


Chapter 4

Green or Sustainable Advertising: A Descriptive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Growing awareness of environmental issues has driven a change in the attitudes and behaviors of consumers, who are demanding more sustainable products and services. In this context, green or sustainable advertising emerges as a key tool for companies seeking to communicate their commitment to the environment and attract a public increasingly concerned about sustainability. The present research focuses on the descriptive analysis of green or sustainable advertising, exploring its characteristics, strategies, trends and challenges, with the aim of understanding its role in promoting more responsible consumption and building a more sustainable future. Some companies focus on highlighting the environmental benefits of their products, such as reducing emissions, using renewable energy or recycling materials. Other companies choose to communicate their sustainable business practices, such as implementing waste reduction programs, supporting conservation projects or committing to fair trade.

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INTRODUCTION

The growing and increasingly pressing global awareness of environmental challenges has catalyzed a profound transformation in consumer attitudes and behaviors. Driven by the urgency to mitigate climate change, biodiversity loss and rampant pollution, citizens are demanding, with an increasingly louder voice, products and services that not only satisfy their functional and aspirational needs, but also minimize their ecological footprint (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This paradigm shift in consumer expectations has led to the emergence and consolidation of green advertising as a fundamental strategic tool for companies seeking to communicate their commitment to sustainability and capture the attention of an increasingly sensitized public (Peattie, 2010).

The emergence of green advertising, far from being a passing fad, has become a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, intrinsically linked to the evolution of green marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Green marketing, as conceived by Ottman (2011), transcends the mere promotion of environmentally friendly products, encompassing a comprehensive business philosophy that integrates environmental considerations at all stages of the product life cycle, from design and production to distribution and disposal. Within this framework, green advertising acts as the communicating arm, translating sustainability initiatives into persuasive messages aimed at consumers, seeking to influence their purchasing decisions and encourage responsible consumption.

The origins of green advertising can be traced back to the growing environmental concerns that emerged strongly at the end of the 20th century, driven by the publication of seminal reports such as *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) and the increasing visibility of problems such as pollution and natural resource degradation (Kilbourne, 2004). Initially, advertising with green overtones was sporadic and often reactive, responding to specific environmental crises or pressure from activist groups (Crane, 2000).

However, the 1980s marked a turning point with growing awareness of the ozone hole and acid rain, leading some companies to highlight environmental attributes of their products as a competitive advantage (Ottman, 2011). This period was characterized by messages that were often simplistic and focused on a single environmental benefit, with a focus more on promoting “less bad” products than inherently sustainable (Peattie, 2010).

The 1990s witnessed greater sophistication, driven by the Rio Earth Summit (1992) and the increasing internalization of sustainability as a relevant factor in the purchasing decisions of an increasingly informed consumer segment (Banerjee, 2020). Companies began to integrate environmental concerns into their marketing

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