related to operations and processes in order to gain sustainable competitive advantage and meet consumer needs and desires. [6, 7] This strategy works as a compelling selling point facilitating green consumption. [8]
- The consumer-packaged goods industry has been forced to keep up with these growing green marketing and green advertising trends. [9] It is for these reasons that this industry is the primary focus for this research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is twofold: to gain an in-depth understanding of the application of green advertising strategies in the consumer-packaged goods industry and collect empirical data regarding the execution of strategies used.

Research Questions:

- What are the most common themes in relation to green advertising strategies for consumer-packaged goods in the literature?
- Which green advertising strategies are most likely to influence a consumer's decision-making process while purchasing a consumer-packaged good?
- What green advertising strategies are seen in magazine print ads?
- Are there any connections between the findings from the literature and the magazine print ad case study?

METHODOLOGY

Systematic Review

- Business Source Premium was used as the search engine.
- Keyword search: green advertising, green advertising claim, green advertising strategies, green marketing, green marketing mix, green marketing strategies, ecological advertising, ecological marketing and sustainable advertising
- Predetermined exclusion criteria were used to eliminate irrelevant articles from analysis, including an initial review of the article's title and abstract.
- Only empirical, academic articles published from 2010 onwards from North America and Europe were considered and included for further analysis.
- Article analysis included: recording the authors, year and name of publication, article title, research question(s) and the main findings.
- Further examination evaluated the number of studies published over time, the journals the articles were published in, and the major themes.

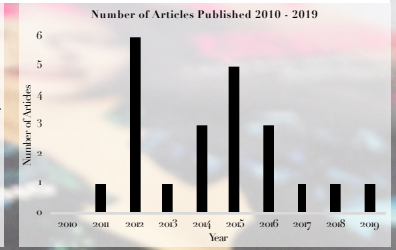
Case Study

- The case study was completed to review green advertising strategies used in print ads from 2018 and 2019 magazine issues.
- Women's fashion, men's fashion/ fitness and lifestyle magazines were selected : Elle Canada, InStyle, Men's Health, Gentleman's Quarterly, Good Housekeeping and Canadian House and Home.
- Sample ads were assessed at both the ad level and the claim level. The ad level categories included the advertiser, type of product/service featured, the target and main objective of the ad, and incorporating executional elements. Claim level categories included environmental claims and appeal types.

RESULTS

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

- Search criteria garnered a total of 576 articles, which was narrowed to 22 based on relevancy to research questions.
- *Journal of Advertising* published the highest number of articles, followed by *Journal of Business Research* and *Journal of Marketing Communications*.
- Major themes from articles include: ad receptivity, green demarketing, advertising mediums, product packaging, eco-labels and appeal types.



CASE STUDY

- A total of 156 green advertisement print samples were collected from the pre-selected magazines.
- The majority of samples were collected from InStyle magazine, however, an Anova test showed no significant results between the number of samples collected (p = 0.0586).
- Chi-squared tests reveal significant associations between the majority of the variables, except between magazine sector and ad objective, and magazine sector and type of environmental claim.

DISCUSSION

- Results from the systematic review highlight the significance of environmental involvement and environmental concern; individuals with high environmental involvement and concern have the most positive reactions to green ads which use functional appeals rather than emotional appeals. [10] Humor in green ads offers the opportunity of garnering higher consumer engagement, [11] and finally, fear appeals are not effective for influencing consumer purchasing intentions. [12]
- Marketing research has shown that men focus primarily on functional elements most relevant to themselves, whereas women generally prefer advertisements emphasising aspirational gratification, with descriptive articulations of the featured product. [13] Results from the case study supported this: women's fashion magazines recorded the highest percentage for personal gain appeals (37.3%), whereas for men's fashion/fitness magazines, the highest percentage was for functional appeals (57.8%). This was also supported through the chi-squared results, a significant association was seen between magazine sector and type of appeal (p-value = 0.0004401). The categories that displayed the largest variances between sectors were the types of products featured in the ads and the appeal types used. This was also supported through the chi-squared tests (p-value = 0.000), further demonstrating the association between sector and the types of products that are featured.

CONCLUSION

- Main findings emphasize that advertising professionals must have a firm understanding of their target market and the related implications of their consumers having either low or high environmental concern.
- The setting in which the ad itself is placed also has influence over a consumer's reaction and response, through both the medium itself, and the associated personal accountability factors.
- A variety of appeal types were mentioned in the literature and used to help structure the case study analysis; from this, functional and personal gain appeals were found to be the most common, with a significant correlation between these and the gendered magazine sectors.
- Finally, the case study found consistent results across the three magazine sectors, women's fashion, men's fashion/ fitness and lifestyle, highlighting that the majority of green ads featuring consumer-packaged goods in magazines share the following traits: target personal health preservation, promote a green product/service, have environmental claims for a given product, use green executional elements, with few third-party verifications.
- The results from this provide a concise summary of current literature available pertaining to green advertising and implications on consumer purchasing intentions with consumer-packaged goods.
- These results will be most relevant for those interested in learning more about the general topic of green advertising, as well as for professionals in the marketing field.

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