

**THE ROLE OF GREEN MARKETING IN BRAND DEVELOPMENT:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON SUSTAINABILITY-DRIVEN CONSUMER
PERCEPTIONS AND LOYALTY IN ALBANIA**

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of green marketing practices on sustainability-driven consumer perceptions and brand loyalty in Albania, as an emerging market. By identifying successful strategies that enhance consumer loyalty, addressing what factors lead to skepticism and identifying key patterns that affect the behaviors toward green marketing, this research sheds light on how sustainability influences long term brand development. Using a quantitative analysis approach, through an online survey, the study gives critical insights regarding the connection between consumers and green marketing practices. The findings reveal generally positive attitudes towards green marketing initiatives despite a relevant awareness gap and skepticism of sustainability claims. Transparency and clear information are also revealed to be important influences in building trust and loyalty. Gender and age emerged as influential demographic variables, with women and younger consumers displaying stronger eco-conscious behaviors. Furthermore, the analysis confirms a partial intention–behavior gap where even though many consumers express strong inclinations toward green purchases, these do not always translate into action, especially when affordability or availability are at stake. Practical recommendations include prioritizing transparency with third party certifications, improving consumer education and encouraging public frameworks that help mitigate the gap between intentions and behavior towards sustainability.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Sustainability, Consumer Perception, Brand Development, Consumer Loyalty.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Considering today's environmentally conscious marketplace, green marketing has emerged as a key strategy for brands aiming to connect with consumers' growing demand for sustainability, along with eco-friendly solutions.

The idea of green marketing, which is founded on corporate social responsibility, is a responsible and ecologically conscious marketing approach, the application of which is steadily increasing in practically every developed and developing nation (Nadanyiova et. al, 2020). It is a topic that should be addressed in academic study as its core focus is on addressing the social component of marketing through the use of ecological resources, the socio-environmental impact of existing marketing, and greening different dimensions of traditional marketing. It is among the newest marketing techniques that has the potential to significantly contribute to improved opportunities and societal well-being.

As sustainability is increasingly becoming a crucial concern for customers, brands are constantly seeking for green marketing strategies to position themselves as environmentally responsible. It is essential to examine how these strategies affect consumer perception especially if their constant adaptation leads to long term relationship and consumer loyalty. However, the effectiveness of green marketing sometimes remains uncertain considering the fact that along with the customer's concern about sustainability, their skepticism increases as well. Misleading customers about the true environmental impact of products or corporate practices otherwise known as greenwashing, can also be a problem in the road to achieving consumer trust. This is why it's important to understand how to effectively use green marketing techniques, which strategies are the most successful, and to what extent is consumer perception and loyalty affected by such practices.

Although many businesses use green marketing techniques, their efficiency varies based on a number of factors, including generational disparities in sustainability awareness and importance, consumer trust, and skepticism towards environmental claims. For instance, Generation Z and Millennials are likely to prioritize brands focusing on real sustainability actions, whereas the older generations are not as interested in sustainable consumption and value product practicality and longevity (Nichols & Holt, 2023). Furthermore, the intentions and goodwill of consumers to purchase eco-friendly products and support sustainable brands, do not always match with their actual behavior.

Despite the growing international concern for sustainability, the growth of green marketing in Albania remains relatively low, facing a number of structural and cultural challenges (Hasrama et al., 2025). Common issues like environmental ignorance, low trust due to greenwashing, and the lack of institutional backing compromise the success of sustainable branding efforts (Mulyadi et al., 2024). In addition, affordability is also a key barrier, with many Albanian consumers being price-conscious and viewing green options as not affordable. Such local conditions make it necessary to ascertain the perception of green marketing initiatives amidst this particular socio-economic and cultural environment.

1.1 Green Marketing

The notion of green marketing is not at all new, and while it rose to prominence in the late 1980 and early 1990, it was first discussed in 1975, when the American Marketing Association (AMA) held a workshop on 'Ecological Marketing'. According to the association, green marketing is defined as "the efforts by the organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns".

The definition of green marketing has long been contested, both before and after it gained popularity (see: Polonsky, 1994; Peattie, 2001; Baker & Hart, 2003; Unruh & Ettenson, 2010; Nadanyiova et al., 2020; Constantinescu et al., 2022.; Subramanian et al., 2023).

Green marketing is the process of producing, promoting and distributing products or services with as little negative environmental impact as possible. These products or services are either environmentally friendly by nature or are packaged and manufactured in the most environmentally friendly way possible. It is one component of a broader movement towards socially and environmentally accountable business practices (Kusuma & Asifulla, 2024; Mokha, 2017). This approach involves a company's efforts to operate sustainably, such as using eco-friendly materials, reducing carbon footprints, sustainable packaging, implementing recycling programs or eliminating waste.

Green marketing is an integrated, sustainable and customer-focused management process that identifies, anticipates, satisfies and fulfils the need of all stakeholder—consumers, employees, shareholders, and society at large—for a reasonable reward, that does not adversely affect human or natural environmental well-being (Mahmoud, 2018). This definition emphasises that green marketing is not a question of simply promoting and selling green products but is concerned with integrating environmental values into a company's core strategic management.

Based on the aforementioned definitions, green marketing entails a variety of actions, including product modification, production process modification, eco-friendly packaging, improved advertising etc. These changes aim not only to reduce negative environmental impacts but also to align brand identity with ethical, social, and environmental values.

1.2 Consumer Perception and Behavior

Consumer perception is defined as how customers assess a brand's image, credibility, and trustworthiness in the context of green practices (Noor, 2024). It functions as a mediating factor between sustainability perception and loyalty.

That said, consumer behavior is known a set of behaviors that assist people in navigating the complex process of recognizing their needs, engaging information acquisition, choosing what to purchase, using items, and reacting to stimuli (Singh et al., 2025).

Brand Development

In the context of green marketing, brand development can be defined as the process of incorporating eco-friendly practices into brand strategy to fulfill consumers' escalating needs for green responsibility.

Aside from boosting a brand's reputation, green marketing strategies—such as eco-friendly packaging and ethical sourcing—help build consumer trust and loyalty (Sarmah & Singh, 2024; Prihatiningrum et al., 2024). Given this, results-driven green marketing techniques will undoubtedly result in the development of a value-added brand by fostering positive consumer perceptions and long-term customer trust and loyalty.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study investigates the effects of green marketing on brand development, aiming to identify which strategies successfully foster consumer loyalty while also addressing issues that may lead to skepticism toward greenwashing. Thus, this paper seeks to analyze the impact of green marketing on long-term brand perception and loyalty by examining consumer perceptions across generations.

The second primary purpose of the study is to assess how Albanian consumers' attitudes and brand loyalty are influenced by green marketing strategies, advertising environmentally

friendly claims, implementing sustainable policies, and raising corporate social responsibility awareness.

Furthermore, this paper intends to assess how transparency in environmentally friendly practices affects consumer trust, engagement, and brand perception.

Another objective of the study is to assess how demographic differences affect responses to green marketing initiatives, focusing specifically on generational differences among Millennials, Generation Z, and older age groups.

This research also strives to demonstrate both direct and mediated relationships among green marketing practices, perceived brand sustainability, and consumer perception. This purposeful framework for this study is based on two primary theories: the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Brand Equity Theory. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) proposes that consumers' behavior is influenced by their attitudes, beliefs, perceived control, and societal norms. The Brand Equity Theory (Keller, 1993) asserts that consumer perceptions and loyalty play a significant role in building brand equity, ultimately leading to brand development.

As a result, focusing on Albania, the study aims to offer insights into how emerging markets trade off environmental goals and market pressures, and how brands can build sustainable consumer relationships by ensuring the harmony between authenticity, accessibility, and sustainability.

1.5 Research Questions

In line with the aforementioned objectives, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: Does transparency and clear communication about eco-friendly practices increase trust and engagement?

RQ2: Are there generational and other demographic differences in responses to green marketing initiatives?

RQ3: Is there a gap between consumers' stated interest in sustainability and their actual purchasing behavior?

1.6 Hypotheses Development

The following hypotheses are proposed based on the above objectives and questions, and the literature below:

H1: Transparent communication towards eco-friendly practices such as sustainable packaging, ethical sourcing and other green marketing initiatives significantly increase trust, positive brand perception and consumer engagement.

H2: Millennials and Gen Z consumers respond more positively to green marketing initiatives compared to older generations (Gen X and Baby Boomers).

H3: Even though Albanian customers care about green marketing initiatives and sustainable practices, there is a gap between their stated intentions and actual purchasing behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Green Marketing and Consumer Perception

Green marketing efforts have a powerful impact on consumers' attitudes by highlighting environmental friendliness and responsible business practices. Several studies highlight that consumers continue to prefer brands that demonstrate environmental responsibility, resulting in higher brand equity and trust.

Noor (2024) employs a quantitative method based on data collected from 200 Indonesian e-commerce consumers to examine the effects of sustainability and green marketing strategies on brand loyalty and recognition in the Indonesian e-commerce landscape. The results of the study reveal that integrating sustainability principles into green marketing strategies can enhance brand equity by increasing customer trust and loyalty.

Kanchana (2024) utilizes a qualitative and exploratory approach to explore research on consumer perceptions, brand strategies, and green marketing in the context of sustainability. The investigation emphasizes key drivers influencing consumer attitudes, such as the perceived reliability of green practices, environmental awareness, and the contribution of sociocultural dynamics to environmentally responsible purchasing. The research also underlines the challenges companies face, such as skepticism towards greenwashing and the imperative to reconcile profitability with genuine sustainability claims.

Sarmah and Singh (2024) investigate the effects of eco-friendly packaging and ethical sourcing on consumer behavior and brand loyalty in their study. They employ a mixed-methods approach in their research, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Their research results indicate that sustainable marketing strategies have a positive impact on customer loyalty, behavior, and perceptions. They demonstrate that consumers are more interested in and react positively to companies that use environmentally friendly packaging and ethical sourcing. Finally, they suggest that a variety of demographic traits impact how people react to sustainable marketing strategies.

Prihatiningrum et al. (2024) employ real-world scenarios from multiple sectors to illustrate successful examples of integrating sustainability into branding and marketing. They cover sustainable marketing strategies that align brand values with consumers' demands for eco-responsibility, highlighting key strategies, authenticity, and stakeholder engagement for good brand reputation and business growth. Findings highlight authenticity as a core component of sustainable marketing to avoid greenwashing and build consumer trust. The authors also emphasize that successful sustainability initiatives enhance brand reputation, customer trust, and business growth, but competitive success also requires the inclusion of stakeholder engagement, a sustainable supply chain, and educational marketing.

Ghritlahre & Baghel (2021) compare how consumers with different demographics perceive and respond to green marketing initiatives, and examine the relationship between consumer perception and green marketing tactics. According to the results of the study, 75% of participants either know or strongly agree that they can purchase eco-friendly products. This finding demonstrates a high level of consumer awareness of green marketing tactics. The research also highlights that demographic factors such as age, gender, income level, and education influence consumers' understanding and trust of green marketing messages.

Rajeswari & Suganya (2023) examine the associations between green marketing and people's behavior. From data collected through a survey they find that consumer behavior is determined by various factors like their values, the attitude towards the brand and products, and trust in brands as well as in their environmental claims. The study further shows that businesses that successfully integrate green marketing into their businesses gain a competitive advantage through the conversion of increasingly more environmentally concerned consumers.

Chidera & Chinaza (2024) highlight that, when brands effectively communicate their sustainability efforts, and commit to genuine sustainability concerns, they can avoid greenwashing accusations and build stronger relationships with consumers, leading to repeat purchases and brand advocacy.

Bhat et al. (2024) and Sipos (2024) further support this claim by using a quantitative approach through online surveys, and found that brands that effectively communicate their environmental efforts are more likely to gain consumer loyalty and trust.

According to research conducted by Mansour et al. (2024), 70% of consumers consider environmental impacts in their purchasing decisions, while 45% are willing to pay more for green products. In contrast, only 30% of consumers believe companies are sincere in their environmental commitments. This finding clearly reflects a significant lack of trust among consumers in companies' eco-friendly claims.

Mulyadi et al. (2024) conducted a systematic literature review to analyze the effectiveness of green marketing techniques in attracting consumer interest in environmentally friendly products. The findings suggest that green marketing is effective in generating consumer interest and brand loyalty, but consumers remain concerned about the accuracy and integrity of green commitments. Therefore, the findings suggest that effective communication and genuine sustainability are essential for companies seeking to revise their marketing strategies to meet the demands of environmentally conscious consumers.

These findings suggest brands' need not only to promote the environmental and green benefits of their products, but also to educate consumers about why sustainability matters and the beneficial impact of their green consumption behavior.

2.2 Green Marketing in the Albanian Context

The relationship of green marketing with consumer behavior in Albania has been studied by few researchers, mostly in recent years.

A study by Mehmetukaj and Musa (2023) reveals that while Albanian consumers are aware of green products and recognize their benefits, their purchasing behavior does not always align with this awareness. Additionally, the study found that Albanian consumers perceive green products as difficult to find due to a "lack of exposure." They also found that while Albanian

consumers are well-informed about consumption and eco-labeling, the majority still prefer to purchase conventional products or are indifferent to both types of products, ultimately not expressing a significant preference for green products.

According to Muçi and Driza (2023), green marketing campaigns are having an increasing impact on consumers. Although the main factor influencing purchases is product features, consumers are more inclined to purchase these goods and pay more attention to strategies because they are environmentally conscious.

Hasrama et al. (2025), from another perspective, using a quantitative approach, investigate the role of green advertising in the tourism sector in Albania by analyzing the relationships between green advertising properties, purchasing attitudes, and environmental awareness. According to the results, the most important element influencing consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions within the framework of green marketing is the way brands convey their message. They emphasize how crucial it is to create messages that appeal to customers' beliefs and environmental concerns in a convincing and engaging way. Furthermore, their study indicates that prioritizing open and truthful communication and avoiding false claims and greenwashing are essential for building consumer trust, expanding brand credibility, and fostering long-term brand loyalty.

2.3 Research Gaps

Despite the increasing interest in green marketing globally and even in emerging markets and its impact on consumer behavior, significant gaps remain in market research, particularly in the Albanian market. Existing studies indicate that consumers have positive views of environmentally friendly products and are becoming more aware of environmental issues. However, some value-action gaps exist, where these positive attitudes do not consistently translate into actual purchase behavior. Therefore, it is important to understand why green marketing awareness and perceptions do not significantly increase consumer willingness to pay and to examine the reasons behind these gaps.

Furthermore, the role of cultural and socio-economic determinants affecting Albanian consumers' perceptions of green marketing initiatives is not well-researched.

Closing such gaps is essential for the design of efficient, effective, and targeted green marketing strategies that resonate with Albanian consumers and promote sustainable consumption habits.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This paper will follow a quantitative methodology, with data sourced primarily from a survey targeted to the Albanian consumers. The study will mostly be exploratory and descriptive in nature, gathering data and insights that can inform marketing strategy and decision-making.

3.2 Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

An online survey was used as the method of administration for this questionnaire. In modern research on green advertising, quantitative research methods, especially surveys, have been widely employed for data collection (see: Smith & Sparkes, 2016; Mansour et al., 2024).

The survey, consisting of 25 questions, was structured according to the relevant literature and divided into thematic sections such as sustainability awareness, brand perception, consumer trust and behavioral intentions. This approach allowed for questions to be designed in a clear, logical, and engaging way for participants.

Data was collected using a structured Google Form distributed through various digital platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. These online and technology-intensive platforms, widely used and accessible for communication, were deliberately chosen to reach the target audience more efficiently, effectively, and ethically. The use of these digital platforms not only streamlined the distribution process but also facilitated broader demographic participation in a shorter period of time. Indeed, this method, consistent with current practices in online survey research, increases both the reach and response rate of the data collection process.

A pilot test (n=15) was conducted to ensure validity and objectivity during the data collection process and to address potential ambiguities in the questions. This test was used to review unclear and potentially biased questions, particularly to help improve the overall survey design. This step played a critical role in creating an objective survey that minimized measurement errors and increased the reliability of the dataset.

Furthermore, utmost care was taken to adhere to ethical principles throughout the data collection process. Before beginning the survey, participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the purpose of the study, ensuring confidentiality, and emphasizing

that participation was entirely voluntary. Due to ethical considerations, no personal information was collected, and participants remained completely anonymous.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The sample of this survey covers the Albanian population with diverse demographic characteristics. This demographic diversity is important for uncovering diverse perspectives on green marketing and for measuring Albanian consumers' familiarity with this concept.

This study employed convenience sampling and snowball sampling as non-probability sampling methods. In addition to popular online platforms, personal networks, online communities, and easily accessible participants were used to disseminate the survey. Snowball sampling encouraged initial participants to share the survey with their networks, thus expanding the sample across different regions of Albania and maintaining its existing diversity.

3.4 Justification of Sample Size

This study was conducted on a sample of 272 participants, which is acceptable for conducting marketing research. This number of participants corresponds to a sample size that would allow for a maximum variance ($p=0.5$) at a 90% confidence level and a margin of error of approximately 5% calculated according to the Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977).

Hair et al. (2011) state that a margin of error of around 5% is acceptable for practical business research and that a 90% confidence level can often be used when applicability is aimed without significantly compromising reliability. Saunders et al. (2019) also state that flexibility in statistical thresholds is reasonable in marketing studies, provided the rationale is clearly explained.

Furthermore, Dillman et al. (2014) emphasize that sampling decisions should reflect the context, purpose, and limitations of the study. Ultimately, for this marketing study, where the goal is to produce actionable insights rather than absolute certainty, this level of statistical rigor is both practically and academically acceptable.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study, SPSS was used to analyze most of the data because it offers more complex and advanced features, while Excel was used to display the data in graphs and tables.

An open-ended question from the survey was analyzed using a qualitative research approach. Both content and thematic analysis were employed to identify key themes and recurring patterns, which allowed for deeper understanding of respondents' perspectives.

4. Results

The results are structured according to the key hypothesis of the research. To ensure the quality and validity of the data, the results begin with a reliability analysis of the key scales used in the survey, followed by a normality test to assess the distribution of variables. These preliminary steps help confirm that the data is appropriate for further statistical analysis. Subsequent subsections include descriptive statistics, non-parametric and correlation tests, and regression models addressing the research questions and hypotheses testing.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the survey constructs, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for three groups of related items. All reliability scores met or exceeded the acceptable threshold for exploratory research ($\alpha \geq 0.7$), confirming that the items within each group demonstrate internal consistency:

Table 1. Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Group	Variables Measured (Question Numbers)	Cronbach's Alpha
Group 1: Green Marketing's Impact on Trust	- Influence of green marketing on brand perception (Q6) - Consideration of environmental sustainability before purchase (Q8) - Perceived trustworthiness of companies that engage in green marketing (Q11) - Importance of a company's environmental responsibility when purchasing (Q12) - Impact of green marketing on long-term trust and brand loyalty (Q24)	0.739
Group 2: Importance of Open Information	- Importance of clear and verifiable sustainability information (Q17) - Impact of transparency on trust in sustainability communication (Q18) - Importance of third-party sustainability labels (Q19)	0.785
Group 3: Green Purchasing Behavior & Intention	- Intention to purchase eco-friendly products (Q20) - Actual choice of eco-friendly products over conventional ones (Q21) - Willingness to pay more for eco-friendly products (Q22)	0.755

4.2 Normality Test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted to assess whether the data met the assumption of normal distribution. All likert scale items had p-values less than 0.001 in both tests, indicating significant departures from normality. This suggests that the data for all survey items are not normally distributed. With this non-normal distribution, the study continued with non-parametric testing.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

4.3.1 Description of the Demographics

4.3.1.1. Age of the Respondents

The age distribution of the sample is spread across various demographics with a skew toward younger generations. The largest age group represented in the survey is 18–24 years making up 38.2% of the total respondents. The second highest age group is 25–34 with a frequency of 14.3%, followed closely by 35–44 at 13.2%. Lower percentages are found among the 45–54 (12.1%) and 55+ (9.6%) ages, while 12.5% were younger than 18. Altogether, individuals below the age of 35 make up more than 65% of the sample.

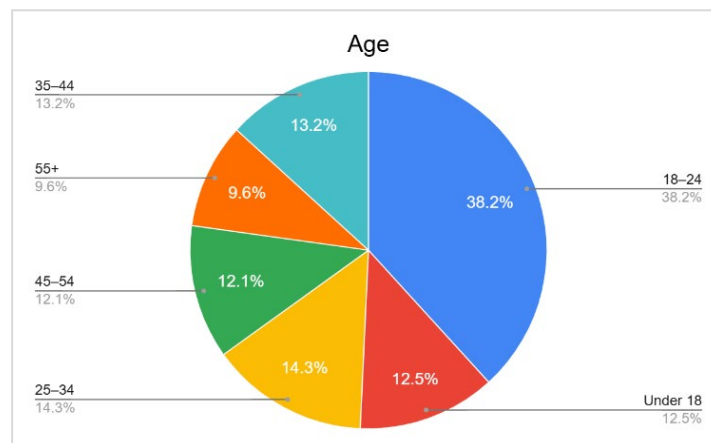


Figure 1. Age of the Respondents

Although this distribution is consistent with findings from related studies, which indicate that younger consumers are more likely to be interested in sustainability-driven matters, it is too soon to draw firm conclusions about how different generations perceive green marketing.

4.3.1.2. Gender of the Respondents

The sample is fairly distributed in terms of gender, with 51.1% of the sample identifying as female and 45.2% as male. There were few respondents (3.7%) who did not wish to disclose their gender. The near equal distribution provides a fairly representative analysis of both male and female attitudes towards green marketing and sustainability preference. This balance is convenient to test hypothetical gender differences in consumer attitudes, particularly attitudes toward environmental responsibility and green purchase intentions. These few missing responses would not have a significant impact on the overall analysis.

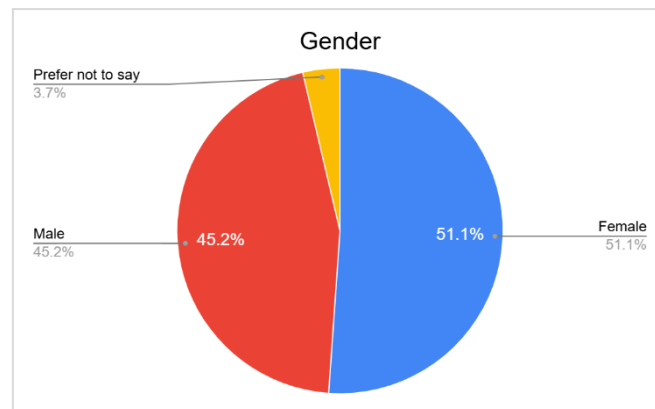


Figure 2. Gender of the respondents

4.3.1.3. Occupation of the Respondents

The sample has a mixed distribution of the employment status. The most frequent category are full-time workers (42.3%), then students (29%), and part-time workers (12.5%). There are fewer groups who are self-employed (9.9%) and unemployed (6.3%).

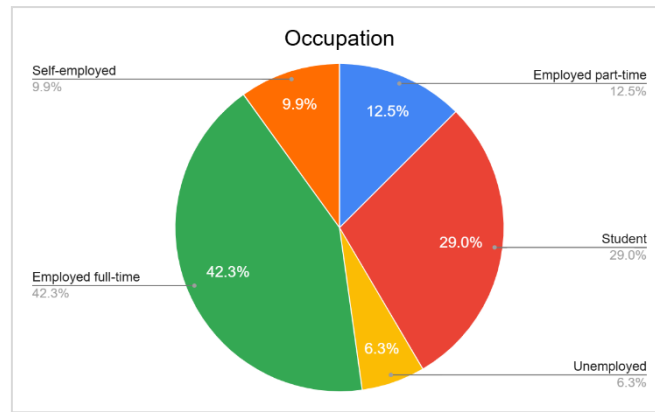


Figure 3. Occupation of the respondents

This spread reflects a sample including active members in the labor market as well as a high percentage of youth in education. The high percentage of full-time workers reflects a strong presence of individuals with stable incomes, potentially influencing buying habits, especially regarding consumers' willingness to pay more for sustainable products. At the same time, the sheer size of the students complements the age profile of the sample and may reflect growing awareness of sustainability issues among younger consumers.

4.3.1.4. Monthly Income

Responses are rather evenly spread across income categories among respondents who chose to disclose their income. The largest segment, 28%, reported an income of more than 100,000 ALL, followed by 25.4% with a reported income of 70,000–100,000 ALL, 23.8% with an income of less than 50,000 ALL, and 22.8% with a reported income of 50,000–70,000 ALL. 29% of the participants would prefer not to disclose their income, a considerable proportion of the total sample.

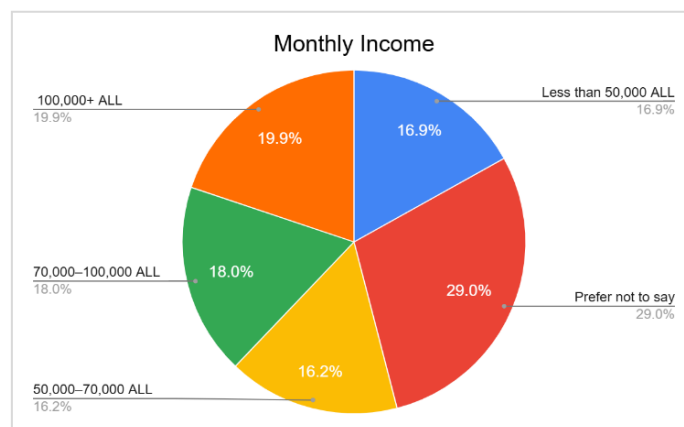


Figure 4. Monthly income of the respondents

4.3.2 Familiarity with the Term "Green Marketing"

Most respondents indicated at least some awareness of the concept. A combined 56.3% reported being either “somewhat familiar” (39%) or “very familiar” (17.3%). Meanwhile, 43.7% of participants were either “not very familiar” (28.3%) or “not at all familiar” (15.4%).

This suggests that while green marketing is not an unfamiliar term to the majority, there is still a substantial portion of the population with limited exposure to it. This range in awareness may have implications for how green marketing strategies are received by different consumer segments, and it provides useful context for interpreting their responses to sustainability-related questions throughout the survey.

Table 2. Familiarity Level with Green Marketing

Familiarity Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all familiar	42	15.4
Not very familiar	77	28.3
Somewhat familiar	106	39
Very familiar	47	17.3
Total	272	100

4.3.3 Awareness of Green Marketing Practices Among Companies in Albania

When asked if they have noticed any companies that promote green marketing in Albania, only 30.9% of respondents answered with yes, while 31.6% said no, and 37.5% were unsure. The high level of uncertainty suggests that sustainable marketing efforts by companies in Albania may lack visibility or clarity.

Table 3. Awareness of Green Marketing Practices

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	84	30.9
No	86	31.6
Not sure	102	37.5
Total	272	100

After being asked if they knew any Albanian companies that promoted green marketing practices, participants were given the opportunity to mention some examples to determine whether the respondents can provide names of businesses in Albania that promote sustainable marketing ideas.

Out of approximately 230 answers, nearly 70% were uninformative, blank, or vague responses such as “I don’t know”, “I have no example”, or just left the answer blank. This indicates a relatively low level of public awareness or recall of green marketing initiatives in the Albanian market.

4.3.4 Perceived Transparency in Green Marketing Practices

Only 19.5% believe companies are transparent, while 44.9% say *no* and 35.7% are *uncertain*. The results point to a clear trust and transparency gap, reinforcing the view that Albanian firms struggle to communicate sustainability efforts credibly.

Table 4. Perceived Transparency in Green Marketing Practices

Response Option	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	53	19.5
No	122	44.9
Maybe	97	35.7
Total	272	100

Furthermore, when asked whether they had ever felt misled by a company's environmental claims ("greenwashing"), the majority (43.4%) of participants said they had never felt misled, while 26.8% said they had been subjected to such deception, and 29.8% said "Maybe."

These findings indicate that while a significant portion of consumers may not recognize greenwashing outright, there remains a notable group that either suspects it or has directly experienced it. This emphasizes the critical role of transparency in corporate environmental messaging and the potential for consumer skepticism when green claims are perceived as vague or unsubstantiated.

4.3.5 Influential Green Marketing Practices

As the green marketing practice that influences purchasing decisions, the majority of respondents (52.9%) selected "eco-friendly packaging," followed by "recycling programs" (44.9%) and "ethical sourcing" (25.4%). This suggests that packaging and visible environmental efforts are particularly effective in capturing consumer attention.

The table below shows the percentage shows the percentage of individual respondents (N = 272) who selected each option, regardless of how many total options they chose. For instance, 52.9% of respondents selected "eco-friendly packaging" as one of the influential factors.

Table 5. Influential Green Marketing Practices

Sustainability Initiative	% of Respondents Who Selected
Eco-friendly packaging	52.90%
Recycling programs	44.90%
Ethical sourcing	25.40%
Donations to environmental causes	25.00%
Carbon footprint labeling	16.20%
None of the above	8.10%

Since each respondent could choose multiple options, the total number of responses (N = 469) exceeds the number of participants. Therefore, Figure 4.5 presents the data as a percentage of

total responses, offering insight into the relative frequency of each option compared to the entire set of answers. This method highlights the most frequently mentioned practices in the overall dataset. As we can see from the table, eco-friendly and recycling programs were the most frequent green marketing initiatives that influence buying decisions. This highlights the need to focus more on these practices when developing green marketing strategies.

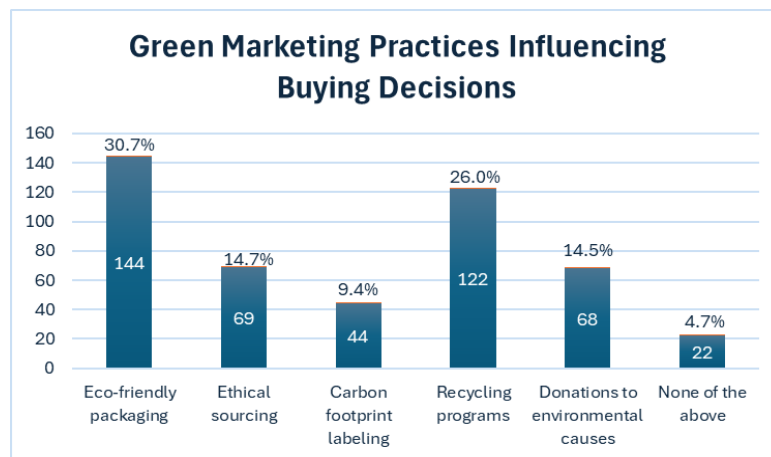


Figure 5. Distribution of Influential Green Marketing Practices

4.3.6 Consumer Attitudes Toward Green Marketing and Sustainability Efforts

This section presents a descriptive analysis of key variables central to understand consumer beliefs and behaviors toward green marketing and sustainability in brand development. The table below presents the mean and standard deviation of key Likert-scale items from the survey, each addressing a specific aspect of consumer perception, belief, and response towards efforts in green marketing. These variables represent key factors such as the impact of green messaging on brand reputation, value placed on sustainability information, trust in brands for environmental responsibility, and the likelihood of sustainable buying behaviors. Interpretation of each item provides a sense of how much Albanian consumers are influenced by, and engage with, sustainability-grounded branding, which forms the basis for relational analysis and discussion.

Table 6. Central Tendencies of Key Variables

#	Statement (abridged)	Mean	S.Dv
Q6	Influence of green marketing on brand view	3.09	0.953
Q8	Consideration of sustainability before purchase	2.76	0.875
Q11	Trust in companies using green marketing	3.36	0.803
Q12	Importance of environmental responsibility	3.27	1.009
Q13	Research into environmental practices	2.44	1.068
Q17	Importance of clear sustainability info	3.92	1.043
Q18	Trust from transparent sustainability comms	3.94	1.009
Q19	Importance of third-party labels	3.78	1.003
Q20	Intention to purchase eco-friendly products	3.07	0.821
Q21	Choosing eco over conventional when available	2.9	0.963
Q22	Willingness to pay more for eco-friendly products	2.92	1.004
Q24	Green marketing's impact on trust and loyalty	3.48	1.002

Descriptive statistics show that respondents are generally favorable to green marketing, though the extent of actual environmentally friendly behavior is not so impressive. High mean scores on statements like transparency in sustainability communication ($M = 3.94$) and clear information on sustainability initiatives ($M = 3.92$) show that credibility and trust are highly promoted by open environmental practices. Similarly, third-party sustainability certifications ($M = 3.78$) are significant trust indicators.

However, more behavior items such as researching a company's green practices ($M = 2.44$) and consistently choosing eco-friendly products ($M = 2.90$) have lower means, which suggests intentions and attitudes do not automatically translate into consistent behavior. However, the mean of the intention to purchase green products' ($M = 3.07$) just remains above the midpoint, so there is a general positive trend here. Overall, the results reveal a consumer market that values transparency and sustainability, especially in brand image and trust, but with a moderate level of behavioral commitment to making green purchasing decisions.

These results give a general and descriptive understanding of the attitudes towards green marketing, however, to examine the study's hypotheses more rigorously, additional statistical tests have been conducted.

4.4 Inferential Statistics and Hypotheses Testing

This section of the data analysis addresses the research questions and hypotheses stated in the introduction.

4.4.1 The Effects of Transparent and Clear Information in Trust and Engagement

H1: *Transparent communication towards eco-friendly practices such as sustainable packaging, ethical sourcing and other green marketing initiatives significantly increase trust, positive brand perception and consumer engagement.*

The descriptive analysis of Likert Scale questions regarding transparency and trust in green marketing claims is a preliminary reflection of participants' attitudes towards clear and verifiable information. Respondents place a high value on this kind of transparency, highlighting the fact that consumers need clarity and transparency in order to believe environmental claims. Additionally, tests reveal that transparency in sustainability messaging greatly increases brand trust, suggesting that this is a crucial component of building enduring relationships with customers. The findings also prove the significance and influence of third-party sustainability labels, which act as external verification that strengthens consumer confidence in brand claims.

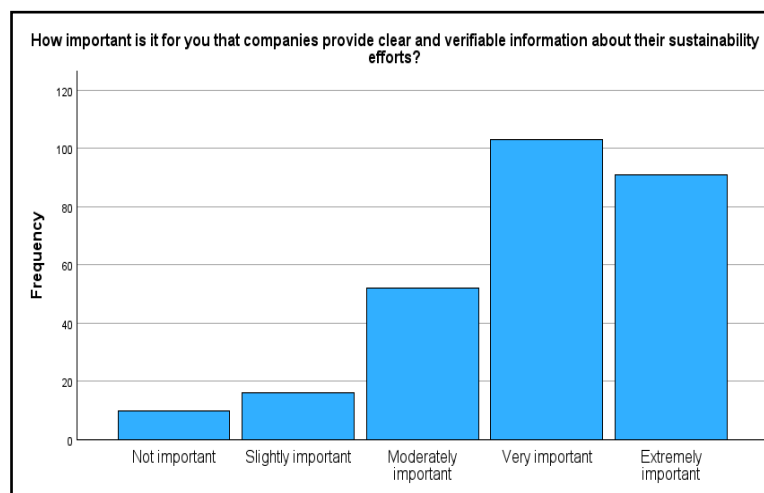


Figure 6. Importance of Clear and Verifiable Information

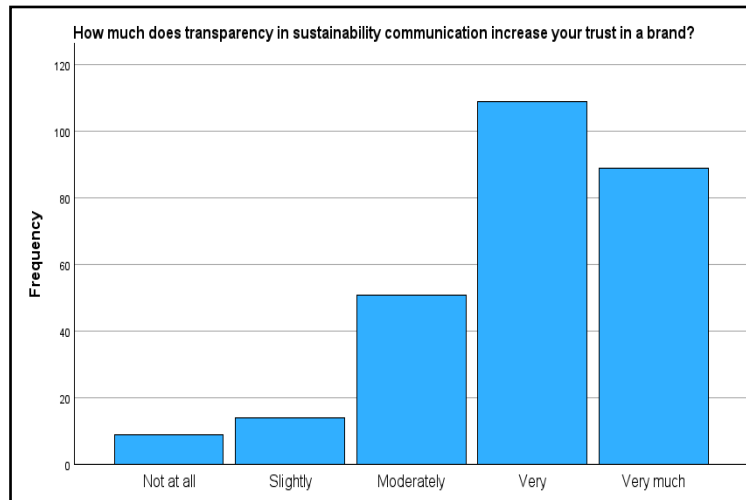


Figure 7. The Effect of Transparency in Trust

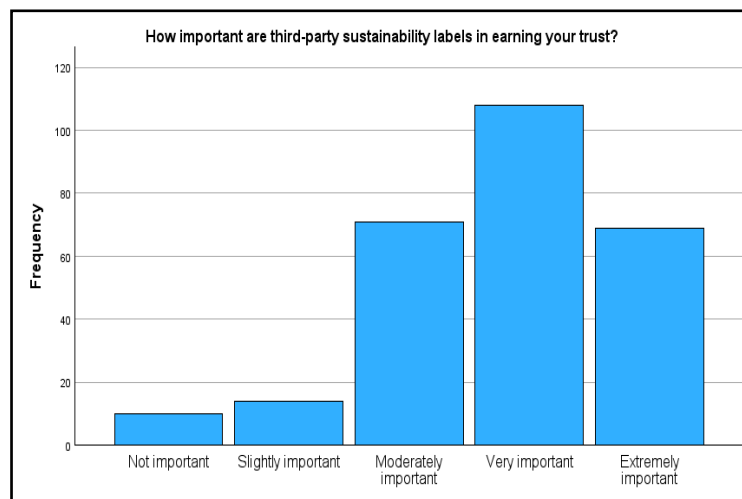


Figure 8. The Importance of Third-Party Labels

According to the figures above, opinions about green marketing initiatives are clearly skewed in favor of open, transparent information and the use of third-party labels. This supports the hypothesis that transparency about green marketing techniques improves consumer impression and trust.

Additionally, the Spearman Correlation test provides important insights into how transparency, clear communication, and labeling influence consumer perceptions and behavior toward green marketing.

Table 7. Spearman Correlation Results on Transparency and Green Marketing

N	Variable 1	Variable 2	Research Question	ρ (rho)	P-value	Strength	Sig ?
1	Importance of environmental responsibility (Q12)	Research on environmental practices before purchase (Q13)	Do consumers who value environmental responsibility research company practices more?	0.49	< .001	Moderate	3
2	Importance of clear sustainability information (Q17)	Transparency increases trust (Q18)	Does valuing clear info lead to greater trust in transparent brands?	0.559	< .001	Moderate–Strong	Yes
3	Transparency increases trust (Q18)	Importance of third-party sustainability labels (Q19)	Do more trusting consumers place greater importance on third-party labels?	0.5	< .001	Moderate	Yes

Spearman's rank correlation tests yield informative results on the interrelationship between environmental values and behavior, trust in transparency, and the role of sustainability labels in helping shape consumer attitudes. All the tests yielded statistically significant results ($p < .001$), which are reflective of pertinent relationships among the variables.

4.4.1.1 Environmental Responsibility and Pre-Purchase Research

There was a positive and moderate correlation between the value that consumers put on environmental responsibility (Q12) and their likelihood of researching a firm's environmental record prior to purchase (Q13). What this suggests is that consumers who prioritize environmental responsibility as having high value are much more likely to engage in enlightened and responsible consumption practice, seeking out information about a company's environmental past prior to purchase.

4.4.1.2 Transparency Clarity of Sustainability Information and Trust in Transparency

There exists a strong to moderate positive correlation between anticipating clear sustainability information (Q17) and the belief that openness causes higher levels of trust in companies (Q18). This indicates that consumers anticipating clarity in ecological communications are

likely to trust those companies that present their green efforts transparently. The significance of this relationship further supports the central role played by communication transparency in building consumer trust in green marketing claims.

4.4.1.3 Faith in Openness and Importance of Third-Party Sustainability Certificates

Moderate positive correlation is shown between trusting transparent companies (Q18) and valuing third-party sustainability labels (Q19). What this is suggesting is that consumers already trusting in transparency will be inclined to see third-party, independent labels as key to verifying the green claims of a company. Such labels can function as powerful trust signals, particularly for consumers already sensitive to the threat of greenwashing.

4.4.2 Generational and Other Demographic Differences in Attitudes Towards Green Marketing

H2: *Millennials and Gen Z consumers respond more positively to green marketing initiatives compared to older generations (Gen X and Baby Boomers).*

The tests for whether statistically significant differences in perceptions, intentions, and sustainable purchasing behavior exist between groups were conducted using a combination of Mann–Whitney U tests and Kruskal–Wallis H tests. The non-parametric tests were used due to the ordinal nature of Likert-scale items and non-normal distribution of data. Furthermore, Spearman correlation analysis, Chi-Square test and Regression analysis were employed to further support the results from these tests.

4.4.2.1 Mann Whitney Test

Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in attitudes and behaviors towards sustainability by gender.

There were significant differences in four key variables. The first was a significant difference in the degree of trust gained through open sustainability communication ($U = 7225.0$, $p = .022$), which indicated that females trust more those brands that are open about their sustainability activity. Also, gender was significant in the context of green purchase intentions ($U = 6427.5$, $p < .001$) as well as the frequency to choose green product whenever both options are available ($U = 5700.0$, $p < .001$), and both signify that females were more pronounced towards environmental purchasing behavior. Last, a strong gender difference existed with regard to

being willing to pay more for green offerings ($U = 5618.0$, $p < .001$), which again indicates that females are more inclined to spend on sustainability. These results support the fact that gender is of notable relevance in shaping the consumer response towards green marketing and sustainability measures.

Table 8. Significant Results from Mann-Whitney Test

No .	Variable Tested	Mann–Whitney U	Z	p-value
18	Transparency in sustainability of communication increases trust	7225	-2.298	0.022
20	Intention to purchase eco-friendly products	6427.5	-3.733	<.001
21	Choosing eco-friendly products over conventional ones	5700	-4.898	<.001
22	Willingness to pay more for eco-friendly products	5618	-5.003	<.001

4.4.2.2 Impact of Gender on Perceived Barriers to Green Purchases

To further support the analysis on gender differences, the Chi-Square test was conducted between gender as an independent variable and what prevents respondents from purchasing eco-friendly products more often as an independent variable.

The barriers that the respondents could choose from included higher cost, limited availability, lack of information, doubt about effectiveness and habitual behavior. The option “other” was sparingly used with some additional perceived barriers specific to some customers.

Table 9. Chi-Square Test: Gender x Barriers to eco-friendly purchases

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17.160a	5	0.004
Likelihood Ratio	18.206	5	0.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.7	1	0.403
N of Valid Cases	262		
a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .94.			

There is a significant association between gender and perceived barriers to purchasing eco-friendly products. In other terms Males and females do not report the same barriers equally but they differ in what prevents them from buying eco-friendly items. Table A26 in Appendix A presents a crosstabulation of Gender and Barriers to Eco-Friendly Purchases, revealing that:

- *Females* are more likely to report:
 - *Limited availability* (28.8% vs. 16.3%)
 - *Habitual purchasing behavior* (17.3% vs. 8.1%)
- *Males* are more likely to report:
 - *Lack of information* (26.8% vs. 14.4%)
 - *Higher cost* (30.1% vs. 23.0%)

This suggests that *women* are more affected by *availability and habits*, while *men* are more affected by *information gaps and price sensitivity*.

4.4.2.3 Effects of Gender on Trust and Loyalty: Ordinal Regression

To further support the results from the Mann Whitney Test, an ordinal regression analysis was conducted to test whether gender had any effect on trust and loyalty toward the use of green marketing practices. The Mann Whitney Test concluded that even though gender had some relevance in various variables regarding purchasing behavior, this constraint had actually no significance on whether respondents trust or feel loyal to brands that use green marketing practices.

Key Results from the Ordinal Regression Analysis:

Dependent Variable (DV): Q24 – Trust and Loyalty from Green Marketing

Independent Variable (IV): Q2 – Gender (Male = 1, Female = 2)

- Model Fit:
 - The model fits well (Goodness-of-fit Pearson test: $p = 0.859$).

- The Test of Parallel Lines confirms that the proportional odds assumption holds ($p = 0.859$).
- Effect of Gender:
 - The coefficient for Gender is $B = 0.067$, with a p -value = 0.768.
 - This is not statistically significant, indicating that gender does not predict trust and loyalty toward sustainable brands in your sample.

The ordinal regression analysis shows that there is no significant effect of gender on whether respondents trust or feel loyal to brands that use green marketing practices. The model itself is statistically valid and well-fitted, but the variable gender does not contribute meaningfully to explaining differences in the DV.

The Mann-Whitney U test also found no statistically significant difference between males and females in their trust/loyalty ratings from green marketing ($p > 0.05$).

Both statistical tests confirm the same thing- gender has no significant influence on how much consumers trust or feel loyal to brands that use green marketing strategies.

4.4.2.4 Age-Based Differences in Responses: Kruskal-Wallis Test

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in responses between different age groups across various sustainability-related attitudes and behaviors.

Results showed *significant differences* between age groups on several key items. Specifically, there were significant effects of age on:

- the extent to which green marketing influences brand perception ($H(5) = 20.771, p < .001$),
- how often sustainability is considered before making a purchase ($H(5) = 14.701, p = .012$),
- perceived trustworthiness of companies using green marketing ($H(5) = 11.420, p = .044$),

- the importance placed on corporate environmental responsibility in purchase decisions ($H(5) = 12.565, p = .028$),
- intention to purchase eco-friendly products ($H(5) = 31.446, p < .001$),
- frequency of choosing eco-friendly over conventional products ($H(5) = 44.373, p < .001$),
- and willingness to pay more for eco-friendly products ($H(5) = 25.260, p < .001$).

Table 10. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results by Age

Survey Item	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig. (p-value)	Significant Difference?
Q6. Green marketing influences brand view	20.771	5	< .001	Yes
Q8. Consider sustainability before purchase	14.701	5	0.012	Yes
Q11. Green marketing = trust	11.42	5	0.044	Yes
Q12. Importance of environmental responsibility	12.565	5	0.028	Yes
Q13. Research company's environmental practices	10.737	5	0.057	No (marginal)
Q17. Importance of clear sustainability info	6.332	5	0.275	No
Q18. Transparency increases trust	7.34	5	0.197	No
Q19. Third-party sustainability labels	8.925	5	0.112	No
Q20. Intend to purchase eco-friendly products	31.446	5	< .001	Yes
Q21. Choose eco-friendly products when available	44.373	5	< .001	Yes
Q22. Willing to pay more for eco-friendly products	25.26	5	< .001	Yes
Q24. Green marketing increases long-term loyalty	8.027	5	0.155	No

These results validates the hypothesis that age is a significant factor in influencing consumer attitudes and behavior towards green marketing and sustainability.

In particular, respondents aged between 35-44 ranked higher across most of the sustainability attributes, those aged 18-35 show moderate to high awareness and engagement, especially in intentions, whereas those aged 55 and older had the lowest mean ranks, suggesting a generation gap in green concern and trust in green marketing. *This shows that older consumers may require different messaging, possibly emphasizing practical benefits or transparency to build trust.*

The remaining items, such as examining company practices, trust through transparency, and sustainability label value, showed no statistically significant age differences ($p > .05$).

4.4.2.5 Differences Across Employment Status Groups: Kruskal-Wallis Test

To examine whether green marketing perceptions and behaviors vary based on respondents' employment status, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted across multiple Likert-scale variables. The test revealed *statistically significant differences* in three key areas:

- **Q20** – *Intention to purchase eco-friendly products* ($H = 11.252, p = .024$)
- **Q21** – *Frequency of choosing eco-friendly over conventional products* ($H = 13.874, p = .008$)
- **Q22** – *Willingness to pay more for environmentally friendly products* ($H = 9.882, p = .042$)

In all three situations, students possessed the highest mean ranks across all the employment groups, demonstrating more eco-friendly behavior and intention than other employment groups. For instance, students possessed greater intentions to buy environmentally friendly products (Mean Rank = 157.44) and a stronger preference to choose an eco-friendly alternative when presented with an option (Mean Rank = 162.21).

The other variables, such as trust in green marketing (Q11) and the influence of transparency on sustainability (Q18), were close to significance ($p = .079$ and $.166$, respectively), with full-time employees rating higher on trust measures and students being more responsive to clear communication.

The remaining items did not exhibit statistically significant differences between groups of employment ($p > .10$), which suggests that factors such as general trust, label importance, and

awareness could be consistent across different employment statuses, while behavioral intentions and actions are more sensitive to employment context.

Table 11. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results by Employment Status

Q #	Question	H (Chi-square)	p-value	Interpretation
20	How often do you intend to purchase eco-friendly products?	11.252	0.024	Significant difference by employment. Students have the highest mean rank (157.44), suggesting greater eco-friendly purchase intention.
21	How often do you choose eco-friendly products over conventional ones?	13.874	0.008	Strong significance. Again, students lead (162.21), while full-time workers rank lowest (128.26), indicating students are more active eco-choosers.
22	I would be willing to pay more for an eco-friendly product.	9.882	0.042	Significant. Students (157.32) and part-time workers (140.28) show more willingness to pay extra compared to full-time workers (124.43).

These findings suggest students might be more receptive consumers of green marketing efforts, particularly those emphasizing product availability, openness, and environmental benefits.

4.4.2.6 Differences Across Income Groups: Kruskal-Wallis Test

To determine whether consumer attitude and behavior for green marketing vary with income, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed for several variables. Differences were found to be significant statistically in three categories:

Q20 – Willingness to purchase environmentally friendly products (H = 12.544, p = .006)

Q21 – Frequency to use environmentally friendly products over conventional ones (H = 17.272, p < .001)

Q22 – Being willing to pay more for green products (H = 13.388, p = .004)

The individuals with less than 100,000 ALL income, particularly those in the 50,000–70,000 ALL range, registered the greatest mean ranks. This suggests that individuals in lower to middle income brackets possess greater behavioral intent and willingness to perform for sustainability, even cost-wise. The income group of 100,000+ ALL registered the least mean ranks on all questions, indicating low engagement in sustainable consumption behavior. This seems unusual if we consider the fact that higher income means better possibilities to pay more, however, if we connect higher income with older age groups, then we understand that from previous tests, older respondents were less interested in purchasing eco-friendly products and less willing to pay more for the matter.

A second variable, Q12 – Environmental responsibility's role in purchasing decisions, also attained significance ($H = 7.955$, $p = .047$). The lower-income groups indicated a higher score for this compared to the highest-income group.

Perception-based items such as the effect of green marketing on brand perception ($p = .374$), =trust in companies that practice green marketing ($p = .119$), effect of transparency on truthfulness, importance of third-party sustainability labels ($p = .817$) and effect of green marketing on brand loyalty ($p = .136$) were not significantly different.

These findings suggest that while general attitudes towards sustainability are consistent between income groups, purchase intention and consumer behavior are more strongly influenced by income. Lower-income segments are not necessarily less green conscious; they are in fact perhaps more likely to buy green brands because of ethical reasons or increasing environmental awareness among young or price-conscious buyers.

This would mean that green marketing initiatives should not target the high-income segment alone, as the lower-income segments also possess a high sustainability propensity, particularly if communication emphasizes affordability, value, and long-term impact.

4.4.3 Intentions Towards Sustainability vs Actual Behavior

H3: Even though Albanian customers care about green marketing initiatives and sustainable practices, there is a gap between their stated intentions and actual purchasing behavior.

A Chi-Square Test of Independence was performed in order to find the relationship between consumers' buying intentions of green products (Q20) and their actual behavior to choose

sustainable products over conventional ones. Both questions are recoded into three groups (Low, Medium, High). The test was conducted on 272 respondents and was statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 272) = 138.075$, $p < .001$, and indicated that there is a high association between intention and behavior.

The crosstabulation revealed that 83.6% of individuals with low intentions also demonstrated low behavior, while 61.5% of individuals with high intentions exhibited high consistency in behavior. This shows that individuals whose intentions are stronger are likely to act sustainably when they have the choice.

But the data also shows a clear intention-behavior gap. Of those with firm intentions (Q20 = High), 38.5% did not translate full intention into action, classifying as moderate (30.8%) or low (7.7%) behavior. This deviation supports Hypothesis 4, that consumers' stated environmental intentions do exceed their verified purchasing behavior. This is in line with previous research in green consumerism and reinforces the main challenge of bridging the gap between sustainable attitudes and practices.

Spearman's correlation analysis also shows that there is a moderate positive correlation between intention to purchase and actual behavior, as well as choosing green products over conventional ones and the will to pay more. This implies that while intention is an important predictor of action, it does not account for full behavioral variance, so there is a partial intention-behavior gap.

Table 12. Significant Spearman Correlation Results for Intention x Behavior

N	Variable 1	Variable 2	Research Question	ρ (rho)	p-val	Strength	Sig ?
7	Intention to purchase eco-friendly products (Q20)	Actual choice of eco-friendly products when available (Q21)	Does stated intention predict actual eco-friendly purchasing?	0.589	< .001	Moderate–Strong	Yes
8	Actual choice of eco-friendly products (Q21)	Willingness to pay more for eco-friendly products (Q22)	Do people who choose green products more often also accept higher prices?	0.553	< .001	Moderate–Strong	Yes

We can notice this slight decrease in behavior by also seeing the simple graphs of responses from the survey:

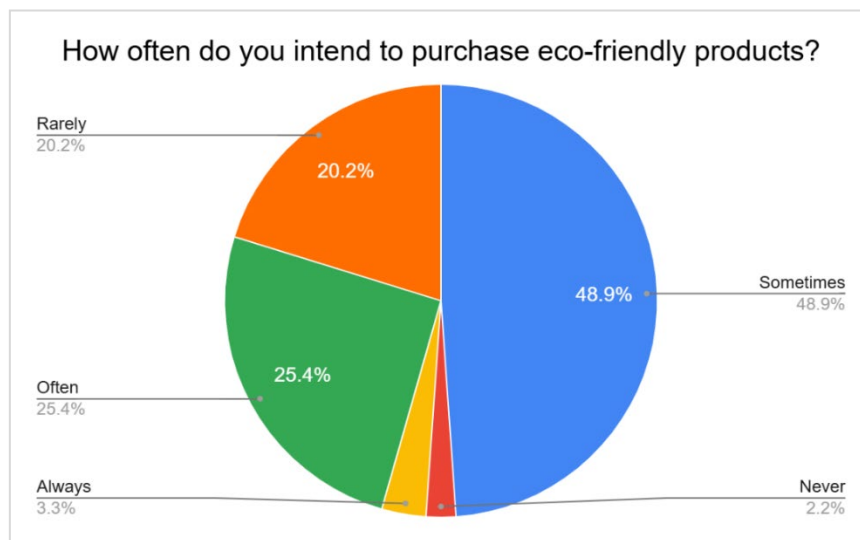


Figure 9. Intentions to Purchase Eco-Friendly Products

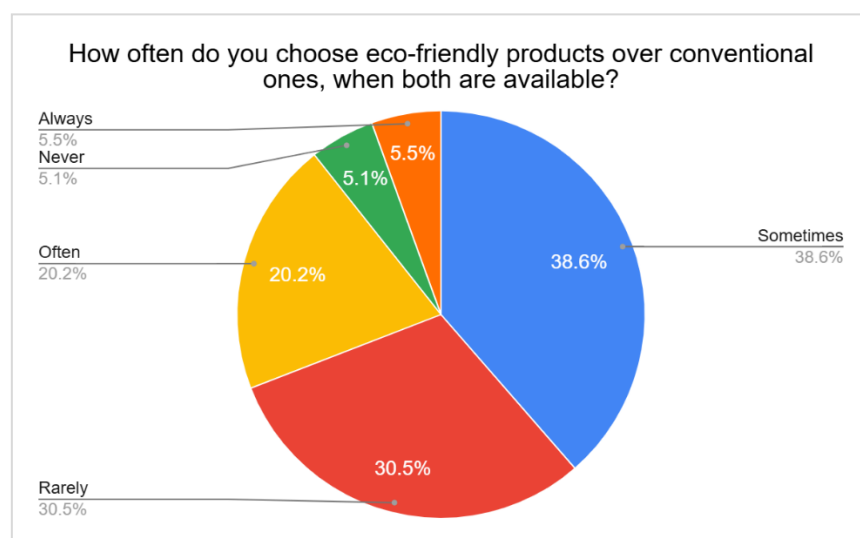


Figure 10. Choosing Eco-Friendly Over Conventional Products

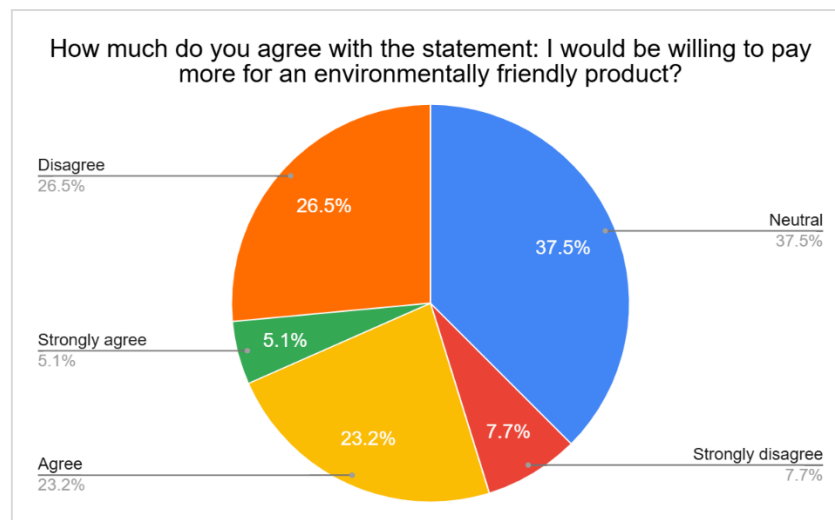


Figure 11. Willingness to Pay More for Eco-Friendly Products

From the graphs we can see valuable visual insights into Hypothesis 4, which proposes that there is a gap between consumers' intentions and their real-life behavior regarding eco-friendly purchases.

While a significant number of express positive intentions towards buying eco-friendly products, fewer consistently act on them. For instance, only 20.2% report that they are often choosing green products vs. 25.4% who intend to. 48.9% state that they sometimes intend to buy these types of products, while their actual behavior changes when both green and conventional products are available or when asked about their willingness to pay more. Only 23.2% agree, and just 5.1% strongly agree to paying more for sustainable products.

These findings align with existing literature and support the hypothesis of the existence of an intention-behavior gap where not all who intend to act sustainably actually do so when the choice is present.

4.5 Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Question

A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted on the responses of the participants to the open question regarding what they think that the biggest challenge for green marketing in Albania is. The responses show six recurring themes, providing a deeper insight into consumer attitudes and the socio-economic context influencing sustainable marketing efforts in the country.

4.5.1 Low Consumer Awareness

The challenge that was mentioned the most by consumers was limited awareness and education regarding green marketing and sustainability practices. For most of the respondents, Albanian consumers are either not familiar with the term or simply do not understand its implications. Lack of awareness lowers demand for green products and decreases pressure from consumers on industries to promote sustainability and green marketing.

4.5.2 Lack of Trust and Greenwashing

A significant number of participants have concern about greenwashing and are unsure about how true Albanian companies are about their environmental claims. Many green marketing initiatives are viewed by consumers as being superficial or misleading, which undermines credibility and destroys confidence. This is consistent with the findings of Mulyadi et al. (2024), who highlighted the importance of perceived authenticity in the success of green marketing initiatives.

4.5.3 High Costs and Low Affordability

The higher cost of green products compared to conventional ones is brought up as one of the main economic barriers to purchasing green. Many mentioned that even when consumers wish to support sustainable brands, affordability is a major constraint. In emerging markets, where price sensitivity is higher and environmental concerns are less important to economic ones, this barrier is especially noticeable.

4.5.4 Lack of Government Support

Inadequate regulatory frameworks, financial incentives, and public initiatives supporting sustainable business practices were also mentioned in the responses. Statements like “there is no law that supports sustainability” or “the government does not support green businesses” show that individuals perceive an absence of institutional support and suggest that green marketing efforts are more company-driven rather than being encouraged through national policy.

4.5.5 Business Reluctance and Short-Term Focus

Several responses mentioned businesses' reluctance to invest in sustainability due to a focus on short-term profits and a lack of long-term strategic planning. This way of thinking, or short-sighted thinking, discourages green product innovation and reflects a widespread cultural and

economic tendency to prioritize cost-cutting and generation of revenue over environmental values.

4.5.6 Cultural Resistance to Change

Finally, there were those who highlighted the impact of cultural values and routines that give low priority to environmental issues. There appears to be a social inertia opposing changes in consumption patterns with statements like “people don’t care much about the environment here” or mentions of the Albanian mentality due to some societal norms. These cultural barriers also decrease the effectiveness of green marketing initiatives.

Overall, the thematic analysis reveals a complex mix of informational, economic, institutional, and cultural barriers to the development of green marketing in Albania.

According to the findings, creating a more favorable environment for sustainable consumption and branding requires multi-stakeholder solutions that combine consumer education, regulatory support, transparent marketing, and culturally sensitive strategies.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study show that Albanian consumers have a general awareness of environmental marketing practices, but this awareness does not always translate into sustainable purchasing behaviors in practice. This is consistent with the “intention-behavior gap” frequently emphasized in the literature (Kanchana, 2024; Puvzhiarasi et al., 2024). For example, in this study, it was observed that 38.5% of individuals with high purchase intention did not translate this intention into behavior; this is consistent with the 25% difference reported by Mansour et al. (2024). This gap between green purchase intentions and actual behavior shows that while intention significantly influences behavior, it doesn't guarantee it. In line with this, the study found that 83.6% of respondents with low intentions showed low behavior, while 61.5% with high intentions translated this into behavior, leaving a significant group of 38.5% who did not act on their intentions, confirming the intention-behavior gap.

According to another finding in the study, only 19.5% of the participants think that Albanian companies are transparent in their sustainability practices. This rate is in line with the critical role of transparent communication in building trust, emphasized by Mulyadi et al. (2024) and Chidera & Chinaza (2024). In this study, Spearman correlation analysis reveals a correlation

between open and transparent communication and trust, which can be considered as a medium-high level. Similarly, the effect of third-party sustainability labels in increasing trust is supported both in this study and in the study by Bhat et al. (2024). Third-party certifications were perceived as external validation tools that helped reduce skepticism and greenwashing concerns. Consumers highly valued transparent and clear communication, especially when supported by facts and consistent messaging.

Consumers express support for green marketing initiatives, especially when those contribute to trust and loyalty. According to the results of the research, 52.9% of the participants in Albania prefer environmentally friendly packaging, and 44.9% prefer recycling programs as green marketing strategies that increase brand trust. This result is parallel to the positive effects of ethical sourcing and environmentally friendly packaging on consumer behavior expressed in the study of Sarmah & Singh (2024). These findings indicate that green marketing initiatives can significantly shape brand perceptions, with additional support shown for ethical sourcing and other initiatives, yet less frequently selected.

From the demographic analysis of the study, it is seen that gender differences are particularly effective in sustainable behaviors. The finding in this study that women are more interested in sustainable products is consistent with the findings of Kanchana (2024) and Ghritlahre & Baghel (2021) regarding the effect of demographic factors on consumer responses. Furthermore, the Chi-Square Test indicated a significant association between gender and factors that prevented respondents from buying eco-friendly products. Results show that women are more affected by limited availability and habits, while what prevents men from purchasing such products are lack of information and higher costs. The Mann–Whitney test further confirmed that women are significantly more engaged with green marketing, showing stronger purchase intentions ($p < .001$), a higher willingness to pay a premium ($p < .001$), and greater trust in sustainability communication ($p = .022$).

On the other hand, the finding that the age variable affects purchase intentions but does not create a significant difference on trust and loyalty is consistent with the finding of Prihatiningrum et al (2024), who emphasize that long-term brand loyalty depends more on brand authenticity and alignment with values.

This study also examined, the effects of other variables such as education status and income level on sustainable behaviors, and it was found that especially low-income individuals

exhibited higher environmental awareness. This finding is supported by the findings of Mulyadi et al. (2024) on the effects of green marketing strategies on different socio-economic groups.

That said, the themes obtained in the qualitative analysis - limited awareness, suspicion of greenwashing, high costs, lack of government support, short-term profit focus of companies and cultural resistance - are seen to be consistent with the structural barriers stated in the literature (see: Hasrama et al., 2025; Mehmetukaj and Musa, 2023). This clearly shows that there are multi-layered (economic, cultural, institutional, etc.) barriers to sustainable marketing practices in Albania.

In conclusion, this study indicates that sustainability themes frequently discussed in the global literature are also valid in the Albanian context. The findings of the study highlight the importance of brands adopting eco-friendly practices as well as communicating these practices in a transparent, authentic and audience-focused manner. Furthermore, according to this study findings, there is a need for broader interventions and practices in public policies, consumer education and accessibility to increase sustainable consumer behavior.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusions

This study set out to explore the effects of green marketing on consumer perceptions, attitudes and behavior when it comes to Albania, a country where green marketing is still developing. With four leading research hypotheses, the objectives of this paper were to assess consumer attitudes towards green marketing, evaluate the role of trust and transparency in building trust and loyalty, study the demographic differences in views of green marketing, and examine if there is an intention-behaviour gap when it comes to sustainable consumption.

Through the use of an online survey, with 272 respondents from different demographics in Albania, the study gave valuable insights into the relationship between the Albanian consumers and green marketing practices.

The findings confirm that while awareness of green marketing practices is growing, there is still an uneven distribution of knowledge with an evident lack of exposure to reliable, consistent, and transparent communication about sustainability. However, as it is, the data

shows that Albanian consumers, in general, have positive views of green marketing, mentioning it as a factor that leads to trust and loyalty towards the company.

Transparency emerged as a prime motivator for consumer trust and engagement. Clear, verifiable facts—particularly when supported by third-party certification—strongly increased credibility and encouraged positive brand perceptions. Gender and age also served in similar roles as motivators of consumer action, with females and younger consumers being more environmentally conscious and active.

Lastly the study supported further literature on the existence of an intention–behavior gap, where consumers that express positive intentions towards green marketing practices do not always translate those intentions into actions. Thematic analysis also identified broader structural and cultural barriers, such as skepticism regarding greenwashing, high prices, inadequate government support, and societal resistance to change, which are all constraint variables on green marketing development in Albania.

The findings highlight how important authentic and clear communication of green marketing practices are in building trust. Based on the results, companies can take several steps to raise awareness and influence positive perceptions towards their efforts, from tailored green marketing strategies, to making sustainable choices easy for their customers through incentives and affordable pricing.

To conclude, the study gestures towards the potential of sustainability as a marketing strategy and as a social imperative—on the condition, though, of being addressed honestly, diversely, and with a long-term vision. It is only by addressing informational, economic, institutional, and cultural barriers simultaneously that Albania can develop an environment in which green marketing is not just a marketing tool, but also a force for sustainable development and behavioral change.

6.2 Practical Recommendations

The findings from this research provide several recommendations for businesses, policymakers and different stakeholders who aim to improve the effectiveness of green marketing and promote more sustainable consumer behavior and ultimately lead to a sustainable business development.

Firstly, we need to address the lack of sufficient knowledge and familiarity with green marketing among Albanian customers. The effort in green marketing practices will go unnoticed and unappreciated if consumers do not have enough information about the matter. Educational campaigns should be more frequent across the public and social media to raise awareness of sustainability principles, environmental sustainability and the need for green consumption. Increased awareness is the first step towards having an informed and environmentally conscious consumer base capable of making conscious choices.

In addition to that, companies can educate their customers about their specific green marketing practices, so the clients know what they are looking at and what the message that is being delivered means. The findings show that transparent communication and third-party sustainability labels significantly enhance the trust of consumers. This is why green marketing communications should be straightforward, clear, easy to understand, supported by facts and consistent across different channels. Third party certifications (e.g., FSC, Fair Trade, or ISO environmental standards) are also a very important gainer of trust among customers, as they help to validate claims, reduce skepticism about greenwashing and gain long term trust. Businesses can include interactive transparency tools, such as QR codes on packaging, leading to reports or environmental metrics linked to the products, to facilitate real-time trust establishment.

Secondly, as the data showed significant gender, age, education, and income differences in green behavior, companies can take advantage of these findings by segmenting marketing initiatives to different audience profiles. For example, youth-driven initiatives should be considered, particularly with students and younger age groups who showed the most interest in sustainability and social causes. Focus on social media, gamification, and on-campus engagement strategies can prove to be highly effective.

Furthermore, the intention-behavior gap showed that while consumers claim they are ready to purchase sustainably, this is not always followed by action. To narrow this gap down several strategies can be taken into consideration. For instance, sustainable choices must be more convenient and accessible, through better product availability, easy-to-spot shelf labeling, and sustainable defaults in both online and offline stores. Companies can also offer incentives or rewards for sustainable shopping, such as loyalty points or discounts for using reusable packaging, or taking part in recycling schemes. Cosmetic companies, for example, can offer to take back used glass packaging from their customers and refill it with product for a cheaper

price. This way, both the company and the client are engaged in eco-friendly decisions, and the customer is encouraged to buy again and create a long-term healthy relationship with the business.

An important factor that was mentioned as a barrier to green purchasing according to the findings is affordability. Even though this is a tricky matter in the area of eco-friendly products, as they have additional costs to be created compared to conventional ones, a few actions can be taken to overcome this problem. First and foremost, companies should use value-based pricing for sustainable products so that they are competitive without compromising ethical standards. Furthermore, we encourage partnerships between local businesses and NGOs to subsidize green production costs, and suggest that government tax initiatives and subsidies must be given to companies investing in sustainable innovation and green alternatives. Similarly, institutional support like the development of regulatory bodies standardizing and defining green marketing claims to reduce greenwashing and enforcing accountability, would encourage green marketing strategies to be more widely practiced across companies. Without a strong institutional framework, green marketing efforts will remain fragmented and limited in scope.

Lastly, this research recommends that companies should be encouraged to have a long-term vision driven by sustainability rather than turning green marketing into a trend or campaign approach with short term profit orientation. Developing internal capacity through employees training and leadership commitment to sustainability principles, and embedding sustainability into a corporate strategy are key initiatives to achieve credible green brand development.

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