The Impact of Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication on Green Brand Image KFC Asia Megamas Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the growing environmental concerns and packaging waste in fast-food outlets by analyzing the impact of eco-friendly packaging innovations and green brand communication on the green brand image of KFC Asia Megamas Medan. The purpose of this research is to evaluate both the individual and combined effects of eco-friendly packaging innovation and green brand communication on brand image. A quantitative method was employed using an incidental sampling technique involving 100 KFC consumers. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS through validity, reliability, classical assumption, and multiple linear regression tests. The results show that both eco-friendly packaging innovation and green brand communication have a significant positive influence on the green brand image, jointly explaining 57.8% of its variance. These findings suggest that integrating eco-friendly packaging initiatives with consistent green brand communication can enhance consumer perception and strengthen sustainable brand strategies in the fast-food industry.

Keywords: Eco-Friendly Packaging, Green Brand Image, Green Branding Communication, Sustainable Packaging Innovation, Fast Food Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

In the era of increasingly urgent climate change that is increasingly urgent, global attention is focused on efforts to mitigate environmental impacts. The single-use packaging industry sector, especially plastics, accounts for hundreds of millions of tons of waste every year, forcing companies to design more environmentally friendly materials (Siatama et al., 2023). Increased solid waste production, ecosystem degradation, and natural resource crises demand the industrial sector to seek sustainable solutions. The government, international institutions, and consumers demand packaging innovations that can reduce waste burden and carbon footprint (Maharani et al., 2023). Single-use plastic packaging is a major source of solid waste, with hundreds of millions of tons entering landfills and oceans yearly and degrading very slowly. The trend is shifting toward biodegradable materials, compostable designs, and circular-economy principles that prioritize recyclability, renewable inputs, and lower emissions (Rame & Crisnaningtyas, 2021). Environmental innovation not only brings a positive impact to the environment by minimizing waste and reducing pollution and emissions, but can also increase the profitability of companies by adopting innovative production methods and efficient use of resources (Nadeem et al., 2020). Eco-friendly innovation is recognized as a practice that can significantly reduce environmental damage and contribute to ecological sustainability as well as economic profitability (Rasheed et al., 2024). A number of consumers still feel confused about the authenticity of the green product claims offered and also do not have awareness in protecting the environment which can unknowingly cause environmental pollution (Panggih & Krisnadi, 2022). The following is

data on the contribution of national plastic waste and F&B plastic consumption data in Indonesia:

Table 1. Data on the Contribution and Consumption of Indonesia's National Plastic Waste

Type of consumption	Volume (tons/year)	Source
Total national plastic consumption	5.7 million	A Lot of Data on Plastics and Plastic Waste
Reusable plastics	3.0 million	A Lot of Data on Plastics and Plastic Waste
Disposable plastic	2.7 million	A Lot of Data on Plastics and Plastic Waste
Recycled single-use plastics	1.0 million	A Lot of Data on Plastics and Plastic Waste
Per capita plastic consumption	20 kg/year	F&B Indonesia plastic consumption data

The fast-food industry generates vast single-use packaging waste daily, with millions of plastic items adding to urban refuse. Rising consumer awareness and government regulations in Japan and South Korea push F&B companies to trial alternative packaging and work with local research on waste management. A strong green reputation now differentiates brands, boosting loyalty and willingness to pay in a crowded market (Ignacia et al., 2025). Brands like McDonald's and Starbucks are leading global initiatives by replacing plastic straws, lowering the use of single-use cups, and introducing take-back programs (Tempo, 2020). As a result, the perception of social and environmental responsibility has increased, despite the cost and operational challenges.

KFC Asia Megamas Medan enforces strict limits on single-use plastics and uses segregated waste collection to promote green packaging. The fast-food sector broadly faces heavy packaging-waste pressures, prompting pilots like paper straws and take-back programs. Medan produces over 1,500 tons of waste daily, with 25–30% from food packaging, and limited infrastructure plus high takeaway/delivery rates at the mall-based KFC amplify the need for local sustainability testing by global brands. The following is a table of assumptions for the use of plastic packaging per day:

Table 2. Potential Plastic Packaging Per Day at KFC Asia Megamas Outlet:

Daily Visit Assumptions	Daily Transactions	Plastic Packaging per Transaction	Total Plastic Packaging per Day
100 customers	100 transactions	4 Packaging	400 packs
150 customers	150 transactions	4 Packaging	600 packs
200 customers	200 transactions	4 Packaging	800 packs
250 customers	250 transactions	4 Packaging	1,000 packs
265 customers	265 transactions	4 Packaging	1,060 packs

KFC Asia Megamas Medan Branch, in an effort to improve its brand image, still faces various problems that can have an impact on the decline of its image which can be caused by several factors. An example of KFC's brand image problem is the URUS Blog Report highlighting that net losses and the closure of dozens of Indonesian KFC outlets in 2024 have triggered public concerns about brand sustainability. The brand's image that was once "top of mind" is starting to be questioned, especially regarding KFC's

commitment to maintaining service standards and long-term sustainability (Andre, 2024).
The following data contains the latest consumer complaints from various sources:

Table 3. KFC Medan Consumer Complaint Data

Yes	Fill in Consumer Reviews
1	The chicken was cold when I received it, the spices were not soluble
2	Why did my package box swap yesterday with no info? The package was not as expected.
3	The paper cup leaked during delivery, making it difficult to carry.
4	Thank you for the fast delivery, but the chili sauce and napkin were not given at all
5	The restaurant lacks lighting, the impression is gloomy and uncomfortable for photos
6	Many seats are chafed, seats in the fabric holes
7	Online promos cannot be used at Asia Megamas branches. The cashier said 'the system has not been updated yet.
8	The restaurant provides little information about its eco-friendly packaging efforts or recycling programs.

several consumer complaints indicate issues related to packaging quality and communication about KFC's eco-friendly packaging. Problems such as leaking containers, unclear information about packaging changes, and inconsistent delivery experience can weaken consumers' perceptions of the brand's environmental commitment. These factors directly relate to KFC's green brand image, as product packaging and the way sustainability messages are communicated influence how consumers perceive the authenticity of the company's environmental efforts.

KFC Indonesia can boost credibility and cut packaging waste by combining independent certification and transparency (ISO 14001, carbon verification, regular sustainability reports) with sustainable packaging (agri-waste bioplastics, FSC recycled paper, compostables suited to local infrastructure), plus stakeholder engagement through zero-waste workshops, interactive social media, employee training as green ambassadors, and partnerships with local waste-management research to pilot context-appropriate solutions (Yaputra et al., 2023).

In local markets such as Medan, a study by the Journal of Wetlands Environmental Management (JWEM) found that inconsistencies in service quality ranging from long lines, limited availability of eco-friendly menus, to poorly informed employees are often more memorable than green campaigns. This condition lowers the perception of KFC's professionalism and weakens the image of the environmentally friendly brand that it wants to build. In addition, CRM can also be used as a philosophy and strategy that supports customer relationship management, in order to create value for the company and customers (Sinaga et al., 2024).

Research conducted by Chen et al. (2017) revealed that excess packaging does not have a direct effect on green brand attachment, but the negative impact is fully mediated by green brand attitude and green brand image, so that consumers who see excess packaging as a sign of greenwashing will reduce their perception i4nd emotional attachment to the brand. Their research also shows that green excessive product packaging has a significant influence on green brand image and green brand attitude. In contrast to the studies conducted by Chen et al. (2017), this study investigates how Medan fast-food consumers respond to eco-friendly packaging and green communication, addressing a gap in past research that emphasized overpackaging's

harms but neglected innovative packaging solutions and green messaging. It examines how excess packaging undermines green brand attachment via green brand attitude and image while testing proactive interventions such as agri-waste bioplastics, compostables, and closed-loop designs, along with the combined effect of technical packaging innovation and green communication intensity on KFC Asia Megamas Medan's brand image.

Eco-friendly packaging like agri-waste bioplastics, recycled paper, and compostable layers has been introduced at KFC but inconsistent implementation (uneven supplies, staff undertraining, unclear disposal instructions) and supply-chain and cost constraints lead outlets to revert to conventional packaging and fail to promote changes in-store, leaving customers confused and unconvinced and limiting any image gains. On June 1, 2022, KFC Singapore launched a pilot project to recycle packaged organic packaging and food waste into fertilizer with digester technology (Riani, 2022). KFC Indonesia's collaboration with startup TRIA can convert 1,000 kg of waste into 200–300 kg of fertilizer in 24 hours, effectively closing a dine-in packaging loop; the company also rolled out the #NoStrawMovement in May 2017 (cutting straw use by 91% by end-2018), the in-store "Budaya Beberes" waste-sorting campaign, and since 2019 has partnered with third parties for integrated outlet waste management and recycling (Yuniarto, 2019). KFC Indonesia supported these efforts with the educational installation "KFC For the Indonesian Sea" in Feb–Mar 2019, showcasing artwork made from packaging waste and offering zero-waste lifestyle training to visitors as part of its social and environmental commitment.

Increased use of biodegradable and recycled materials raises R&D and equipment costs PLA bioplastics can be 20–30% pricier than conventional plastics risking higher prices or lower margins if efficiencies aren't found. Eco-friendly materials often underperform on heat, moisture, and food-safety protection, increasing leakage risk and harming perceived food quality. Weak waste collection and processing standards in many parts of Indonesia also mean recyclable or compostable packaging can end up in landfills, undermining both environmental benefits and consumer trust.

Green branding communication uses eco labels, logos, QR-code traceability, social media content, in-store signage, and packaging education to shape a brand's environmental narrative. Authentic, consistent messages and transparent data increase credibility, boost loyalty, and raise willingness to pay, while inconsistent or opaque claims risk greenwashing and damage trust. Research conducted by Bashir et al. (2020) shows that Green Brand Benefits and Brand Outcomes have significant influence on Green Brand Image.

KFC Indonesia's eco claims are viewed by many consumers as marketing gimmicks because communications often lack quantitative data, third-party certification, and measurable evidence such as carbon or straw-reduction figures; in-store visuals and social posts emphasize the #NoStrawMovement but omit concrete metrics, and low consumer literacy about terms like biodegradable versus compostable further weakens message effectiveness, increasing skepticism and the risk of perceived greenwashing (Sinaga et al., 2022). Most consumers don't understand material differences, so green messages struggle to raise awareness and fuel skepticism about authenticity. Outlet-level delivery is fragmented: some stores show posters but lack follow-up actions like education or take-back programs, creating inconsistent experiences and confusing customers who expect uniform green branding across the KFC Indonesia network.

This study argues that sustainable packaging innovation and green branding communication work synergistically; material innovations provide tangible evidence

while communication conveys value, together embedding an environmental story into the product and strengthening brand image as an irreplicable intangible asset. Focusing on KFC Asia Megamas Medan addresses a local research gap Medan's consumer traits, market dynamics, and waste infrastructure create a distinct context allowing measurement of how eco-packaging adoption and green messaging affect brand image. Results will offer data-driven recommendations to improve sustainable packaging and communication, bolster KFC Asia Megamas Medan's brand equity, and serve as a benchmark for other Indonesian fast-food outlets.

The study's novelty is combining packaging innovation and green branding communication into a single framework for fast-food outlets in Medan, measuring their direct and synergistic effects on brand image, and offering practical recommendations for KFC Asia Megamas Medan. It integrates technical eco-packaging solutions with tiered communication tactics to shape perceptions, fills a local research gap on MSME fast-food sustainability, and provides actionable guidance for both KFC management and future researchers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Brand Image
Green brand image refers to the principle of "green" or "healthy" which has become a necessity in today's people's lifestyle (Stuart, 2025). Brand Image is a view of the value of a product that a company gives to customers about the beliefs formed and inherent in the customer's mind towards a certain brand (Rosmayanti, 2023). Brand image is similar to consumers' self-image, where they connect themselves with the brand. In this highly competitive region, brand image is crucial for positioning a brand that is in a good position for the industry to always play a useful position (Prayogo et al., 2023). The concept of brand image begins as a series of consumer associations, perceptions, and beliefs formed through experiences, advertising, and visual elements focusing on functional quality, prestige, and emotional appeal.

Brand image indicators according to Prayogo et al. (2023) are as follows:
1. Corporate image
   It is a set of consumer-recognized associations with industries that create goods and services. Listed: popularity, credibility, industry network, as well as the users themselves.
2. Product / Consumer Image
   A set of relationships that consumers experience regarding a product or service. Contents: product attributes, consumer efficacy, and warranty.
3. Avatar (user photo)
   Avatars that depict a collection of associations experienced by consumers for a person who uses an item or service.

Based on the theories discussed, it can be concluded that a strong green brand image is formed when consumers associate a brand with consistent environmental responsibility and sustainable practices. Positive perceptions arise when the company's environmental claims are supported by visible actions and credible communication.

Eco-friendly packaging innovation
Green packaging innovation refers to packaging for foodstuffs where the packaging comes from environmentally friendly materials and does not harm the environment and human health (Arianty & Ariska, 2023). Innovation green packaging is also packaging that can provide impressions and information about products that have high quality and can attract consumer interest (Rahmawati & Azizah, 2022). Eco-friendly packaging is now strategic: consumers expect quality plus environmental responsibility, so using renewable or recycled materials (agri-waste pulp, plant-based bioplastics, natural fibers)

reduces reliance on fossil plastics and lowers production carbon footprints. Lightweight, stackable designs also cut logistics volume, transport costs, and CO_2 emissions. Local sourcing and circular-economy practices reinforce brand image for eco-conscious buyers while improving operational efficiency and long-term business value.

Indicators of eco-friendly packaging innovation according to Rahmawati & Azizah (2022) are as follows:
1. Recyclable packaging is packaging that after use can be reprocessed into raw materials for new products without significantly degrading the quality of materials.
2. Reusable packaging is packaging that is designed to be reused by consumers multiple times, such as refillable bottles, cloth bags, or durable plastic containers before being disposed of.
3. Packaging made from recycled materials, which is packaging that is all or partly made of recycled materials is usually marked with a percentage of "PCR" (post-consumer recycled).
4. The materials used are not made from hazardous materials, namely packaging materials that are free of toxic substances, carcinogenic, hormone disruptors, or heavy metals that can pollute the environment or endanger human health.

From the theoretical perspective, eco-friendly packaging innovation is not only about the use of environmentally safe materials but also about demonstrating the company's commitment to sustainability. Packaging that is recyclable, reusable, or made from non-toxic materials can strengthen consumer trust and enhance the brand's green image.

Green Branding Communication

Green Brand Communication (GBC) is employed to convey a firm's commitment to environmental considerations to various stakeholders. It encompasses the promotion of a company's sustainability endeavors and eco friendly products, which purportedly enhances the firm's image and competitive edge, thereby potentially leading to increased profitability (Akude et al., 2025). Indicators of Green Brand Communication (GBC) according to Akude et al. (2025) are as follows:
1. Communication strategy is an overall planning and management of messages designed to convey a company's commitment to environmental issues to various stakeholders.
2. Consumer engagement is consumer engagement refers to efforts to build active two-way interactions between brands and audiences, so that consumers not only receive information, but also participate in green initiatives.
3. Digital communication is the use of digital platforms and technology to deliver green branding campaigns. The main channels include social media, websites, mobile applications, email marketing, to the use of QR codes or blockchain technology for carbon footprint transparency.

The reviewed theories indicate that effective green branding communication builds transparency and trust by delivering clear, consistent, and data-based messages regarding a brand's environmental initiatives. When companies communicate their sustainability efforts accurately, it positively influences how consumers perceive their green brand image.
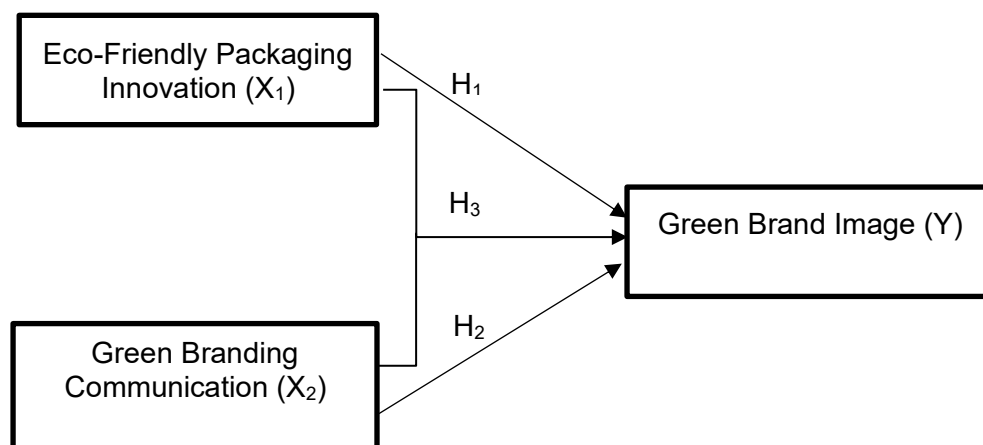
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The hypothesis in this study is:

H_1: Eco-friendly packaging innovation has an influence on Green Brand Image.
H_2: Green Branding Communication has an influence on Green Brand Image.
H_3: Eco-friendly packaging innovation and Green Branding Communication together have an influence on Green Brand Image.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted at the Asia Mega Mas Complex Block G No.19-20, Jalan Asia Raya, Sukaramai II, Medan Area, Sukaramai II, Medan Area, Medan City, North Sumatra 20222, Indonesia. This study is quantitative research. This research was carried out by making questionnaire statements and disseminating them to consumers and processing data using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) application software. This study uses incidental sampling techniques. Sugiyono (2022:133) Defines incidental sampling as a sample determination technique based on chance, that is, anyone who happens to meet the researcher can be used as a sample, if it is seen that the person who happens to be met is suitable as a data source. A population is the whole of the object being studied, whereas a sample is only a part of the population itself (Scotland, 2023). The population in this study consists of consumers of KFC Asia Branch Megamas Medan. The total population from August 2024 to August 2025 was 102,536 consumers. In calculating the sample, the slovin formula was used so that the sample that will be used in this study amounts to 100 respondents. In this study, the researcher determined the number of samples would be 100 respondents from consumers of KFC Asia Megamas Medan Branch.

RESULTS

This study employed multiple linear regression analysis using data obtained from 100 consumers who made purchases at KFC Asia Megamas Medan. All statistical procedures were carried out using SPSS.

The results of the validity test for the variable (X_1) Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation show that each r_{count} value > r_{table} 0.3610, thus it can be concluded that 8 items of the questionnaire statements for variable X_1 are declared valid. For the variable (X_2) Green Branding Communication, it shows that each r_{count} value > r_{table} 0.3610, thus it can be concluded that 6 items of the questionnaire statements for variable X_2 are declared valid. The results of the validity test for the variable (Y) Green Brand Image show that each

r_{count} value > r_{table} 0.3610, thus it can be concluded that 6 items of the questionnaire statements for variable Y are declared valid.

The reliability test shows that the Cronbach's Alpha values of Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation, Green Branding Communication, and Green Brand Image are all greater than 0.60, thus according to the standards, it can be concluded that all variables are reliable.

The normality assessment demonstrated that the distribution of residuals followed a pattern that was aligned with the expected diagonal line, suggesting that the regression model fulfilled the normality assumption.

In addition, multicollinearity test shows that Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication have a tolerance of 0.588 (> 0.1) and a VIF of 1.701 (< 10). This was reflected by tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 10, meaning that Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication indicating there is no multicollinearity between these variables.

The linear regression analysis test revealed of 4.656 indicates that when both Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication are zero, the Green Brand Image is expected to be 4.656. The regression coefficient of the Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation variable (X_1) of 0.280 shows that every increase in the Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation variable of 1 unit, then the Green Brand Image will increase by 0.280 units and the coefficient is positive, so it can be concluded that Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation has a positive effect on the Green Brand Image at KFC Asia Megamas Medan BranchThe regression coefficient for Green Branding Communication (X_2) is 0.391, meaning a one-unit increase in Green Branding Communication corresponds to a 0.391-unit increase in Green Brand Image. The positive coefficient indicates Green Branding Communication positively influences Green Brand Image at KFC Asia Megamas Medan Branch.

The Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation (X_1) has a t-value of **4.122**, which exceeds the critical t-value **1.9847**, and a p-value of **0.000** (less than 0.05), indicating that X_1 has a significant positive partial effect on Green Brand Image at KFC Asia Megamas Medan Branch. The Green Branding Communication (X_2) has a t-value of **5.601**, which exceeds the critical t-value **1.9847**, and a p-value of **0.000** (less than 0.05), indicating that X_2 also has a significant positive partial effect on Green Brand Image at KFC Asia Megamas Medan Branch.
Based on the research that has been carried out on F Test, it shows that the value of F_{cal} (66.352) > F_{table} (3.09) with a significant level (0.000) < 0.05, so it can be concluded that Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication have a simultaneous effect on the Green Brand Image at KFC Asia Megamas Medan Branch.

Based on the research, the Coefficient of Determination, shows R Square value obtained is 0.578. The results of this test showed that 57.8% of Green Brand Image was influenced by the variables of Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication, while the remaining 42.2% was influenced by other variables that were not studied in this study.

DISCUSSION

Environmentally Friendly Packaging Innovation Towards Green Brand Image
The results of the t-test showed a regression coefficient of Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation of 0.280 with a calculated t_{count} = 4.122 > t_{table} (1.9847) and p = 0.000 < 0.05, indicating a positive and significant influence on the Green Brand Image.

The results of this study are in line with the study by Arianty & Ariska (2023) which emphasizes that recyclable and hazardous material-free packaging increases consumers' perception of the brand's environmental responsibility.

Green Branding Communication Towards Green Brand Image
Green Branding Communication showed a regression coefficient of 0.391, value t_{count} = 5.601 > t_{table} (1.9847) and p = 0.000 < 0.05. This signifies that each unit of increased green message intensity on social media, in-store signage, and traceability increases the Green Brand Image by 0.391 units significantly. Green branding communication has also been proven to have a positive and significant impact.

The results of this study are also in line with Bashir et al. (2020) which shows that green branding communication strategies and the use of quantitative data in green campaigns strengthen green brand image by mediating the perception of product benefits for consumers.

Environmentally Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication Towards Green Brand Image
The F test produces F_{count} = 66.352 > F_{table} (3.09) with p = 0.000 < 0.05, proves that the two independent variables have a significant effect together on the Green Brand Image. Coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.578 indicates that 57.8% of the variation in Green Brand Image is explained by Eco-Friendly Packaging Innovation and Green Branding Communication, while 42.2% is influenced by other factors outside of this model. The synergy between the two emphasizes that innovative material evidence must be accompanied by a credible green branding narrative so that consumers feel the concrete benefits and stories of brand sustainability. The results of this study strengthen a conceptual model that combines packaging technical innovation and the intensity of green messages.

The collaboration of the two results in a cumulative effect that is greater than the partial impact of each variable. The results of this study are also in line with those carried out by Bashir et al. (2020), shows that Green Brand Benefits and Brand Outcomes have significant influence on Green Brand Image.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that packaging innovations that are truly environmentally friendly have succeeded in strengthening the brand's green image by presenting concrete evidence of ecological commitment, while consistent and transparent green branding communication can foster trust and positive associations in the minds of consumers. When these two initiatives are implemented simultaneously, the impact on green brand perception becomes stronger, demonstrating that innovative material evidence needs to be accompanied by a credible sustainability narrative so that consumers can experience the real benefits and understand the story behind each brand's green move. To strengthen the brand's green position, it is recommended that management focus on the use of renewable packaging materials and designs that support the circular economy, while building partnerships with local suppliers so that eco-friendly supplies are guaranteed to be evenly distributed in each outlet. At the operational level, training employees as green ambassadors as well as the provision of educational materials explaining the benefits and ways of packaging recycling packaging will help avoid confusion and skepticism. In addition, transparency through independent certification and the publication of sustainability metrics on packaging and digital

channels will strengthen brand credibility and mitigate potential allegations of greenwashing. In view of the limitations of this study, further research should explore consumer attitudes towards the value of sustainability as a link between green packaging, green branding communication, and purchasing decisions. A qualitative approach through in-depth interviews or group discussions can uncover the emotional nuances and deep perceptions of consumers towards the green message. Field experiments in multiple regions and similar brands will also help test the consistency of findings while tailoring sustainability strategies to local market characteristics.

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