

A Study on Greenwashing of Environmental Sustainability Communication: The Perspective of Mis-Leading Marketing Claims: A Case Study on Coca Cola Company

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ABSTRACT

The global rise of environmental changes, is becoming a socially responsible problem, which made companies to take significant efforts to convince customers that they are committed to sustainable developments and their practices, policies and products are environmentally friendly. Greenwashing is misleading practice when a company or organization spends more time and money on marketing themselves as environmentally friendly, than, on minimizing their environmental impact. The main objective of the paper is to understand the crisis of transparency and credibility of environmental sustainability communication by companies by disclosing the positive but not the negative aspects of environmental profile of companies. The companies use deceptive green marketing strategies, by use of exaggerated and false claims, by use of unverifiable words, like, 'natural', 'green', 'eco-friendly', 'organic', 'non-toxic' on labels and packaging. The paper intends to understand how the company, under study is accused of greenwashing by use of green advertisement as a tool to overstate or even falsify the minimization of environmental impacts of their product offerings. The risk of greenwashing causes confusion and scepticism among consumers, where, consumers are deceived by deceptive environmental advertisements and misleading environmental claims. The paper studies the effects of sustainability reporting by Coco Cola Company being influenced by greenwashing practice in discharging their accountability to internal and external stakeholders groups in order to achieve their goal of environmental sustainability. The paper is initiated with the importance to regulate greenwash which misleads consumers by nature evoking elements in advertisement to artificially enhance a brand's ecological image. The study tries to investigate the companies' commitment to environmental responsibility by different organizations like, regulatory bodies, social activist groups, environmental organizations and NGOs who see greenwashing as negative environmental campaign to disclose them as good corporate citizen. The study finds that, greenwashing must be stopped and false claims must be transparent and backed by third-party certifications to portray them as environmentally ethical.

Keywords: *Greenwashing, Green Marketing, Environmental Sustainability Reports, Accountability, Scepticism*

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In the world which is becoming more eco-friendly in recent years, the packaging of a product, containing the word ‘natural’ or ‘recyclable’ have been convicted to be victim of greenwashing practice. The problem of greenwashing is becoming a serious obstacle to sustainable development as well to the disclosure of environmental information. Greenwashing is a type of spin in which green marketing is used deceptively to promote the perception that a company and its products or services are environmentally safe or friendly. The word greenwashing merges the concept of green i.e., environmentally sound and whitewashing i.e., to gloss over the wrongdoings to describe the use of deceptive use of green marketing which promotes a misleading perception that a company’s policies, practices, products or services are environmentally friendly (Kewalramani.D. & Sobelson. R.J.; 2012; Forbes). Green marketing opportunities is used by companies to exaggerate green claims or use deceptive or misleading green promises to create product differentiation based on sustainability related positioning (Terrachoice, 2010). Therefore, the study aims to understand the effects of greenwashing on different focus groups and the impact of disclosure of greenwashing communications on different stakeholder groups.

The study undergoes how the companies use the greenwashing practices to selectively disclose the positive environmental messages, withholding their negative ones to create an impression of transparency while masking their true environmental performance. Companies’ greenwashing does not value attention to detail, transparency and honesty, thereby, contaminates credibility of all sustainability related marketing and inhibits progress towards a sustainable economy. The main objective of the paper is to understand the sustainable development strategies implemented by the Coca Cola Company and to investigate how the phenomenon of greenwashing is committed by the company in environmental sustainability reports. The study will therefore, undergo how the cyclical marketing efforts, misguided public relation stunts or simply changing the packaging of an existing product while continuing to use unsustainable ingredients or practices is used by companies generating confusion and scepticism among consumers in their buying decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study in analysing the claims about plastic packaging being eco-friendly made by big companies like, Coca Cola are misleading greenwashing practice. Companies are accused of greenwashing when they brand something as more eco-friendly or sustainable than it really is. The study in understanding the claims that are made with little proof about how the products addresses the crisis in plastic pollution by intercepting using “ocean-bound” or “recyclable” plastic are some of the most common examples of greenwashing. The examples show brands are presenting materials and selling products claiming they are better for the environment when they are either difficult to recyclable, not recyclable at all or using just a small fraction of “ocean bound” plastic collected through various clean ups. The study in analysing the authenticity of marketing communication and to understand whether the companies are doing the right thing by the environment or greenwashing their images to make it seem like they are doing the right thing, undergoes a case study analysis on the Coca Cola Company, the world’s largest beverage company engaged in a number of mis-leading greenwashing activities.

- Lakshmi. S. Dr. and Akshaya. A. (2024); “Greenwashing: A Grey Shade of Green Marketing”; in *IPB Journal of Business Management*; vol. 14, No 14; ISSN: 2249-9040; the paper throws light upon how business firm create an impression that they are producing eco-friendly products and how consumers are trapped in this illusion.

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The study also finds the ways for business to avoid greenwashing and how consumers can spot greenwashing in their decision-making process.

- Silva. B.G. and Ce. F. R. (2024); “The Effects of Greenwashing on Purchasing Intention and Perceived Quality by the Consumer”; in *Brazilian Journal of Marketing*; e-ISSN: 2177-5184; retrieved from; <https://doi.org/>; the study finds that the practice of greenwashing have negative influence on purchase intention and perceived product quality. The paper demonstrates the halo effect caused by greenwashing. The paper demonstrates that high involvement with a product manifests negative attitudes towards the organization, through a reduction in the purchase intention and attribution of low quality when greenwashing is verified.
- Lin. Z., (2022); “Reasons and analysis of Coca Cola’s greenwashing”; in *BCP Business and Management*’ vol no. 33; pg no.: 23-28; retrieved from; www.researchgate.net. finds that companies advertise their products under the banner of green friendly. The paper studies the series of sustainable actions by Coca-Cola, one of the world’s largest plastic polluters, by analyzing the impact of Coca-Cola on human health and the environmental impact of the plastic bottles and the water pollution by Coca Cola, which concluded Coca Cola’s sustainable strategy is greenwashing.
- Szabo.S. and Webster.J. (2020); “Perceived Greenwashing: The Effects of Green Marketing on Environmental and Product Perceptions”; in *Journal of Business Ethics*; vol. no.; 171; pgs: 719-739; at Springer Nature; finds that, greenwashing may not only affect company’s profitability, but also results in ethical harm. The study also finds that perceived greenwashing relates not only to environmental and product perceptions, but also to consumer’s happiness.
- Lyon. T.P. and Montgomery. A. Wren; (2015); “The Means and End of Greenwash”; in *Sage Publications, Organizations and Environment*; at Bobst Library, New York University, retrieved from oae.sagepub.com.; the study shows that greenwashing is a broad term that encompasses a broad term that encompasses a variety of specific forms of misleading communications.

The paper is based on empirical study, in which literatures are reviewed in addressing the key issue of deceptive practice of greenwashing and its impact on environmental sustainability communications.

Objectives of the Study

The paper tries to understand the problems of greenwashing and encompasses the range of phenomenon that companies undertake to overcome the pressure of stakeholders including investors, consumers, NGOs (Non-Government Organization), government and civil society. The paper will try to understand the following objectives:

- To understand how the variety of forms of misleading communications that companies adapt to demonstrate them as green corporate citizen and to increase their sales and profitability.
- To understand how Coca Cola employs greenwash in their products and processes to be sustainability leaders
- To understand the environmental litigations against the Coca Cola Company that backslash consumer’s health and affect environment conservation.
- To understand the measures that enhances the transparency of sustainability reporting and to reduce the unethical greenwashing practice that affects the green propaganda.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper will try to understand the impact of greenwashing on environmental sustainability performance of companies, particularly, with a case study analysis of Coca Cola, the largest plastic waste generator, greenwashes by false and deceptive advertising and misleads the consumers in their purchasing intentions. The study is analyzed by comparing the sustainability communication data of Coca Cola company over three years, 2022, 2023 and 2024 by using tables to analyse the gap in environmental performance and to critically analyse elaborately the criticism faced by the company from activists and environmental experts against the mis-leading sustainability claims. The secondary data analysis in absolute and percentage terms will help to understand how Coca Cola paints a sunny picture of its environmental footprint, touting its investment in sustainable packaging, batting about the tag-line “a world without waste” and “proclaiming that our planet matters”. The study will try to understand the greenwashing practice by critically analyzing the litigations and lawsuits raised against the company by regulatory bodies.

Analysis and Findings:

The greenwashing practice endangers the credible efforts to reduce emissions and addresses climate change. Through deceptive marketing and false claims of sustainability, greenwashing misleads consumers, investors and the public, hampering the trust, ambition and action needed to bring about global change and secure a sustainable planet. The study will undergo the case study analysis of Coca Cola company, where, the company is alleged for misleading sustainability statements amounting to greenwashing, or in legal terms, false and deceptive advertising.

Box 1: The Coca Cola Company Vision Statement

The Coca Cola Company Vision Statement

Coca Cola's vision statement is “to craft the brands and choices of drinks that people love, to refresh them in body and spirit. And done in ways that create a more sustainable business and better shared future that makes a difference in people's lives, communities and planet”.

Source: 2024 Integrated Report; Coca Cola FEMSA

Box 2: The Coca Cola Company Sustainability Goals

The Coca Cola Company Sustainability Goals

The Coca Cola company is committed to prioritize sustainability in their operations and communities. The company is prioritizing goals and actions that seek to improve water security in high-risk locations, reducing packaging waste and decrease emissions. The company has set their sustainability targets to make their packaging 100% recyclable by 2025, use 50% recycled material by 2030 and recycle one can for each it sells by 2030.

Source: The Coca Cola Company; (2024); Environmental Update Independent Accountant's Review Report

Environmental Sustainability Performance Analysis of The Coca Cola Company

The Coca Cola company, one of the biggest players of the beverage companies globally, having a wide beverage portfolio expanding to more than 200 brands and thousands of beverages around the world, from soft drinks and water to coffee and teas are enjoyed in more than 200 countries and territories each day. The company is committed to offering people more of the drinks they want across a range of categories and sizes while driving

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sustainable solutions that build resilience into their business and create positive change for the planet. The American soda company Coca-Cola was recently accused of greenwashing in two different cases. First, it promoted its new line of the low-sugar version, Coca-Cola Life, , as a “green, healthy alternative”. Second, the company claimed that it is committed to reducing plastic waste. In both cases, consumers have seen through the greenwashing. After nutritionists highlighted that the beverage still wasn’t healthy, Coca-Cola Life disappeared from the shelves. The low-sugar label misled consumers about the total content that was still present in the bottle. Likewise, Coca Cola went to court over its plastic waste claims, with the company being named one of the world’s largest plastic polluters.

But, Coca Cola has become the world’s number one plastic polluting company and the largest consumer-facing global seller of plastics. According to the Earth Island Institute Publication, 2021, Coca-Cola generates an estimated 2.9 metric tons of plastic waste each year. Today Coca Cola is not a sustainable business and portraying itself as one who is misleading its consumers. The company faced lawsuits by Earth Island Institute, who pleaded that Coca Cola’s environmental and sustainability claims are in violation to the DC Consumer Protection Procedures Act (CPPA), which protects consumers against false, deceptive or unfair business practices (Source: Earth Island Institute; 2024; “Coca Cola must face Greenwashing Lawsuit in D.C.”; at Washington D.C.; retrieved from; www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org).

Table 1: Environmental Performance Parameters of The Coca Cola Company from 2022 to 2024

Environmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Sustainability Commitments	2022	2023	2024	Change in Performance in 2024 compared to 2022
Water Usage (water usage ratio litres of water used per litre of product produced)	The company is committed by 2030 to reduce water usage per liter of beverage by 36% compared to 2018, prioritizing plants in water-risk areas. The company sets a target of achieving 100% of water replenishment in nature and communities	1.78	1.79	1.79	The company’s water consumption remains uniform in 2022 and 2024 and fails to meet the commitment to water consumption and protecting water for future generations.
Packaging and Recycling (plastic, primarily PET bottles)	The company’s sustainability goals to make their packaging 100% recyclable by 2025, use 50% recycled material by 2030 and recycle one can for each it sells by 2030.	47%	48%	48%	118,600 Tons of PET collected in 2024 and only 30% of recycled PET used in packaging.
Total GHG Manufacturing	The Company sets “drink in your hand”	4.97	4.95	Not Applicable	230.7 gCo2e per litre of CO2

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Environmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Sustainability Commitments	2022	2023	2024	Change in Performance in 2024 compared to 2022
(Scopes 1,2 and 3) Market based method (million metric tons of CO2e)	goal in 2013 by 25% reduction of carbon footprint. The company sets a target to reduce the absolute greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030 against a 2015 baseline. The updated 2035 goal, Coca Cola aims to reduce Scope1,2 and 3 emissions in line with a 1.50c trajectory, using 2019 baseline, using Science Based Target Initiative (SBTi).				produced (carbon footprint emission ratio) in 2024.
Energy Usage (percentage renewable electricity)	The company is committed to reduce the energy usage ratio per liter produced by 23% by 2030 compared to 2018. The company is committed to incorporate renewable electricity in their operations	21%	24%	28%	There has been an increase of renewable energy from 24% to 28%. The company uses 84% of energy from renewable sources in 2024.

Source: "2024 Environmental Update Report" of The Coca Cola Company retrieved from; www.cocacolacompany.com

The table above shows the environmental performance of Coca Cola Company in the areas of water, packaging, emissions and energy use. The company with vast network of bottling plants, extensive logistic operations and over 200 countries served has significant environmental footprints. The company's significant commitments to sustainability, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting water stewardship and improving packaging sustainability, still remains one of the largest contributors of plastic pollution worldwide.

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Table 2: Environmental Sustainability Gaps of The Coca Cola Company

Environmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Sustainability Goals	Actual Performance	Sustainability Gaps
Packaging and Recycling Solutions	The company aims to use 35% to 40% recycled material in their primary packaging material (plastic, glass and aluminum) including increasing recycled plastic use to 30% to 35% globally by 2035. The Company aims to help to ensure the collection of 70% to 75% of the equivalent number of bottles and cans they introduce into the market annually by 2035.	62% of the equivalent bottles and cans the company introduced in the market in 2023 were collected and refilled or collected for recycling	It's sustainable packaging strategy "World Without Waste" initiative, which aims to collect or recycle one bottle or can for every one sold by 2030, still remains one of the largest contributors to plastic pollution worldwide.
Water Use	The goal of water use by the company is to become water-balanced by 2020	The company used 1.78 liters of water used to produce one liter of beverage in 2023 and 2024.	By adopting new technologies and optimizing processes, the company has remained same in water use both in 2023 and 2024, using 1.78 liter of water per liter of product produced, inspite of adopting new technologies.
Water Replenishment	The company seek to return 100% of the total water used in each of their more than 200 high risk locations across the Coca-Cola system by 2035	The company achieved 100% replenishment of water used by their operations. The company created a replenishment potential equivalent to 124.5% of water used by their operations in 2018.	In August 2024, the company achieved an intermediate target of a 1.36 water use ratio, a 14% improvement since 2018, setting a new benchmark for efficiency in beverage industry.
Reducing Emissions	The ambition of the company is to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Through science based targets, the company is continuously evolving climate change solutions and goals to align with current climate science.	Total Scope 1 and Scope 2 emission of CO2 amounts to 1,286,462 million metric tons of Co2 e in 2024. The company sets a target of climate ambition in 2021 to reduce absolute greenhouse	Total GHG manufacturing emissions, market based methods reduced by only from 4.97 million metric tons of CO2e in 2022 to 4.95 million metric tons of in 2023. The company is still behind in

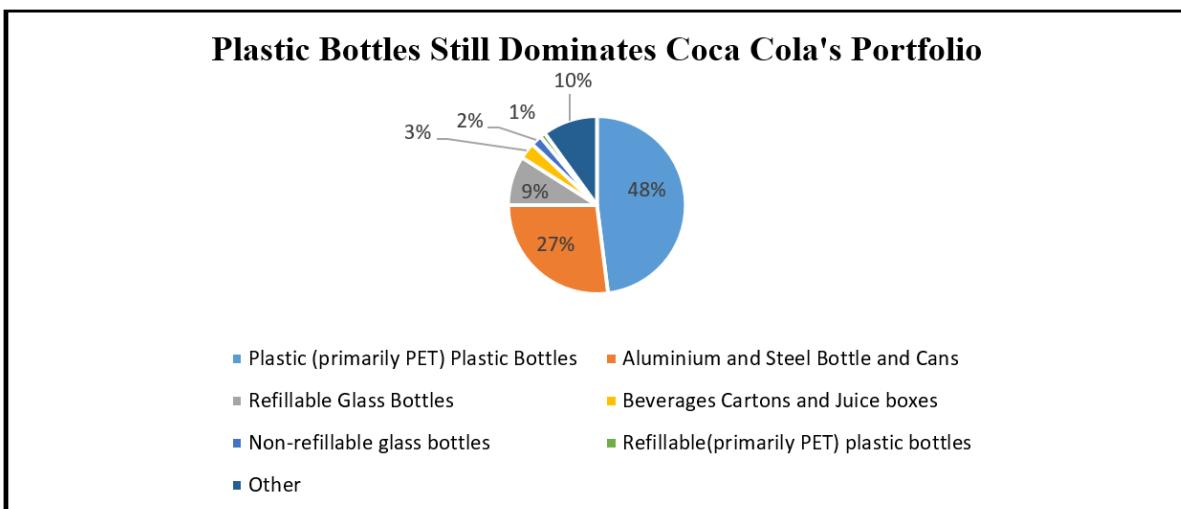
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Environmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Sustainability Goals	Actual Performance	Sustainability Gaps
	The company sets a target of achieving 25% of carbon footprint of the “drink in your hand”.	ambitions by 25% by 2030 against a 2015 baseline.	achieving 2030 climate goal and adopting renewable energy sources.
Energy Use	The company makes sustainable investments and energy purchase agreements from renewable sources and efficiency projects.	The company uses only 44.9% of renewable energies of total energy use in 2024. The company uses only 28% of renewable energy in 2024, a only 4% increase from 2023 and percentage of renewable	The company continues still to replace their cooling equipment with more efficient models that use cutting edge technologies to reduce energy consumption and incorporate recovered or recycled parts

Source: “2024 Integrated Annual Report of Coca Cola FEMSA” retrieved from www.investors.cocacolafemsa.com

The table above shows the sustainability gaps in environmental stewardships of the Coca Cola company, which, makes the company as the worst plastic polluter. The company paints a sunny picture of its environmental footprint, touting its investment in sustainable packaging, batting about the tagline “world without waste” and proclaiming that “our planet matters”. Companies are accused of greenwashing when they brand something as more eco-friendly, green or sustainable than it really is. The complaint made to the European Commission focuses on claims by the Coca Cola company that the single use plastic water bottles they supply are 100% recycled or 100% recyclable. “A 100% recycling rates for bottles is technically not possible and just because bottles made with recycled plastics does not mean that they don’t harm the people and planet. It is important for the company not to portray them recycling as silver bullet to the plastic crisis instead they need to focus efforts on reducing plastic at source (Source: Loggett.T. & Edser.N.(2023); “Coca-Cola and Nestle accused of misleading eco-claims” at BBC News).

Coca Cola world’s largest beverage company is on track to use more than 9.1 billion pounds of plastics annually by 2030, according to the new report by advocacy organization, Oceana. This represents a 20% increase over the company’s most recently reported plastic use in 2023, which Oceana said was already plastic to circle the Earth more than 100 times. The report also suggested that the amount of plastic packaging from Coca Cola expected to enter the world’s waterways and oceans, a staggering 1.3 billion pounds, which is enough to enter the stomachs of more than 18 billion blue whales (source: Igini.M.; 2025; “Coca-Cola’s Plastic Use to Reach 9.1 Billion Pounds By 2030:Report”; in www.earth.org).



Source: Rachal. M.; 2025; "Coca Cola reports jump in packaging deemed recyclable"; in Packaging Dive

- **Chart: Coca-Cola's Plastic Bottles Still Dominates Its Product Portfolio**

The collection and recycling of beverage packaging of Coca-Cola still remains challenging. Coca-Cola is still behind plan on meeting its 2030 recycled content and collection goals. Coca-Cola reported in 2024 it increased the rate of recycled content in its primary packaging globally to 28%. PET is its most used substrate and 18% of that was recycled PET (source: Rachal. M.; 2025; "Coca-Cola reports jump in packaging deemed recyclable"; in Packaging Dive). Coca-Cola's total weight of virgin plastic used increased to 2.94 million metric tons in 2024, after declining in 2023 to 2.83 million metric tons. But, single-use plastic bottles made with recycled content can, just like bottles made of virgin plastic, still become marine pollution and harm ocean life, which makes the company as the most polluting corporations, which is a liability for the future of the company, the ocean and the planet.

- **Environmental Lawsuits and Litigations Against Coca Cola Company**

The Coca Cola company has been sued by the environmental organization Earth Island Institute for falsely advertising that it is sustainable and environmentally friendly despite being the largest plastic polluter in the world. The company follows deceptive marketing practices and follows greenwashing by marketing its products as sustainable. This includes Coca Cola's disproportionate use of its glass bottle in its advertising, when in reality most of the packaging it produces, nearly 50% is made of plastic. It additionally touts efforts to increase its plastic bottles' recyclability as environmentally sustainable, while in reality recycling does not mitigate the harm that the company's increasing production of plastic bottles creates.

Box 3: Environmental Litigations against Coca Cola for Greenwashing

The Coca Cola Company faced allegations by Earth Island Institute

The company faced litigations by environmental non-profit institute, the Earth Island, alleges that the company's statements overstate its work sustainability and undersell its environmental impact in June 2021.

*Source: Farren. Z. L., 2021; "Coca Cola Sued for False Advertising Over Sustainability Claims" in *Earth Island Journal*; Earth Island Institute Publication.*

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The Earth Island Institute filed a lawsuit against Coca Cola, alleges that Coca Cola's sustainability focused statements amounts to greenwashing or in legal terms, false and deceptive advertising. It points out that despite heavy marketing of its so-called green image, the company is the number one plastic waste generator in the world. The company has also been named the number one corporate polluter for three years in a row by the nonprofit Break Free from Plastic's Global Cleanup and Brand Audit Report, which assesses plastic waste collected across a dozen of countries. Coca Cola's reliance on plastic "recycling" is problematic, as plastic "recycling" is widely recognized as greenwashing and does not actually solve plastic pollution.

• Greenwashing Preventive Measures

The severe environmental footprints suffocating the planet and killing the wildlife needs immediate control measures to push companies to take responsibility for their environmental impact. The greenwashing practice, misleads public that the company follows sustainable business practices when it is far from the truth and instead is causing irreversible damage to marine life, oceans and coastal communities. Coca-Cola is the largest consumer facing global seller of plastics, producing almost one-quarter of the world's single use PET plastic bottles. Coca cola's plastic bottles, caps and wrappers have been the most commonly found branded plastic pollution found in the environment since 2018 according to, Break Free from Plastic Brand Audits (Source: plasticpollutioncoalition; (2024); "Coca-Cola Quietly Drops Reuse Targets, Decreases Recycling Goals").

To combat the plastic pollution crisis, a transition to a circular economy is necessary. This emphasizes reducing, reusing and recycling materials, thereby minimizing waste and environmental impact and making the companies accountable to the public. The companies towards reducing plastic pollution must shift to single used material like, glass which can be safely reused and refilled. By supporting initiatives like, global brand audits and advocating for more sustainable business practices, companies can be more responsible corporate citizen.

Comment:

The lawsuit which was filed in District of Columbia Superior Court under DC's Consumer Procedures Act, against Coca Cola, seeks that, "Coca Cola to be honest with consumers about its plastic use so that consumers can make informed purchased decisions"-Sumona Mazumdar; general counsel, for Earth Island Institute

Source: Farren. Z. L., 2021; "Coca Cola Sued for False Advertising Over Sustainability Claims" in *Earth Island Journal*; Earth Island Institute Publication.

"The Coca Cola company must stop the greenwashing and false claims, be transparent about the plastic they use, and be a leader in investing in deposit and refill programs for the health of humans, animals, waterways, the ocean and our environment"-Julia Cohen, co-founder and managing director at Plastic Pollution Coalition, an Earth Island Project

Source: Farren. Z. L., 2021; "Coca Cola Sued for False Advertising Over Sustainability Claims" in *Earth Island Journal*; Earth Island Institute Publication.

Greenwashing in a variety of forms, from well-intentioned, ambiguous statements to outright lies that are intended to benefit from the wave of support for sustainably responsible

products without putting in the hard graft. So, this practice of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how environmentally sound a company's products is not only deceptive, but also unethical. So, greenwashing presents a significant obstacle to tackle climate change and environmental disorders.

In order, to prevent greenwashing standards and guidelines to be developed. The guidelines will aim to prevent greenwashing and misleading environmental claims, supplementing the prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022. In recognition to this challenge, India has introduced comprehensive Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Misleading Environmental Claims, 2024, though, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to safeguard consumer from misleading marketing practices and promote transparency in environmental claims. (Source: Sushma. M.; (2025); "How India's Greenwashing Guidelines can protect Consumers"; in *CAG {citizen consumer and Civic Action Group; retrieved from; cag.org.in}*).

Greenwashing undermines the credible efforts to reduce emissions and addresses climate change. Through deceptive marketing and false claims of sustainability, greenwashing misleads consumers, investors and the public, hampering the trust, ambition and action needed to bring about global change and secure a sustainable planet. So, greenwashing must be prevented by using transparent and specific language in sustainability communications. The authenticity of sustainability communications can be increased by third-party certifications, avoiding vague claims, such as, "eco-friendly", "natural" without sustainable authentications, using specific environmental claims like, "compostable", "plastic-free", "recyclable" by scientific evidence or third party verifications, improving consumer understanding by explaining technical terms like, "greenhouse gas emissions" or Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) in user-friendly language and developing awareness among consumers to participate in sustainability initiatives, like, recycling programs or community clean-up events. Companies by embracing transparent language, verifying and validating claims, communicating concrete actions, practicing full disclosure and engaging with consumers can promote genuine sustainability and building lasting trust. So, companies need to prioritize their authentic sustainability and avoid the pitfalls of greenwashing.

Findings

The growing up of environmental problems with the practice of environmental disorders; caused by industrial activities initiates business to include environmental information in their corporate reports. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, businesses face challenges of meeting consumer expectations while maintaining integrity. However, accompanying growth in the number of 'green shoppers' is the rise of 'green marketing', where, companies make claims of sustainability to attract shoppers. This has led to the challenge of 'greenwashing' where the authenticity of environmental claims is doubtful, exaggerated or misrepresented. This has obvious repercussion on consumer trust and could be seen as infringement upon their fundamental rights. The study finds that;

- The case study analysis shows that the coca cola company must be transparent and practice full disclosure outlining the carbon emissions, water usage, plastic waste generation and acknowledge strategies to overcome them. The company must incorporate more innovative recycling technology and clean-up operations in areas around their bottling plants. The company must actively invest in sustainable packaging solutions and refilling programs for the health of humans, animals, waterways, the ocean and our environment.

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- The Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Greenwashing or Misleading Environmental Claims, 2024, a pivotal regulatory framework designed to enhance the accuracy of businesses' environmental claims, thereby empowering consumers.
- The Green Marketing Guidelines, like, Green Claims Code published in 2021 and developed by Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), can ensure consumer protection by giving consumers the information needed to make the purchase decisions and addressing deceptive marketing practices.

So, corporate greenwashing is not only unethical, but also erodes consumer trust and harms the environment. By familiarizing ourselves with the tactics used in greenwashing, we can better navigate the path to sustainability and avoid greenwashing claims.

Companies need to ensure transparency and consumer trust in eco-friendly practices. The companies need to ensure the true nature of the products they are purchasing. So, greenwashing must be stopped and false claims must be transparent and backed by third-party certifications to portray them as environmentally ethical.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that the greenwashing practice deeply hurts consumers' decision-making process and distorts them from making informed decisions. Companies use greenwashing to attract environmentally conscious consumers, but greenwashing can negatively affect businesses. The practice of greenwashing can lead to loss of consumer's trust, increase legal and regulatory risks and face significant financial consequences for defending against legal actions, potential fines and rebranding and rebuilding trust towards sustainability. The problem with greenwashing regarding untruthful, deceptive or misleading environmental marketing claims creates an illusion of environmental sustainability, rather than sustainability itself. This creation of illusion of environmental sustainability could have serious social consequences as consumers will continue to use products and support companies that further environmental degradation and reduce the quality of living conditions for future generation (Davis 1992).

So, greenwashing is a serious threat to the image and reputation of the company that engage in unfair practices. To avoid greenwashing and build consumer trust, companies should communicate their environmental efforts reliably, use recognized quality certifications, adhere to sustainability principles and take real environmental actions. Greenwashing risks cynicism among stakeholders and making it harder for corporations to contribute towards sustainable development goals.

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Conflict of Interest

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