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Corporate Strategies and Youth Perception of Sustainability Commitment

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Abstract

Corporate sustainability has emerged as a critical strategic imperative for organizations seeking to mitigate their environmental impacts amid escalating climate pressures and growing stakeholder demands. This study examines corporate strategies aimed at reducing environmental footprints—including circular economy models, energy efficiency measures, and digitalization—and investigates how young adults perceive and evaluate corporate sustainability commitments, with particular emphasis on greenwashing skepticism. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was administered to 150 university students and young professionals aged 18–25 years in Spain. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and linear regression to examine the influence of prior sustainability knowledge, academic background, age, and sectoral context on perceived corporate sustainability commitment, greenwashing perception, and willingness to consume sustainable products. The findings reveal that prior sustainability knowledge significantly and positively predicts higher evaluations of corporate environmental commitment, while age and academic background—particularly among students in Economics and Business—are associated with heightened greenwashing skepticism. Perceived corporate sustainability commitment is found to exert a significant positive influence on sustainable consumption intention, and production-intensive sectors are consistently perceived as more environmentally harmful than service-oriented industries. These findings underscore the importance of transparent, credible, and verifiable sustainability strategies in building legitimacy and trust among younger generations, and contribute to the growing literature on stakeholder perceptions of corporate environmental responsibility.

Keywords: corporate sustainability; greenwashing perception; sustainable consumption; youth perception; young consumers; corporate social responsibility; environmental impact reduction; ESG

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1. Introduction

The accelerating degradation of the natural environment and the increasing severity of climate change have positioned sustainability at the forefront of contemporary economic and managerial debates. Corporations occupy a pivotal role in this context, given that their production processes and service activities are responsible for a substantial share of global resource consumption, waste generation, and greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, firms face increasing pressure from regulators, investors, consumers, and society at large to adopt strategies that reduce their environmental footprint while maintaining economic viability [1,2].

In recent years, corporate sustainability has evolved from a predominantly voluntary or reputational practice into a central strategic dimension of organizational management [3,4]. Regulatory frameworks, investor expectations, and rising consumer awareness have driven firms to integrate environmental criteria into their decision-making processes. Strategies such as circular economy models, energy efficiency initiatives, digitalization, and responsible resource management are widely recognized as effective mechanisms for reducing environmental impact. However, the implementation and effectiveness of these strategies remain uneven across industries and firms, often depending on organizational capabilities, leadership commitment, and strategic coherence.

Despite the growing adoption of sustainability initiatives, public skepticism toward corporate environmental claims has intensified. The increasing prevalence of greenwashing—defined as the use of misleading, exaggerated, or unsubstantiated claims regarding environmental performance [5,6]—poses a significant challenge to corporate credibility and stakeholder trust [7,8]. This phenomenon is particularly salient among younger generations, who tend to combine high environmental awareness with critical attitudes toward corporate communication.

Young adults constitute a key stakeholder group due to their dual role as current consumers and future economic decision makers [9,10]. While existing research suggests that younger generations place strong value on sustainability [11,12], it also indicates that they are increasingly cautious about the authenticity of corporate environmental strategies [13,14]. Factors such as age, academic background, and prior sustainability knowledge appear to shape how young adults evaluate corporate commitment and distinguish between substantive environmental practices and symbolic actions.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze corporate strategies for reducing environmental impact in production and service activities and to examine how young adults perceive corporate sustainability commitments, with particular emphasis on greenwashing concerns. By adopting a quantitative empirical approach, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between corporate sustainability strategies and stakeholder perception, thereby addressing an important gap in the existing literature [15–17].

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Corporate Sustainability and Environmental Impact Reduction Strategies

Corporate sustainability is broadly understood as the systematic integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations into organizational strategy and operations [3,4]. From a strategic standpoint, sustainability enables firms to align long-term value creation with environmental responsibility, thereby strengthening competitive positioning and organizational resilience. A growing body of literature demonstrates that firms adopting proactive environmental strategies are better positioned to achieve operational efficiency gains, foster innovation, and accrue reputational benefits [1,2].

Key corporate strategies aimed at reducing environmental impact include the adoption of circular economy principles, optimization of production processes, digitalization of service delivery, and the use of renewable energy sources. Circular economy models promote resource efficiency through recycling, reuse, and product redesign, reducing dependency on finite resources [15]. Similarly, digitalization enables firms to minimize material consumption and improve energy efficiency, particularly in service-based industries [16,17].

However, the successful implementation of these strategies is contingent upon organizational factors such as financial resources, technological capabilities, and leadership commitment [1,2]. Recent studies also emphasize the role of advanced analytical tools and promise verification techniques to strengthen the credibility of sustainability claims [16,17].

2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility and Greenwashing Perception

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) provides a conceptual framework for understanding firms' environmental commitments beyond economic performance [3,4]. CSR-oriented firms are expected to act transparently, minimize negative externalities, and contribute to sustainable development. Empirical evidence suggests that effective CSR practices enhance corporate legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and consumer loyalty [1,2].

Nevertheless, inconsistencies between corporate communication and actual environmental performance may lead to perceptions of greenwashing. Greenwashing undermines stakeholder confidence and can generate reputational damage, particularly among environmentally conscious consumers [5,6]. The literature identifies greenwashing as a critical risk associated with sustainability communication, especially in contexts characterized by information asymmetry and weak verification mechanisms [7,8].

Perception plays a central role in this process, as stakeholders evaluate sustainability not only based on objective performance but also on credibility and transparency. Consequently, understanding how different stakeholder groups interpret corporate sustainability messages is essential for assessing the effectiveness and risks of environmental strategies [18].

2.3. Youth Perception and Sustainable Consumption Behavior

Young consumers have attracted increasing scholarly attention due to their heightened environmental awareness and growing influence on market dynamics [9,10]. Research also highlights the growing concern over greenwashing practices specifically within ESG reporting frameworks [11,12].

At the same time, young people exhibit pronounced skepticism toward corporate environmental claims, particularly when such claims lack transparency or measurable outcomes. Prior studies suggest that demographic and cognitive factors—including age, academic training, and sustainability literacy—significantly influence how young consumers perceive corporate behavior and assess the credibility of sustainability initiatives [13,14].

Moreover, the perception of corporate sustainability has been shown to directly affect consumption behavior. Positive evaluations of environmental commitment are associated with higher purchase intention and brand loyalty, whereas perceptions of greenwashing reduce trust and discourage consumption [19]. These dynamics highlight the strategic importance of aligning sustainability practices with credible communication, especially when targeting younger stakeholders.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study employed to analyze the relationships between young adults' perceptions of corporate sustainability, greenwashing, and their willingness to consume environmentally responsible products and services. A cross-sectional approach was selected because this study aims to capture participants' attitudes and perceptions at a single point in time rather than examining changes over time. This design allows for the identification of patterns and associations among variables, facilitating hypothesis testing regarding the influence of prior sustainability knowledge, academic background, age, and sectoral context on perception and behavior.

The explanatory nature of the research design enables the estimation of predictive relationships between cognitive, demographic, and perceptual variables and consumption-related behavioral intentions through inferential statistical techniques, including analysis of variance (ANOVA) and linear regression models.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of university students and young professionals aged 18–25 years residing in Spain. This group was selected due to its dual role as current consumers and future economic decision makers, as well as its heightened sensitivity to environmental issues.

A non-probabilistic convenience sampling method, complemented with snowball sampling, was employed to reach a diverse sample across various academic disciplines, including Economics, Business, Social Sciences, and Experimental Sciences. The final sample consisted of n = 150 participants, which is considered sufficient for conducting ANOVA and linear regression analyses, providing robust statistical power for exploratory and explanatory purposes.

3.3. Instrument Development

A structured online questionnaire was developed specifically for this study. The design of the instrument was informed by an extensive review of the literature on corporate sustainability, corporate social responsibility (CSR), greenwashing, and sustainable consumption. The questionnaire contained 13 items, including:

1. Sociodemographic questions (age, gender, academic background).
2. Items assessing prior sustainability knowledge.
3. Likert-scale questions (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) evaluating perceived corporate sustainability commitment, perception of greenwashing, and willingness to consume sustainable products and services.
4. Open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights and additional perspectives on corporate environmental practices.

To ensure clarity, consistency, and content validity, the questionnaire underwent a three-step development process: identification of relevant constructs, adaptation of validated items from prior studies, and semantic and conceptual review by academic experts. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms, allowing anonymity, ease of access, and automatic data recording.

3.4. Procedure and Data Collection

Participants received the survey link through academic and professional networks, including university WhatsApp groups and email lists. To minimize social desirability bias, respondents were informed that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

The survey remained open for 14 days, during which reminders were sent to encourage participation. Each participant could submit only one response per device, ensuring the integrity and reliability of the data.

3.5. Variables and Operationalization

The study examined the following variables (Table 1):
Dependent Variables

- Perceived Corporate Sustainability Commitment (PCSC): Measured using a five-point Likert scale assessing participants' evaluation of the credibility, coherence, and effectiveness of companies' environmental initiatives.
- Perceived Greenwashing (PGW): Measured through Likert-scale items capturing skepticism toward corporate sustainability communication.
- Willingness to Consume Sustainably (WCS): Measured as participants' intention to support environmentally responsible products and services.

Independent Variables

- Prior Sustainability Knowledge (PSK): Assessed dichotomously (yes/no) and complemented by self-evaluated familiarity with sustainability concepts.
- Age: Categorized into two groups (18–21 and 22–25).
- Academic Background: Classified as Economics and Business, Social Sciences, and Experimental Sciences.
- Sectoral Context: Evaluated through perceived environmental impact differences between production-intensive and service-oriented sectors.

Table 1. Variables and operationalization.

Scale	Measurement	Type	Variable
Likert 1–5	Evaluation of corporate environmental initiatives and commitment	Dependent	Perceived Corporate Sustainability Commitment (PCSC)
Likert 1–5	Skepticism toward corporate sustainability claims	Dependent	Perceived Greenwashing (PGW)
Likert 1–5	Intention to support sustainable products and services	Dependent	Willingness to Consume Sustainably (WCS)
Dichotomous (Yes/No)	Self-reported knowledge of sustainability concepts	Independent	Prior Sustainability Knowledge (PSK)
18–21/22–25	Respondent age group	Independent	Age
Categorical	Field of academic training	Independent	Academic Background
Categorical	Perceived environmental impact by sector	Independent	Sectoral Context

3.6. Hypotheses and Analytical Framework

Based on the theoretical framework and existing literature, the study tested the following hypotheses:

H1: *Prior sustainability knowledge positively influences perceived corporate sustainability commitment.*

H2: *Academic background significantly affects perceived corporate sustainability commitment.*

H3: *Age significantly influences the perception of greenwashing.*

H4: *Perceived corporate sustainability commitment positively influences willingness to consume sustainably.*

H5: *Sectoral context significantly affects perceived environmental harm.*

To test these hypotheses, a combination of descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, ANOVA, and linear regression models was employed (Table 2).

Table 2. Hypotheses, variables, and analytical techniques.

Statistical Technique	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Hypothesis
Linear regression	PCSC	Prior Sustainability Knowledge (PSK)	H1
ANOVA	PCSC	Academic Background	H2
ANOVA	PGW	Age	H3
Linear regression	WCS	PCSC	H4
ANOVA	Perceived Environmental Harm	Sectoral Context	H5

3.7. Regression Model Specification

To formally assess predictive relationships between variables, linear regression models were estimated. Linear regression is appropriate given the continuous nature of the dependent variables and the objective of estimating the magnitude and direction of causal relationships.

Model 1: Prior Sustainability Knowledge and Sustainability Perception

where represents the perceived corporate sustainability commitment of an individual, denotes prior sustainability knowledge, is the intercept, captures the effect of sustainability knowledge, and is the error term.

$$PCSC_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot PSK_i + \varepsilon_i$$

This model tests Hypothesis 1.

Model 2: Sustainability Perception and Sustainable Consumption

where denotes willingness to consume sustainably.

$$WCS_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot PCSC_i + \varepsilon_i$$

This model tests Hypothesis 4.

Extended Model with Control Variables

To enhance robustness, age and academic background were incorporated as control variables (Table 3).

Table 3. Regression model overview.

Purpose	Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Model
Test effect of sustainability knowledge on perception	PSK	PCSC	Model 1
Test effect of perception on sustainable consumption	PCSC	WCS	Model 2
Robustness analysis	PCSC, Age, Academic Background	WCS	Extended Model

This specification allows the isolation of the net effect of sustainability perception on consumption intentions while accounting for demographic and educational differences.

3.8. Data Analysis Software and Techniques

Data were analyzed using **IBM SPSS Statistics 28** and **Microsoft Excel 365**. SPSS was used for inferential statistical analyses, including reliability testing, ANOVA, and regression modeling, while Excel supported data cleaning, visualization, and preliminary summaries.

The analytical procedure included:

1. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies).
2. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha.
3. Bivariate correlation analysis.
4. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test group differences (H2, H3, H5).
5. Linear regression analyses to test predictive relationships (H1, H4).

A significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ was adopted for all statistical tests.

3.9. Ethical Considerations and Bias Control

The study adhered to established ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, informed, and anonymous, with no personally identifiable information collected.

Participants were informed of the research objectives and their right to withdraw at any time.

To reduce potential bias, responses were limited to one per device, anonymity was maintained to minimize social desirability bias, and all questionnaire items were neutrally worded to avoid leading responses.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Characteristics

The final sample consisted of 150 participants aged between 18 and 25 years, reflecting a typical distribution of young adults in higher education and early professional stages. The academic composition was predominantly Economics and Business (55%), followed by Social Sciences (25%) and Experimental Sciences (20%), indicating a majority of participants with formal exposure to business and management-related concepts. Approximately 40% of participants reported prior sustainability knowledge, while 60% indicated limited or no familiarity, highlighting substantial variability in environmental literacy that may influence perceptions of corporate sustainability initiatives.

The operationalization of variables and analytical framework guiding the empirical analysis are presented in Tables 1 and 2 in the Methodology section while descriptive statistics of demographic characteristics and sustainability knowledge are summarized in Table 4. The age distribution was balanced, with 52% aged 18–21 and 48% aged 22–25, allowing for meaningful comparison across developmental stages within the young adult population. This age segmentation is consistent with prior research suggesting that environmental awareness and critical evaluation capacity may increase with maturity and exposure to academic or professional experiences [11,19].

Table 4. Sample demographics and sustainability knowledge.

%	*n*	Category	Variable
52%	78	18–21	Age
48%	72	22–25	
55%	82	Economics and Business	Academic background
25%	38	Social Sciences	
20%	30	Experimental Sciences	
40%	60	Yes	Prior sustainability knowledge
60%	90	No	

The academic background distribution further provides insight into the cognitive frameworks shaping participants' evaluations of corporate sustainability. Students from Economics and Business disciplines are more likely to be familiar with concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), ESG reporting, and strategic environmental management, which may explain their higher levels of critical scrutiny toward corporate sustainability claims compared to participants from Social or Experimental Sciences. Participants with limited sustainability knowledge provide a baseline of less informed evaluation, contributing to the heterogeneity of perceptions within the sample.

4.2. Reliability of Measurement Scales

The internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a widely accepted indicator of reliability in survey-based research. All constructs exhibit adequate to high internal consistency, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 [20] (Table 5).

Table 5. Reliability of measurement scales.

Cronbach's α	Construct
0.81	Perceived Corporate Sustainability Commitment (PCSC)
0.76	Perceived Greenwashing (PGW)
0.79	Willingness to Consume Sustainably (WCS)

Note: $\alpha > 0.70$ is considered acceptable [20].

The perceived corporate sustainability commitment (PCSC) scale demonstrates strong internal coherence ($\alpha = 0.81$), indicating consistency among items measuring perceptions of corporate environmental effort and authenticity. The perceived greenwashing (PGW) scale also exhibits acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.76$), suggesting a stable measurement of skepticism toward corporate sustainability communication. Similarly, the willingness to consume sustainably (WCS) scale shows solid internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.79$).

These reliability results support the validity of the constructs used in the ANOVA tests and linear regression models specified in Section 3.7, confirming that the measurement instruments are suitable for subsequent inferential analyses.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing and Regression Results

To facilitate interpretation of the empirical findings, Table 6 summarizes the statistical tests conducted to evaluate the proposed hypotheses.

Table 6. Summary of hypothesis testing results.

Decision	*p*-Value	Test Statistic	Statistical Method	Relationship Tested	Hypothesis
Supported	<0.01	β = 0.32	Linear regression	Prior sustainability knowledge → Perceived corporate sustainability commitment	H1
Supported	<0.05	F = 3.15	ANOVA	Academic background → Perceived corporate sustainability commitment	H2
Supported	<0.05	F = 4.27	ANOVA	Age → Perception of greenwashing	H3
Supported	<0.01	β = 0.43	Linear regression	Perceived corporate sustainability commitment → Willingness to consume sustainably	H4
Supported	<0.05	—	ANOVA	Sectoral context → Perceived environmental harm	H5

The results confirm that young adults' perceptions of corporate sustainability are shaped by a combination of cognitive, demographic, academic, behavioral, and sectoral factors, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of sustainability perception.

The confirmation of **H1**, based on Model 1, highlights the critical role of prior sustainability knowledge in shaping perceptions of corporate environmental commitment. Participants with higher levels of sustainability literacy reported significantly higher evaluations of corporate sustainability commitment ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that sustainability knowledge enhances individuals' ability to critically assess corporate environmental strategies and distinguish substantive initiatives from symbolic or superficial actions. From a theoretical perspective, this result supports cognitive-based models of consumer evaluation, which posit that informed stakeholders apply more rigorous evaluative criteria when assessing corporate responsibility.

The support for **H2** indicates that academic background significantly influences perceived corporate sustainability commitment. Participants from Economics and Business disciplines exhibited higher levels of critical scrutiny compared to those from Social or Experimental Sciences ($F = 3.15$, $p < 0.05$). This finding reflects the role of disciplinary socialization, as business-oriented education often emphasizes corporate governance, strategic CSR, performance measurement, and sustainability reporting. Consequently, sustainability perception appears to be partially constructed through educational exposure and analytical training.

Regarding **H3**, the analysis reveals that age significantly affects the perception of greenwashing ($F = 4.27$, $p < 0.05$). Participants aged 22–25 demonstrated greater skepticism toward corporate sustainability communication than those aged 18–21. This result suggests that even within a relatively narrow age range, increased maturity and consumer experience contribute to heightened critical evaluation of corporate claims, aligning with prior studies linking experience to skepticism toward marketing-driven sustainability narratives [21–24].

The confirmation of **H4**, supported by Model 2, underscores the behavioral relevance of sustainability perception. A strong and positive relationship was observed between perceived corporate sustainability commitment and willingness to consume sustainably ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$). This finding provides empirical evidence that credible sustainability strategies can generate tangible economic value by influencing consumption intentions. It reinforces the view that sustainability is not merely an ethical or reputational concern, but a strategic factor with direct implications for market behavior among younger consumers.

Finally, the support for **H5** indicates that sectoral context significantly conditions perceptions of environmental harm. Production-intensive sectors were consistently perceived as more environmentally damaging than service-oriented sectors ($p < 0.05$), highlighting the importance of industry-specific expectations. This result suggests that stakeholders evaluate corporate responsibility relative to perceived sectoral impact, implying that firms operating in environmentally intensive industries face higher legitimacy thresholds and greater scrutiny.

4.4. Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Table 7 reports the mean scores and standard deviations for the main perceptual variables measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 7. Mean scores by variable (Likert 1–5).

SD	Mean	Variable
0.68	4.05	Perceived Corporate Sustainability Commitment (PCSC)
0.71	3.42	Perceived Greenwashing (PGW)
0.65	4.12	Willingness to Consume Sustainably (WCS)

The high mean scores for **PCSC (M = 4.05)** and **WCS (M = 4.12)** indicate a generally favorable evaluation of corporate sustainability efforts and a strong willingness among young adults to support environmentally responsible businesses. In contrast, the moderate mean for **PGW (M = 3.42)** suggests persistent skepticism regarding the authenticity of corporate sustainability claims. These descriptive patterns are consistent with the regression results reported in Table 6, reinforcing the robustness of the empirical findings.

4.5. Summary of Findings

The results of this study underscore the multidimensional nature of young adults' perceptions of corporate sustainability and highlight the interplay between sustainability knowledge, academic background, age, behavioral intentions, and sectoral context. Prior sustainability knowledge emerges as a key driver of more critical and discerning evaluations, demonstrating that environmental literacy not only informs understanding but also shapes evaluative judgment and expectations of corporate responsibility.

Academic background further conditions perception, with Economics and Business students exhibiting heightened scrutiny of sustainability claims due to their exposure to governance, CSR, and strategic management frameworks. Age-related differences reveal that even within a narrow cohort, accumulated experience fosters skepticism toward potential greenwashing. Importantly, the positive association between perceived corporate

sustainability commitment and willingness to consume sustainably confirms the economic relevance of credible sustainability strategies. Finally, sectoral differences emphasize the need for context-specific sustainability approaches that align with stakeholder expectations and perceived environmental impact.

Collectively, these findings provide robust empirical evidence that effective corporate sustainability strategies must account for stakeholder heterogeneity and integrate transparency, credibility, and strategic alignment to mitigate greenwashing risks and enhance legitimacy.

5. Discussion

This study investigated how young adults perceive corporate sustainability strategies, with a focus on three central constructs: perceived corporate sustainability commitment (PCSC), perceived greenwashing (PGW), and willingness to consume sustainably (WCS). The empirical analyses demonstrate that prior sustainability knowledge, academic background, age, and sectoral context are significant determinants of these perceptions, thereby revealing the multidimensional nature of young adults' evaluative processes.

Prior sustainability knowledge enhances the evaluation of corporate environmental commitment. Regression results ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$) show that participants with prior exposure to sustainability concepts perceive higher PCSC. This aligns with the literature emphasizing that environmental literacy fosters critical assessment, enabling stakeholders to distinguish genuine sustainability efforts from symbolic actions [7,8]. The PCSC scale exhibited high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.81$, Table 2), confirming the robustness of these measurements.

Academic background also influences perception. ANOVA results ($F = 3.15$, $p < 0.05$) indicate that students in Economics and Business rate PCSC higher than those from Social or Experimental Sciences, likely due to exposure to corporate governance, CSR, and strategic management frameworks. These findings suggest that disciplinary socialization shapes evaluative criteria for corporate sustainability claims.

Age affects the perception of greenwashing. Older participants (22–25 years) reported higher PGW ($F = 4.27$, $p < 0.05$), reflecting greater consumer experience and familiarity with corporate practices. Descriptive statistics show moderate PGW scores ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating persistent skepticism among young adults, even in the presence of credible sustainability initiatives.

Perceived corporate sustainability commitment positively predicts WCS ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$, Table 3). Participants demonstrated high WCS ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.65$, Table 4), suggesting that authentic sustainability initiatives can influence behavioral intentions, foster brand loyalty, and generate tangible economic benefits.

Sectoral context significantly conditions perceptions of environmental harm (H5, Table 3), with production-intensive sectors perceived as more damaging than service-oriented sectors [5]. This is consistent with recent bibliometric analyses showing the centrality of greenwashing in sustainability research and the need for more robust verification methods [9,10,12].

These findings collectively indicate that effective corporate sustainability requires a multidimensional approach, integrating environmental performance, transparent communication, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with organizational goals. Young stakeholders are sensitive to discrepancies between corporate discourse and actual practices, emphasizing the strategic importance of reducing PGW while enhancing PCSC and WCS.

Practical Implications

1. Educational Initiatives and Stakeholder Engagement: Firms should enhance environmental literacy to improve stakeholder evaluations of sustainability.
2. Strategy-Practice Alignment: Ensuring coherence between corporate commitments and actual practices reduces perceived greenwashing.
3. Transparent Reporting: Implement verifiable reporting standards to strengthen credibility.
4. Tailored Communication: Adapt messages to stakeholder characteristics, including age, academic background, and prior sustainability knowledge, to maximize WCS.

6. Conclusions

This study makes a meaningful contribution to the corporate sustainability literature by bridging the analysis of environmental strategies with the examination of stakeholder perception among young adults. The results confirm that prior sustainability knowledge, academic background, and age are significant determinants of how young adults evaluate corporate sustainability commitments and their susceptibility to perceiving greenwashing.

From a theoretical perspective, the study underscores that implementation alone is insufficient; stakeholder interpretation determines credibility and strategic impact. Practically, firms must implement coherent, transparent, and measurable sustainability practices, supported by internal training, stakeholder engagement, and third-party verification. Tailoring communication to young adults can maximize both ethical and economic outcomes.

Limitations include the non-probabilistic sampling, limiting generalizability, and the cross-sectional design, constraining causal inference. Future research should expand sample sizes, incorporate longitudinal and cross-cultural designs, and explore organizational factors such as leadership, governance, and innovation capacity in shaping sustainability perception.

In summary, corporate sustainability represents not only a response to environmental challenges but also a strategic opportunity to strengthen societal relationships. Understanding young adults' perceptions enables firms to develop credible, responsible, and socially aligned business models, fostering environmental and economic value.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed at the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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