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## ‘Effie’ciency of Green Advertising: Evaluating Consumer Responses to Green Advertising Addressing Water Conservation

### Yeşil Reklamın Etkinliği: Su Tasarrufuna Yönelik Yeşil Reklama Tüketici Tepkilerinin Değerlendirilmesi

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#### Abstract

**Aim:** This study investigates consumer responses to award-winning green advertising campaigns addressing water conservation in Türkiye. Focusing on campaigns by Finish and Cif, the research explores how consumers perceive the environmental messaging, product quality, and authenticity of green claims, while also reflecting on broader societal and governmental engagement with sustainability.

**Method:** Adopting a qualitative research design, the study utilizes thematic analysis of 629 consumer comments extracted from YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) under Finish and Cif’s green advertising campaigns, which received Effie Awards between 2020-2022. MAXQDA 2020 software was used for coding and analysis, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step procedure. Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen’s Kappa ( $\kappa = 0.86$ ), ensuring high agreement.

**Results:** The analysis revealed five key themes: brand-related, campaign-related, reviewer-related, community-related and policy-related comments. Consumers were found to have a dual attitude – admiring the environmental goals and creative elements of the campaigns, while many were skeptical of greenwashing and questioning product quality. They were also found to make actionable suggestions to improve environmental authenticity, criticizing societal indifference to sustainability and calling for stronger government policies and education.

**Conclusion:** Green advertising can effectively promote environmental awareness, but its credibility relies on actual brand practices and transparent communication. The study highlights the active role of consumers as co-creators of environmental discourse and offers practical implications for brands and policymakers seeking

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to promote sustainability. It is recommended that future studies expand to broader demographics and integrate a variety of data collection methods beyond social media comments.

### Keywords

Green Advertising, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Award-Winning Campaigns, Consumer Response, Thematic Analysis

### Öz

**Amaç:** Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de su tasarrufuna yönelik ödüllü yeşil reklam kampanyalarına yönelik tüketici tepkilerini araştırmaktadır. Finish ve Cif’in kampanyalarına odaklanan araştırma, tüketicilerin çevresel mesajlaşmayı, ürün kalitesini ve yeşil iddiaların gerçekliğini nasıl algıladıklarını araştırırken, aynı zamanda sürdürülebilirlikle ilgili daha geniş toplumsal ve devlet katılımını da yansıtmaktadır.

**Yöntem:** Nitel bir araştırma tasarımı benimseyen çalışma, Finish ve Cif’in 2020-2022 yılları arasında Effie Ödülleri alan yeşil reklam kampanyaları kapsamında YouTube, Instagram ve X’ten (eski adıyla Twitter) veri kazıma yoluyla toplanan 629 tüketici yorumunun tematik analizini gerçekleştirmiştir. Braun ve Clarke’ın (2006) altı adımlı prosedürünü izleyerek kodlama ve analiz için MAXQDA 2020 yazılımından faydalanılmıştır. Kodlayıcılar arası güvenilirlik, Cohen’in Kappa’sı ( $\kappa = 0,86$ ) kullanılarak değerlendirilmiş ve yüksek uyum tespit edilmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Analiz sonucunda beş temel tema ortaya çıkmıştır: markayla ilgili, reklam kampanyalarıyla ilgili, yorumcuyla ilgili, toplumla ilgili ve politikayla ilgili yorumlar. Tüketicilerin ikili bir tutum sergilediği görülmüştür - kampanyaların çevresel hedeflerine ve yaratıcı unsurlarına hayranlık duyarken, birçoğu yeşil aklamaya karşı şüpheci ve ürün kalitesini sorgulayıcı konumda tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca çevresel özgünlüğü iyileştirmek için uygulanabilir önerilerde bulundukları, sürdürülebilirliğe karşı toplumsal ilgisizliği eleştirdikleri ve daha güçlü hükümet politikaları ve eğitimi çağrısında bulundukları görülmüştür.

**Sonuç:** Yeşil reklamcılık çevre bilincini etkili bir şekilde teşvik edebilmektedir, ancak güvenilirliği gerçek marka uygulamalarına ve şeffaf iletişime dayanmaktadır. Çalışma, tüketicilerin çevre söyleminin eş yaratıcıları olarak aktif rolünün altını çizmekte ve sürdürülebilirliği teşvik etmeyi amaçlayan markalar ve politika yapıcılar için pratik çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Gelecekteki çalışmaların daha geniş demografik özelliklere yayılması ve sosyal medya yorumlarının ötesinde çeşitli veri toplama yöntemlerini entegre etmesi önerilmektedir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Yeşil Reklam, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedefleri (SKH), Ödüllü Kampanyalar, Tüketici Tepkisi, Tematik Analiz

## Introduction

The emergence of environmental awareness has significantly transformed consumer behavior and marketing strategies in recent years. This article examines the complex relationship between green advertising, which has attracted increasing attention due to the increasing environmental problems at the global level, and consumer responses. Rapid economic growth and consumption habits, especially in developed countries, have led to environmental degradation, which has brought about a transformation towards sustainable consumption and corporate social responsibility (Chen and Chai 2010; Williams et al. 2023).

At a time when environmental concerns and sustainable practices are increasingly discussed in the public domain, Turkey provides a unique case to examine green advertising and its impact on consumer behavior. As a rapidly developing country with increasing interest in environmental issues, Turkey provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of green advertising in promoting sustainable consumption practices, particularly through social media platforms. The prominent role of social media in the dissemination of green advertising messages is particularly striking in the Turkish context. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly known as ‘Twitter’) have become key tools in shaping consumers’ interest in environmental issues (Alam et al. 2023). Therefore, this study

aims to assess the interaction between green advertising messages distributed through social media platforms and their impact on consumer behavior in Turkey by examining the comments made on award-winning green advertising posts shared by brands on YouTube, Instagram, and X. Thus, it aims to contribute to the sustainability literature on consumer attitudes towards advertising in developing countries, as emphasized by Rathee and Milfeld (2023).

Green advertising, which aims at promoting products and services by emphasizing their environmental attributes, has become a critical tool in leading consumer choices and developing sustainable consumption (Amoako et al. 2022; Gu et al. 2022). This study explores the efficacy of green advertising in shaping consumer preferences and the associated challenges in Turkey. It also addresses the complex dynamics of environmental, social, and economic sustainability, highlighting the interdependence of these elements in the broader context of sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Brundtland 1987; Rathee and Milfeld 2023; Voola et al. 2022b; Voola et al. 2022a). Besides, it investigates various green advertising strategies and their impact on consumer purchase intentions, considering factors such as price sensitivity and consumer trust (Amoako et al. 2022; Alam et al. 2023).

The increasing environmental deterioration and water pollution triggered by disruption of Earth's natural balance, increasing population, changes in technology, rapid economic growth and consumer consumption patterns is a global challenge (Chen and Chai 2010), with Turkey being no exception. In Turkey, green advertising plays a vital role in shaping the perceptions and behaviors of consumers who are increasingly interested in how companies address environmental issues, reflected in their purchasing decisions. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how green advertising can effectively foster the transition towards a more sustainable future, aligning with the SDGs and the evolving consumer consciousness towards environmental issues. In doing so, it attempts to address the pivotal goal of green advertising research, which, as Gu et al (2022) set forth, is to "explore whether green advertising can really influence the audience and make them develop sustainable green behavior habits". Furthermore, by analyzing the consumer response to green advertising distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study tries to provide insights regarding the effectiveness of green advertising messages on consumers' perception of sustainability, thus taking a step towards fulfilling what Rathee and Milfeld (2023) suggest as the leading role of advertising research in finding out how catastrophic events like pandemic impact the understanding and behaviors of consumers. It is also worth mentioning here that it contributes to the literature on SDGs by addressing the green advertising related to SDG 6, SDG 11, and SDG 14, which, as Delvaux and Van den Broeck (2023) reveal, are among the most rarely studied topics in the literature. This study covers the green advertising addressing also SDG 12, which has drawn quite a lot of attention from scholars in the field, but Delvaux and Van den Broeck (2023) underline that there is an urgent need to communication related research on environmental issues related to this SDG. Thus, it also pays attention to meeting this need in the literature.

## Conceptual Background

With the agreement of all 193 member states, the United Nations (UN) established 17 sustainability goals in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda (Galan-Ladero and Alves 2023), encompassing areas like responsible production and consumption, climate action, and promoting health and well-being (Amoako et al. 2022; Jones et al. 2016) to struggle with "the deeply entrenched economic, social and environmental problems" (Voola et al. 2022b). While condensing these complex problems into 17 goals (Duane et al. 2022) simplifies interpretation and implementation of sustainable practices for businesses, civil society, and policymakers, these goals offer a framework for marketing professionals to evaluate how companies incorporate inclusive growth into their business strategies (Voola et al. 2022a; Voola et al. 2022b). It has been recommended that companies can select one of the three strategies to adopt SDGs in their marketing and advertising efforts. The first strategy involves choosing an SDG that aligns closely with the company's core values and concentrating efforts on it. The second strategy treats the SDGs as a comprehensive framework, guiding the company's actions towards sustainability by giving equal importance to all goals and striving to meet them whenever possible. The third one encourages collaboration with other organizations to jointly undertake sustainability projects, using the goals as a basis for this cooperation. It should be underlined here that although

these goals seem to address mostly companies, the fact is, as implied in the last strategy, that achieving these goals requires immediate action from businesses, governments, and individuals jointly to adopt more sustainable practices (Maciejewski and Lesznik 2022; Duane et al. 2022). One of the effective ways to prompt such a joint action is claimed to be green marketing activities including PR, publicity, and advertising (Borawska et al. 2020; Jones et al. 2016).

The integration of social and environmental concerns into business practices is increasingly vital in today's market, driven by consumer demand for corporate transparency in areas like human rights and environmental protection. Green advertising efforts, encompassing efforts from state authorities to private enterprises, aim to reshape public attitudes towards important social and environmental issues. They have become essential for businesses, aligning with consumers' growing environmental and social awareness (Voola et al. 2022b; Galan-Ladero and Alves 2023; Easterling et al. 1996; Fowler and Close 2012). This advertising form includes themes like planet preservation, wildlife preservation, and personal health, with a stringent definition emphasizing promotion of environmental awareness and corrective behaviors (Fowler and Close 2012; Banerjee et al. 1995). It goes beyond product promotion, integrating social ideals with environmental, economic, and social implications (Amoako et al. 2022; Rathee and Milfeld 2023). However, integration of green messages in corporate communications enhances corporate value and employee loyalty improves trust, develops new markets, establishes resilience to future increases in costs, reduce regulatory and legal risks, provides competitive advantage, and influences purchase intentions of the consumers (Jones et al. 2016; Rathee and Milfeld 2023; Easterling et al. 1996). Green advertising also helps companies meet the demand of consumers from companies to act responsibly towards environmental issues (Brundtland 1987).

Green marketing and advertising play a vital role in advancing the SDGs by promoting behaviors that benefit society and align with sustainability objectives (Maciejewski and Lesznik 2022). The SDGs are increasingly recognized within marketing scholarship as a framework for addressing global challenges, with experts advocating that all marketing and advertising efforts should consider the SDGs (Voola et al. 2022b; Delvaux and Van den Broeck 2023). The green marketing and advertising approach, applicable across various sectors, is essential in tackling issues like global warming, water shortages, and diseases, thereby aiding in achieving the SDGs (Galan-Ladero and Alves 2023; Duane et al. 2022). The role of green marketing and advertising is pivotal in fostering sustainable consumer behavior through awareness, acceptance, knowledge, and action, ultimately leading to long-term well-being and quality of life (Maciejewski and Lesznik 2022).

Effective green marketing and advertising hinges on several key factors, emphasizing both the message and the medium. Pro-environmental consumption (PEC) targets reducing negative environmental impacts through consumer actions (Alam et al. 2023). The strategies that foster community involvement and brand engagement are crucial, particularly in unique market contexts affected by many environmental issues like climate change (Amoako et al. 2022). Green advertising often employs a serious tone using fear and guilt appeals to address issues like environmental degradation and social concerns. These fear-arousing appeals can trigger self-protective reactions on defensive responses, impacting the effectiveness of advertisements. Furthermore, pro-environment consumers are naturally more inclined to campaigns that align with their environmental values (Alam et al. 2023; Amoako et al. 2022). The rise of online interaction propensity (OIP) and the influence of social media content significantly affect consumer intentions and behaviors towards green products (Alam et al. 2023). Innovative advertising forms, including dynamic visual communications involving living elements and interactive process, are emerging to enhance the perception of human values and environmental culture. Green advertising extends beyond traditional media, demanding an environmental purpose in brand marketing and storytelling for deeper consumer engagement (Mueller 2023). In summary, the effectiveness of green advertising relies on a blend of emotionally resonant messaging, innovative communication strategies, and the leveraging of digital platforms to resonate with environmentally conscious consumers.

Green marketing and advertising face several challenges in achieving its aims. Media discourse on natural resources like water is often dominated by economic frameworks, overshadowing

environmental concerns. Consumers may view pro-environmental advertising with skepticism, suspecting deceptive or overstated campaigns, which can decrease their engagement and pro-environment consumption intentions (Alam et al. 2023). Industry context can influence the effectiveness of green advertising. For example, environmental and green messages from industries perceived as 'sinful' or controversial can lead to increased skepticism (Rathee and Milfeld 2023). Additionally, Rathee and Milfeld (2023) stress that cultural orientations toward individualism or collectivism shape consumer responses to green advertising, with variations in environmental concerns and willingness to pay for sustainable products across different regions. Price also plays a mediating role, as the added costs of green marketing can lead to higher product prices, potentially deterring consumers (Amoako et al. 2022). Another challenge is the misconceptions regarding the effectiveness of green products despite advancements. Consumers often perceive green products as less effective, a phenomenon known as the dilution effect, where adding additional goals (like environmental friendliness) to a product is believed to dilute the effectiveness in its primary function (Grolleau et al. 2019). This perception is reinforced by biases like the zero-sum heuristic, where consumers assume that resources devoted to green benefits reduce a product's quality in other areas (Grolleau et al. 2019). Besides, adopting environmental options is often perceived as involving some form of compromise. Despite the actual situation being contrary, this ingrained belief can cause individuals to view environmentally friendly decisions as necessitating personal trade-offs, especially regarding cost, ease of use, and efficacy (Grolleau et al. 2019). The 'licensing effect' as another challenge suggests that engagement in green behavior might paradoxically reduce ethical choices in the future, a phenomenon observed in green advertising. Additionally, the type of green advertising, whether rational or emotional, influences the licensing effect, particularly in individuals with low environmental cognition (Gu et al. 2022). Finally, message design in advertising, including framing and appeal, significantly impacts its effectiveness. Subtle changes in wording can dramatically influence consumer perceptions and behaviors (Gu et al. 2022).

Effective solutions for marketers and advertising professionals to struggle with the challenges vary. To enhance green marketing and advertising effectiveness, they need to consider differentiating between B2C and B2B approaches. B2C marketing and advertising needs to authentically appeal to consumers' altruism and social betterment, while B2B approach requires focusing on the integration of stories of product innovation and environmental responsibility (Voola et al. 2022a). Using cues like eco-labels, certifications, and endorsements enhances ad credibility and effectiveness, depending on the audience's environmental concerns (Rathee and Milfeld 2023). Additionally, the influence of social groups and celebrity endorsements plays a fundamental role in encouraging sustainable product choices (Rathee and Milfeld 2023; Mueller 2023). Source credibility, encompassing expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, is also crucial for message acceptance (Rathee and Milfeld 2023). Narrative styles in advertising is claimed to be more persuasive in encouraging sustainable behavior (Rathee and Milfeld 2023). Humor in campaigns is found to target effectively individuals with negative attitudes towards certain behaviors, and social comparison on platforms like social media influences pro-environmental behavior (Alam et al. 2023). The effectiveness of green marketing and advertising can also be enhanced by considering four key aspects, which are (1) understanding consumer needs, (2) employing creative engagement strategies, (3) acknowledging social-cultural contexts, and (4) strategically addressing competition while easing the target audience's effort or cost (Hastings and Domegan 2014; Galan-Ladero and Alves 2023).

## Methodology

### Data Collection

To fulfil the aim of this study, consumer comments to two real award-winning green advertising campaigns were collected: Finish's "Tomorrow's Water" (Yarının Suyu 2020; Su Endeksi 2021) and Cif's "Beautiful While Clean" (Temizken Güzel 2022). These campaigns stand out as leading and block-busting examples of attempts made by major brands to move away from traditional methods of conveying environmental messages in their advertising. Finish's campaign, in collaboration with Siemens, Profilo, and National Geographic, focused on raising awareness about water scarcity and sustainable living. This involved broadcasting joint commercials, creating documentary films, and

integrating the campaign's message into popular TV series and promoting the message of stop pre-rinsing the dishes. The campaign highlighted Türkiye's risk of becoming water-poor and emphasized saving 57 liters of water per dishwashing cycle with Finish's efficient products. It combined a call for responsible, environmentally conscious behavior from consumers with the brand's promise of water conservation, cleanliness, and "Perfect Shine".

The "Beautiful While Clean" project by Cif involves installing "Cif garbage traps" in various Istanbul districts to collect sea surface waste, reflecting the company's commitment to cleaning urban areas and streets. This initiative aligns with the belief that clean and well-maintained places contribute to people's happiness. Expanding its focus beyond home cleaning, Cif aims to enhance urban beauty and happiness. The campaign also addresses environmental damage from plastic waste and promotes Cif's eco-friendly initiatives, including a 100% recyclable bottle for their Cif cream product, with a significant role played by the garbage traps in the Bosphorus.

The study aims to understand how consumers respond to green advertisements, and these campaigns were purposively selected. It was assumed that award-winning campaigns have the ability to connect with audiences, represent the highest standards in the advertising industry, succeed in their marketing objectives (increasing brand awareness, changing consumer attitudes, etc.), reflect cultural and societal values, and contribute to social change (Porter and Guy J 2006). In this respect, the consumer responses to these campaigns awarded by Effie Awards, one of the most prestigious advertising creativity contests in Türkiye were collected. Second, the scope of the study was a determinant factor for choosing the award category, and in line with this scope, the "Positive Change: Environmental and Social Good" was found suitable. Third, the green advertising campaigns of brands (Nestle Damak, and Getir) were excluded from the study as these campaigns addressed the issues of employment and empowerment of farmers, which are out of the scope.

In an effort to capture a broad range of consumer perspectives, comments were collected from a variety of media platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, and X. The social media platforms were selected based on the finding that they were the most used social media platforms in Türkiye during the selected years (Kemp 2020, 2021, 2022). Comments posted on YouTube were collected via MAXQDA YouTube data importer function, while those posted on X and Instagram were copied and pasted from the pages by the authors into different files stored on personal desktop. The data were collected systematically on October 18, 2023, and those from the platforms X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram were uploaded to MAXQDA 2020 for analysis. In total, 468 comments from Finish's four award-winning advertising videos, and 161 comments from Cif's two advertising videos were included in the dataset. The dataset included information about the commenter's URL, commenter's Avatar URL, and such information was deleted from the dataset.

## Data Analysis

In our study interpreting consumer responses to green advertising, we utilized thematic analysis, a foundational method for qualitative research (Braun and Clarke 2006), conducted on between October 19, 2023 and January 2, 2024. This involved thoroughly reading all comments, coding them, and then categorizing these codes into themes on MAXQDA 2020 qualitative data analysis software at an interpretive level, going further than just a semantic analysis (Javadi and Zarea 2016), and adhered to the six-step procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Our focus was primarily on discernible patterns of communication, prioritizing the significance of the comments overall rather than concentrating solely on specific words. To ensure the reliability of the thematic analysis, a second coder independently coded 30% of the data, and the intercoder reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa coefficient, which was found to be 86%, indicating a high level of agreement between the coders. After the iterative data analysis process, we identified five broad themes that emerged across all comments made about each campaign to evaluate the nature of the comments. These five broad themes relate to consumer responses to green advertising campaigns recognized by Effie Awards Türkiye. Given the nature of data collection from public social media platforms, ethical considerations were carefully addressed. The study ensured that the privacy and confidentiality of the commenters were maintained, and all data were used solely for the purpose of academic research. No identifiers regarding the commenters are not presented in the results or any other part of this paper in order to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

## Results

This section elucidates the thematic analysis conducted on 629 comments, employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodological approach via MAXQDA 2020. Our analysis crystallizes into five distinct yet interconnected themes: "Brand Related Comments", "Commercial Related Comments", "Commentator Related Comments", "Society Related Comments", and "Government Related Comments".

### Brand-Related Comments

This theme is divided into two main sub-themes: 'Advertiser Brand Related Comments', and 'Other Brand Related Comments'.

#### ***Advertiser Brand Related Comments***

The brands' pro-environmental approach has garnered admiration, particularly their latest campaigns, resonating deeply with consumers. Their positive responses to this campaign stem from the campaigns' ability to bring joy, their exemplary service, and the fact that the idea originated from local students. This admiration leads consumers to express their support in various ways: congratulating the brands, thanking them, endorsing them, and sending good wishes. Their congratulatory attitude is sparked both by the campaigns' success and the brands' collaboration with beloved influencers. Additionally, gratitude towards the brands is noted, not just for the campaigns but also for the high performance of their products. Consumers show their support for the brands by lifelong purchases, defending them against negative remarks, and promoting their ads to expand their reach. Wishes for the campaigns' wider adoption and influencing behavioral changes, like ending pre-rinse habits, are also prevalent. Furthermore, product quality and fragrance contribute to the brands' appeal. This admiration goes hand in hand with a strong trust in the brands, rooted in their green initiatives, products, and credible influencers involved.

In contrast to the admiration expressed for the advertiser brands, there have been notable criticisms focused on their products, communication strategies, and consumer approach. A significant portion of the criticism is centered around the brands' product manufacturing and pricing policies. The main issues with product manufacturing include the production of low-quality goods, excessive chemical usages, and animal testing. Consumers have reported dissatisfaction with the products' inability to remove dish stains, scratches on dishes, the need for additional hand rinsing, failure to eliminate odors, and dishwasher tablets not dissolving properly. Alongside quality concerns, there is criticism regarding the brands' pricing strategies, perceived as failing to balance price and quality. Consumers have specifically highlighted the high costs of products, even referencing the Finish brand's advertisement claim of saving 57 liters of water per use, stating that the product's price outweighs the cost savings on water. The brands' communication activities have also come under scrutiny. Consumers accuse these brands of dishonesty in their pro-environmental campaigns, alleging that they use deceptive, unrealistic environmental claims and prioritize commercial interests over environmental and social values. Additionally, the perceived inadequacy in communicating past environmental efforts has led to skepticism about the authenticity of current projects. Customer service quality and indifference have also been criticized. In terms of consumer approach, the brands were accused of underestimating consumers' intelligence, ignoring their economic situations, and shifting all responsibility onto them. Due to these criticisms, some consumers expressed a strong stance against these brands, vowing to never purchase or use their products.

The feedback from consumers regarding the criticized brands encompasses various suggestions aimed at improving their promotional activities, products, pricing, distribution, and corporate action. In terms of promotional activities, key suggestions focused on enhancing the reach and impact of green campaigns. Ideas include sending promotional products to consumers to encourage desired behaviors, broadening the audience of advertising videos, and extending campaigns beyond consumers to factories and businesses in general. Additionally, there are suggestions to promote different regions of Istanbul in campaigns, engage in activities raising awareness on other social issues, and share future plans for pro-environmental actions. In terms of product, addressing the criticisms and environmental harm and chemical use, consumers suggested the development of

organic and biodegradable products, free from toxic ingredients. For products criticized for cleaning inefficiency, there was a call to improve quality, possibly reallocating funds from advertising to product development. Another significant recommendation is to cease using animals in product testing. In light of complaints about high prices, consumers suggested price reductions. Emphasizing half-off discounts on pro-environmental products was highlighted as a way to make these choices more accessible to consumers, thereby enhancing the brands' environmental impact. In terms of distribution and market strategy, suggestions include reintroduction of products previously withdrawn from the Turkish market, and making products available in Turkey that are currently sold in foreign markets. Lastly, on a broader corporate level, a proposal was made for brands to provide assistance to African countries, struggling with drought. These suggestions collectively aim to address the criticisms while enhancing the brands' environmental responsibility, market presence, and consumer satisfaction.

In the dataset, consumers posed various questions to the advertiser brands, reflecting concerns about the brands' environmental commitment, the effectiveness of their campaigns, and their approaches to solving brand-related issues. First, consumers were inquiring about the authenticity of the brands' environmental friendliness. They seek clarity on whether the brands genuinely prioritize environmental concerns in their operations and decision-making processes. Second, questions were centered around the impact and effectiveness of the brands' environmental campaigns. Consumers were curious to know whether these campaigns effectively addressed environmental issues. They also expressed interest in understanding the brands' waste disposal processes and their stance on the use of chemicals, specifically questioning how these practices contribute to nature conservation. Last, in relation to the criticisms about the poor quality of the brands' products, consumers were asking for solutions and explanations. They wanted to know how the brands plan to address these quality issues and what steps were being taken to improve product standards. These inquiries demonstrated a keen interest from consumers in the transparency and authenticity of the brands' environmental initiatives and their commitment to resolving product quality issues.

### ***Other Brand Related Comments***

The dataset reveals that consumer comments about other brands in markets, when compared to the advertiser brands, are shaped by a mix of appreciation, criticism, and suggestions. Consumers expressed admiration and loyalty towards rival brands, primarily due to the perceived high quality of these brands and their customer-centric communication approaches. This appreciation seems to be a reaction to the criticism of the advertiser brands, with consumers finding more value in the offerings and engagement strategies of the competitors.

The main criticism directed at these other brands relates to their environmental communication campaigns, which were perceived as insincere and deceptive. Additionally, some consumers compare these brands unfavorably with the advertiser brands, criticizing them for conducting insensitive, overly commercial, or unnecessary advertising campaigns. In the light of these criticisms, consumers suggest that these other brands should engage in more environmentally and socially sensitive advertising campaigns, potentially taking cues from the advertiser brands. For dishwasher brands specifically, innovation-oriented suggestions were made. Consumers proposed the development of dishwashers capable of cleaning dishes without detergent tablets, thus reducing chemical use and contributing to the environment positively.

### **Commercial-Related Comments**

In the comments analyzed, consumer responses to the advertisements encompassed a range of likes, criticisms, and questions. The appreciation for the ads was primarily driven by several key factors: awareness-raising aspect, music in the ad, story of the ad, and characters in the ad. These elements of the ads not only garnered likes but also motivated consumers to actively support the ads. This support manifested in expressing gratitude to the ad producers and defending the ads against negative comments. Such engagement indicates that the ads successfully connected with the audience on multiple levels, from the content and storytelling to the more technical aspects like music and character portrayal.

The criticisms of the ads, almost matching the level of admiration, were primarily shaped around three aspects: the advertising message, the subject of the advertisement, and advertising production. First, a significant portion of the criticism was directed at the perceived intent behind the ads. Consumers expressed skepticism, suspecting that the brands' green advertising efforts were primarily commercial in nature, a tactic often referred to as 'greenwashing'. Additionally, there were complaints that the ad messages were not informative or clear enough. Second, criticisms were leveled at the portrayal of environmental issues in the ads. Specifically, consumers challenged the Finish brand's claim in its ads about Türkiye's water scarcity, suggesting that the brand exaggerated the water issue for dramatic effect. Last, concerns focused on the images, characters, and actions, depicted in the ads. Consumers felt that the images, resembling documentary footage, lacked creative advertising appeal and found some of them disturbing. The characters in the commercials drew criticism for their unsettling way of glancing at the camera, their slow moments while washing the dishes, and for drinking tap water in a particular manner. Additionally, the apparent wasteful use of water during the commercial shoots – with taps left running for extended periods – was heavily criticized, contradicting the environmental message of the ad.

Interestingly, the musical element in the ads, while a source of appreciation for some, also spurred questions among consumers. Many were curious about the specific music used, indicating that it had a memorable impact on the audience. This dual reaction to the music underscores how different aspects of ads can evoke varied responses from the audience.

### Commentator-Related Comments

Positive opinions about other commentators were often shaped by their display of pro-environmental behavior, logical interpretation of the ads, and a realistic view of the societal issues. These positive responses typically manifested in expressions of gratitude and support towards others, fostering a sense of community and shared values. Social media platforms facilitate dynamic dialogue among users. For instance, consumers actively engaged in discussions by responding to questions posed by others. This interaction not only enriches conversation but also aids in spreading information, clarifying misconceptions, and potentially influencing attitudes towards the green ads and the issues they address. Overall, these platforms serve as a vibrant space for discussion and interaction, where consumers not only react to the ads themselves but also engage with each other, sharing opinions, offering support, and participating in meaningful dialogues. This environment allows for a deeper understanding of public sentiment and provides insight into consumer behavior and preferences regarding green advertising and related social issues.

In the dataset, alongside consumers engaging in positive interactions, there are also instances of consumers criticizing other commentators. The nature and reasons for these criticisms vary: (1) criticism for being uninformed or wrong; (2) judgment on general cultural knowledge; (3) views on tap vs. bottled water; (4) misleading comments and misinterpretation of ads; and (5) critique of proposed solutions. Some consumers heavily criticized others for being uninformed or holding incorrect opinions. A particular point of contention was the perceived failure of other commentators to recognize the importance of water conservation for a sustainable future. Comments also targeted the perceived lack of general cultural knowledge among other commentators, suggesting a broader critique of their understanding and awareness of environmental issues. Criticisms also extended to opinions about tap water and bottled water, with some consumers judging others based on their preferences and views in this context. Commentators were also criticized for posting misleading comments, misinterpreting the real message of the ads, or being overly sympathetic to the brands' viewpoint. Some consumers who suggested solutions to environmental problems highlighted in the ads also faced criticism. These solutions were sometimes deemed environmentally unfriendly or harmful to other living beings. Additionally, there was skepticism about the feasibility of these solutions, with some critics believing that societal laziness and apathy toward pro-environmental actions would hinder their implementation.

### Society-Related Comments

Criticisms regarding society's approach to sustainability were centered on the difference between attitudes and behaviors regarding sustainability. Specifically, there were critiques of society's negative

attitudes toward the importance and value of water. The society was criticized in several aspects. First, they were criticized for wasting water through their actions and practices in their daily lives. Second, it was claimed that society acts selfishly and wastefully, without regard for environmental impacts. Third, some segments of society were criticized for their skepticism or outright criticism of environmental movements and initiatives. Fourth, they were criticized due to their reluctance to change their behaviors unless there are punitive measures in place like increases in prices. Fifth, they were criticized due to their judgmental attitudes, particularly in terms of judging dishwashing practices, and assuming knowledge. Members of society were criticized for their judgmental views towards those who do not pre-rinse dishes before putting them in the dishwasher, implying a lack of meticulousness. Additionally, in terms of assuming knowledge, some were criticized due to the societal attitudes where individuals act as though they know everything, often refusing to admit their lack of knowledge on certain issues. These criticisms highlight a perceived gap between societal attitudes and actions, especially regarding environmental issues, and a tendency towards judgmental and know-it-all behaviors. They reflect a broader commentary on societal norms and values, and suggest a need for more education, awareness, and genuine commitment to sustainability and respectful discourse.

Alongside their critiques of society, consumers also offered environmental suggestions to the public, paralleling their brand-oriented advice. These suggestions highlight a proactive approach to environmental conservation and responsible consumer behavior. Environmental suggestions include 'saving water', 'using organic and natural products', 'sensitivity to ad themes', 'taking actions', and 'supporting afforestation efforts':

- *Saving water:* Consumers suggested innovative ways to re-use water, like using water from washing machines for toilet flushing, or repurposing water used for washing fruits to water plants. These ideas emphasize practical methods for conserving water in daily life (Authors' Own Thematic Classification).
- *Using organic and natural products:* There was encouragement to switch to organic and natural cleaning alternatives, such as vinegar, soap, and baking soda, instead of chemical-laden detergents. This suggestion reflects a growing consumer interest in environmentally friendly and health-conscious lifestyle choices (Authors' Own Thematic Classification).
- *Sensitivity to ad themes:* Consumers were encouraged to be more attentive and responsive to the environmental issues highlighted in ads, suggesting a need for greater public engagement and awareness regarding these issues (Authors' Own Thematic Classification).
- *Taking actions:* There was a call for active participation in environmental conservation efforts, indicating a desire for more collective action and responsibility in addressing environmental challenges (Authors' Own Thematic Classification).
- *Supporting afforestation efforts:* Encouraging support for tree planting and forest conservation initiatives reflects a broader understanding of the importance of ecosystems in environmental health (Authors' Own Thematic Classification).

In terms of brand-oriented suggestions, consumers expressed divergent views. Some pro-brand suggestions endorse the advertiser brand, driven by the satisfaction with its products. This indicates a segment of consumers who value the brands' offerings and encourage their use. Other opposite suggestions were critical of the advertiser brand, citing poor product quality and the use of animals in product testing as reasons. These criticisms reflect consumer concerns about ethical practices and product standards. These diverse suggestions from consumers showcase a multifaceted approach to environmental responsibility, encompassing both personal lifestyle changes and broader consumer behavior towards brands.

## Government-Related Comments

The criticisms addressed the environmental policies and penal policies. In terms of environmental policies, criticisms focused on several key issues, including the construction of hydroelectric power plants, privatization of natural resources, neglect of natural resource depletion, insufficient support for environmental projects, and a lack of public awareness campaigns. Additionally, concerns raised in terms of penal policies included the absence of effective penalty policies to prevent water wastage

in agriculture, penalizing brands engaged in environmental projects, and perceived unfairness in penalizing illegal electricity use.

As a response to these criticisms, the consumers provided some suggestions for policy improvements in the scope of environmental policies, pricing and taxation policies, and education policies. The suggestions in terms of environmental policies focused on water issues and plastic bags. Suggestions for water issues included encouraging the use of purified seawater, mandating drip irrigation in agriculture, restricting water supply from lakes, and promoting the widespread adoption of brand-led environmental projects. Additionally, a regulatory suggestion to halt the production and consumption of plastic bags aims at reducing environmental waste and fostering sustainability. In terms of pricing and taxation policies, adjustments such as increased water prices and reducing VAT on washing machines and dishwashers are proposed to incentivize environmentally friendly practices. Last, there was a call for integration of environmental protection topics into national education curricula, emphasizing the importance of environmental education from a young age.

## Conclusion

Consistent with the insights of Amoako et al. (2022) and Gu et al. (2022), our findings highlight the challenges brands face in maintaining credibility in their green advertising. Consumer skepticism towards perceived greenwashing and the demand for authentic environmental commitment reflect the need for transparency in environmental campaigns, as emphasized by Rathee and Milfeld (2023). The study also revealed a significant consumer focus on product quality and ethical production practices, echoing concerns raised in the literature about the impact of green marketing on product perceptions and consumer trust (Jones et al. 2016; Rathee and Milfeld 2023). The critical feedback and suggestions from consumers indicate a desire for more organic, biodegradable products and a move away from harmful production practices, resonating with the global shift towards sustainable consumption and corporate social responsibility (Brundtland 1987; Voola et al. 2022b).

Moreover, the observed consumer engagement in the form of suggestions and inquiries about brand practices and campaign effectiveness mirrors the increasing consumer involvement in environmental discourse, as noted by various researchers (Galan-Ladero and Alves 2023). This engagement reflects a broader societal shift towards environmental consciousness and the role of consumers in influencing brand strategies and advertising strategies. Integrating Maciejewski and Lesznik (2022) insights with our study highlights the necessity of educating society, especially younger demographics, about the multifaceted goals of sustainable development. The consumer feedback on social media reflects a sophisticated understanding of sustainability, aligning with the need for targeted digital campaigns. Since such campaigns are distributed via social media platforms, some untargeted users may reach these campaigns, and some users who do not pay expected interest in the sustainability issue may react to the campaigns in an undesired manner or may surprisingly act favorably. This study also reinforces the idea that there is an urgent need of designing and enforcing education programs nationwide. Furthermore, the concept of dilution effect, as discussed in the literature, can be linked to the findings of our study. This effect suggests that the impact of green advertising may be diluted when consumers perceive a mismatch between a brand's environmental claims and its actual practices. In our study, consumer feedback indicated skepticism towards brands' environmental campaigns, particularly when they felt these campaigns were not backed by genuine, sustainable actions. This skepticism reflects the dilution of the perceived authenticity and effectiveness of green advertising, highlighting the importance for brands to ensure alignment between their marketing and advertising messages and real-world environmental practices to maintain credibility and consumer trust.

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**Conceptualization:** Aydoğan. **Design:** Aydoğan **Data Collection / Processing:** Aydoğan. **Analysis / Interpretation:** Aydoğan & Oruç. **Literature Review:** Oruç. **Writing:** Aydoğan, Oruç.

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## Summary

*This study aims to analyze the consumer responses to the green advertising campaign shared especially on social media platforms in the context of the transformations observed in the consumer behavior and marketing strategies in recent years when the environmental problems have shown an incredible increase. The rapid economic growth and increasing consumption habits both have triggered environmental corruption; this has brought up the brands' trends towards sustainable production and social responsibility practices. As a developing country, Türkiye serves as a key player in this transformation. Especially the vital role of the social media platforms in the distribution of green advertising campaigns is of great importance for Türkiye, the focus of this study. In this regard, this study conducted a thematic analysis on a total of 629 consumer comments for two green advertising campaign films shared on YouTube, Instagram, and X. The campaigns are Finish's "Tomorrow's Water" and Cif's "Beautiful When Clean" green advertising projects, which won Effie Türkiye awards. While Finish's campaign focuses on the water scarcity, Cif's campaign aims to make contribution to city aesthetics and the cleaning up of the waste on the sea surface. Both campaigns contain social messages aligned with sustainability goals of the brands and aspire to the association of brand values with environmental responsibilities.*

*The user comments were extracted from Instagram via web scraper plug-ins, from YouTube via MAXQDA 2020, and manually from X, and were examined through Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis on MAXQDA 2020. Five themes emerged from data analysis: 1) Brand-related comments, 2) Ad-related comments, 3) Commenter-related comments, 4) Society-related comments, and 5) Government-related comments.*

*Both brands were praised by many commenters for their environmentally friendly approaches. However, they faced intense criticism because of the low product quality, high pricing policies, inefficient communication strategies, and insincerity. The commenters questioned whether the brands' environmentalist rhetoric aligned with their commercial concerns; besides, they directed criticisms to brands for the issues like product inefficiency, chemical contents, and animal testing. Furthermore, they made various suggestions for brands such as the proliferation of campaigns, price reductions, organic product development, and the distribution of support to countries like Africa which suffer from water scarcity.*

*Ad-related comments included both positive and negative opinions of the commenters. While some commenters expressed their appreciation of advertising films for their successful use of music, storytelling and casting and for their efforts to raise awareness towards environmental issues, some others criticized the campaigns for the inclusion of insincere messages, dramatic exaggerations, contradictory images of water waste, and inadequate information. Moreover, the ad songs evoked both positive and engaging comments.*

*The commenter-related comments demonstrated that the interactions among the social media users were strong. On the one hand, the commenters who displayed environmental sensitivity were supported. On the other hand, negative reactions were directed at the commenters who misled, made contradictory suggestions, or misunderstood the criticisms. These interactions signaled the development of social awareness and public discussion toward green advertising campaigns.*

*The comments included both society-related and government-related aspects. In the society-related comments, it was observed that the commenters expressed their discontent about the society's indifference to water waste, selfish behavior, skeptical attitudes toward environmental initiatives and lack of knowledge about environmental issues. In addition, these comments underlined the need for leading society to take environmentally friendly actions such as water saving, natural product use, sensitivity to green advertising campaigns, and planting saplings. The government-related comments encompassed topics like criticisms for environmental policies, penal systems, and education policies, while these comments addressed some suggestions such as initiatives for the preservation of water resources, incentives for drip irrigation, bans on plastic bags, regulations on water pricing, and development of curricula for raising environmental awareness.*

*To conclude, this study reveals that the trust issues that the green advertising campaigns face in the eyes of the consumers should be associated with their greenwashing perceptions and concerns about the product quality. The comments demonstrated that consumers consider advertising campaigns as not just a tool of marketing, but also as tools which have the potential of shaping the public's environmental sensitivity. Moreover, such social media campaigns support the active participation of consumers and the enhancement of public discussion while increasing the levels of education, awareness and consciousness in terms of environmental issues. This study makes significant contributions to the understanding of the relationship between advertising and sustainability by the thematic analysis of social media comments made for green advertising campaigns which address some of the key sustainable development goals such as SDG 6, 11, 12, and 14.*