



Aalto University  
School of Business

Mikkeli Campus

## IMPACT OF GREENWASHING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND PURCHASE INTENT IN THE FOOD SECTOR

Study the impact of greenwashing on consumer perception and purchase intent towards green marketing and the effect that green knowledge has on these variables.

Niklas Paasilta

International Business  
Bachelor's Thesis  
Supervisor: Mirjaliisa Charles  
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**Author:** Niklas Paasilta  
**Title of thesis:** Impact of greenwashing on consumer behaviour and purchase intent in the food sector

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**Supervisor:** Mirjaliisa Charles

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of this study were to study the effects that greenwashing has on consumers' decision making and perceptions towards green food products and companies. The study will also aim to explore the effect that green knowledge has on and perceived greenwashing and green purchase intent.

### **Summary**

Literature on types of greenwashing and the effect on consumer perceptions and purchase intent was reviewed. Based on the literature review questions were then formulated for the participants. This study focuses on Finnish students who purchase food for themselves. The research was done through group discussions and interviews and were qualitative in nature. The results were then analyzed to answer three research questions aimed at answering the research objectives.

### **Conclusions**

The study revealed that changes in perception towards a company due to greenwashing depend on the type of greenwashing. However, this does not necessarily lead to negative purchase intent towards these companies. It was found that if there is a lack of alternatives perceived greenwashing will have little to no effect on the purchase intent towards the greenwashing company. In addition, green knowledge was found to have inconsequential effects on consumer purchase intent towards a greenwashing company.

**Key words:** *Greenwashing, Food Industry, Green Consumer Behavior, Green Purchase intentions, Green Marketing*

**Language:** English

**Grade:**

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# 1. Introduction

We are living in times of rising concern over the preservation of the environment. Issues such as deforestation, global warming and pollution have become important societal issues that people want something done about. As a result, global markets for sustainable products have been growing rapidly over the last few decades. According to a recent survey 83% of their respondents think it is important that companies design products that can be recycled or reused. In the same study 72% respondents stated that they are currently buying more environmentally friendly products than they were 5 years ago and 81% expect to buy more in the next 5 years (Accenture.com, 2019). This demand from consumers for companies to be more ecological is one of the main drivers for the increase in green advertising and CSR that we have witnessed. However, the number of false claims related to firm's environmental performance has also skyrocketed and has thus led to greenwashing (De Jong et al., 2017).

The food sector is no exception when it comes to these market trends. Food production and consumption is a major factor of the deterioration of the environment we see today (Garnett, 2008) and consumers want to see something done. Therefore, many food companies have felt the need to implement environmentally friendly programs; however, many companies have also used this to cover up their environmentally destructive practices.

## 1.1 Research problem

There has been a lot of study of the effects that greenwashing has on consumers perception of greenwashing companies and products. Most literature agrees that when greenwashing is discovered it has negative consequences on the consumers' behavioral intentions and attitudes towards the brand and company (Atkinson & Kim, 2014; Chen & Chang, 2013; Parguel et al. 2011; De Jong et al., 2017). However, many of the studies don't take different types of greenwashing into account, it looks at it as a dichotomy of there either is greenwashing or its absent. On top of this, what it still often debated is the effect that greenwashing has on consumer purchase intent and the magnitude of these effects on the greenwashing company. Thus, there is a

clear research gap when it comes to the effect that different situations of greenwashing have on consumer perception and purchase intent towards these companies.

There have also been some studies done on the effect role that green product knowledge has on green purchase intent (intention to buy green products). Green product knowledge being the subjective knowledge that consumers have on the environmental attributes and impacts of green products (Wang et al., 2019). There has also been quite a lot of debate on the matter, however. Some studies have found that green product knowledge is a necessary precondition for green purchase intent (Kanchanapibul et al., 2014; Newton et al., 2015). However, many studies disagree with this (Liobikienė et al., 2016; Wheeler et al., 2013; Zhao et al., 2014). Green product knowledge being the extent to which consumers know about the products attributes, health effects, and the environmental benefits that purchasing the product will result in (Leire and Thidell, 2005). Thus, this area of greenwashing thus requires some more research, especially in Finland as such studies have not been conducted.

This thesis aims to fill this research gap by studying young Finnish consumers who purchase their own food.

## **1.2 Research objectives**

The main objective of this study is to research the role that greenwashing has on customers' decision making and overall perceptions towards green products and companies. This study will also want to better understand the effect that green knowledge of the consumer has on the decision making and perceptions. These objectives are reflected in the research questions.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How do different situations of perceived greenwashing by food companies affect consumer perception of green food companies?
2. How does perceived greenwashing affect consumer' purchase intent of green food products?
3. How does green knowledge affect consumer reaction to perceived greenwashing and green purchase intent?

## **2. Literature Review**

This section explores the literature and further explains the research questions. It also suggests what could be expected with the consumer research results that'll be discussed later in the thesis.

### **2.1 Definitions**

Greenwashing was defined as “the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.” by TerraChoice (2010) and Greenpeace. However, there is no consensus among researchers when it comes to the definition of greenwashing and there is some variance. However, most research papers define greenwashing along the same lines as Greenpeace and TerraChoice (2010). For example, Delmas and Burbano (2011: 65) define greenwashing as “...the intersection of two firm behaviours: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance.”

Some definitions have also included social factors in their definitions of greenwashing, for example use of child labour and poor working conditions (Lyon and Maxwell, 2011). However, this review will not focus on these definitions to keep the research within the scope and timeframe of the thesis process.

Jones (2019: 16) also adds that "...greenwashing is not merely a matter of deceptive claims-making." It's mainly about distraction. The purpose of greenwashing is to divert consumer attention from environmental problems and make consumers overestimate their ability to make environmental changes (Jones, 2019).

**2.2 Types of greenwashing and models**

When it comes to the different greenwashing techniques that companies employ Lyon and Montgomery (2015) offer the most comprehensive list of techniques. They had peer-reviewed and synthesised 34 greenwashing publications from 1990 to 2013 and compiled the main varieties of greenwashing based on this.

These are very similar to the widely cited TerraChoice's (2010) seven "Sins of Greenwashing", where TerraChoice took a similar approach to attempting to categorize and explain the different greenwashing techniques employed by companies. Jones (2019) made a useful adaptation of these two definitions as it simplifies and makes them clearer.

Varieties of Greenwash

Technique	Definition	Examples
Selective disclosure	Selectively disclosing positive attributes while keeping related negative attributes out of public view	Firm discloses GHG emissions to seem "transparent" but fails to reduce carbon footprint
Empty green claims and policies	Companies make promises/ commitments that they fail to live up to	Firm makes environmental promises as a way to impress consumers and investors while not following up with actions
Dubious certifications and labels	Certifications and labels typically run by third parties that may be misleading	In-house labels and weak third-party labels make the firm seem greener than it is
Co-opted NGO endorsements and partnerships	Nonprofit organizations partner with the company to grant legitimacy to its efforts	Firms use well-regarded NGOs (e.g., Greenpeace) to legitimate "green" product lines
Ineffective public voluntary programs	Government sponsored voluntary programs can lead to little or no actual improvements	Firms late to join the EPA's Climate Leaders program did not actually reduce their carbon footprints
Misleading narrative or discourse	Green rhetoric indicates a company's "more enlightened" approach	BP's "beyond petroleum" campaign emphasizing its investments in solar
Misleading visual imagery	Green images and logos indicates a company's "more enlightened" approach	Firms using animals and other nature-related symbols as icons to seem sustainable

Source. Adapted from Thomas P. Lyon and A. Wren Montgomery (2015).  
 Note. NGO = non-governmental organization; GHG = green house gas; EPA = Environmental Protection Agency.

Figure 1: Varieties of Greenwash (adapted from Jones, 2019)  
 Sins of Greenwashing



Technique	Definition	Example
Hidden tradeoff	Focusing on a narrow set of positive attributes when more significant negative impacts go unmentioned	Paper from “sustainably harvested forests” ignores GHG emissions, energy, and so on
No proof	Claims made with no supporting/verifiable evidence	Lists “post-consumer recycled content” with no verification
Vague	Claims so broadly defined or general that they are misunderstood or rendered meaningless	“All natural” can still be quite toxic and isn’t de facto “green”
Irrelevant	Truthful claims that are unimportant or unhelpful to the consumer	“CFC-free” isn’t useful as CFC’s were banned years ago
Lesser of two evils	Claims that may be true about the product but that ignore the destructive practices of the category and/or industry as a whole	Organic cigarettes or more fuel-efficient SUVs are not necessarily “greener” choices
Fibbing/lying	Making claims that are false	Many products claim to be Energy Star certified when they are not
False labels	Utilizing ecolabels that look like independent, third-party verifications but are either controlled by the company itself or that originate from questionable sources	Using their own in-house labels that look like third-party certifications

Source. Adapted from TerraChoice (2010).

Note. GHG = green house gas; CFC = chlorofluorocarbon.

Figure 2: Sins of Greenwashing (adapted from Jones, 2019)

TerraChoice’s (2010) seven “Sins of Greenwashing” as adapted by Jones (2019) has many similarities when it comes to Lyon and Montgomery’s model, such as lack of proof and false labels. However, whereas TerraChoice (2010) as adapted by Jones (2019) more or less expands on the previously mentioned types of deceitful techniques, Lyon and Montgomery (2015) as adapted by Jones (2019) offer more specific types such as the use of NGOs and narrative techniques. Both have their uses; however, Lyon’s and Montgomery’s (2015) as adapted by Jones (2019) model seems to be more comprehensive and thus it seems to be the most appropriate for this thesis. Based on their definitions of greenwashing, mentioned earlier and seven sins of greenwashing, TerraChoice (2010) found, in their widely cited research, that 94.5% of the 5,296 products they analysed had identifiable greenwashing. This would paint a grim picture of the market for the consumer.

However, it could be seen as problematic to view greenwashing as such a dichotomy that it either exists or is absent according to Jones (2019). Jones (2019) argues that greenwashing is more nuanced than this. Jones (2019) states that it would be better to view greenwashing on a scale rather than with a true-false dichotomy, as it would

paint a more realistic and accurate picture of greenwashing in a company or brand. This is something that will be kept in mind when analysing any type of greenwashing.

This same dichotomy can be seen in the models presented by many researchers such as Delmas and Burbano, (2011) and De Jong et al. (2017). The typology used defined organizations based on two dimensions to describe greenwashing. They distinguish between organizations that either greenwash or don't between "vocal" and "silent" firms, forming a four-cell typology.

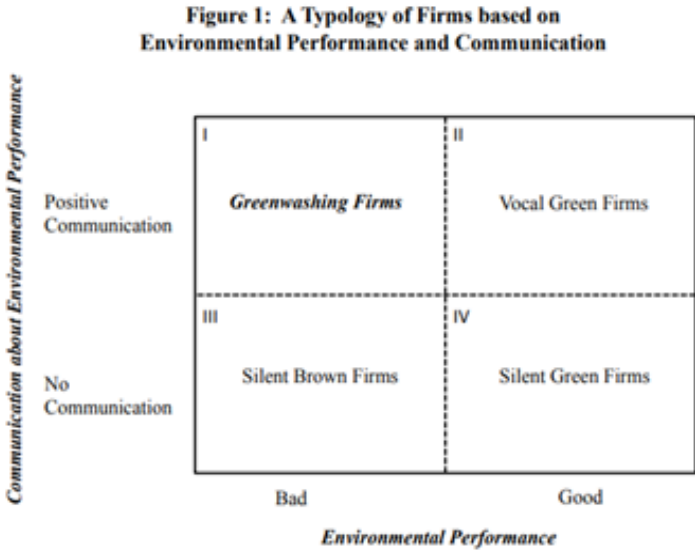


Figure 3: A Typology of Firms based on Environmental Performance and Communication (Delmas and Burbano, 2011)

Jones (2019) would yet again criticise this form of viewing greenwashing, as he thinks it is too simplified. "This is out of sync with the complex narrative techniques that constitute greenwashing and involve sophisticated claims that are exceedingly difficult to establish as, simply, true or false." (Jones, 2019).

However, De Jong et. Al (2017) would agree that "In practice, an organization's environmental performance might not be clearly good or bad". However, they would also argue that this simplification of reality is a good starting point for their quantitative study and is thus necessary and useful. This is why this model will be utilized in the thesis, as it provides a good way to categorize and distinguish between different organizations when it comes to greenwashing.

### **2.3 Greenwashing firms**

This section will analyse the conclusions that researchers have reached when it comes to the effect that greenwashing has on different types of organizations (mainly the ones mentioned in Figure 3). It suggests what can be expected with the consumer research that will be conducted for the thesis. This will be the backbone of the overall exploration of greenwashing as it goes over the literature analysing the effects of green marketing and greenwashing on consumers.

Nyilasy et.al (2013) concluded in their study the different effects that green marketing has on companies with different levels of consumer knowledge on environmental performance. According to the study green advertising lowers consumer brand attitude and purchase intentions towards firms known to have low environmental performance who still practice in green marketing i.e., vocal brown firms. However, these greenwashing firms scored better than the silent brown firms.

This is a rather accepted finding since the literature mostly agrees with the idea that when green washing is discovered it has negative consequences on the consumers' behavioral intentions and attitudes towards the brand and company (Atkinson & Kim, 2014; Chen & Chang, 2013; Parguel et al. 2011; De Jong et al., 2017) .

Lyon and Maxwell (2011) found that the companies which are the likeliest to greenwash are the dirtiest ones. They reasoned that this is because they have little to lose and so will do this for any amount of increase in public perception toward their company or brand. This is in line with Nyilasy et.al (2013) findings as they found that dirty companies running green advertisements saw a slight increase in public perception compared to the ones that ran no advertisements. This is further backed by De Jong et al. (2017) who found that even when consumers are aware that the green information communicated by an organization is not entirely true, they still form more favorable attitudes towards the greenwashing firms than silent brown firms. This explains why so many companies use greenwashing, as this research suggests that they can use it to better consumers perception of their environmental performance.

However, there is still debate on the general effect that these negative attitudes might have for a company. Nyilasy et.al (2013) suggests that these effects might have quite dire consequences and affect the companies negatively. De Jong et al. (2019), however, conclude that greenwashing will have minor positive or inconsequential effects on these 'dirty' companies' green image. As in their study, they found that greenwashing does not affect consumers purchase interests.

## **2.4 Vocal green firms**

Nyilasy et.al (2013) also discovered that there is a small, but significant lowered consumer attitude towards environmentally friendly firms when they conduct green advertising. This contradictory find was explained using attribution theory by Nyilasy et.al (2013:9) "Consumers may start to form negative attributions about the motives of the company, attributing them ulterior motives." In other words, there is an increase in green scepticism, which is scepticism towards green companies, brands, and products.

Lyon and Maxwell (2011) reached a similar conclusion in their earlier study. They stated that companies are becoming reluctant to make even valid green claims, as they fear they might be criticized for this. A recent Finnish consumer study by Drum (2019) also found that over half of Finnish people believe that green marketing by food companies is usually greenwashing. This suggests that there is overall skepticism towards any sort of green advertising and could explain why even responsible companies are coming under fire.

This is an interesting find regarding the research topic as it shows the overall disdain in Finland towards food brands, when it comes to greenwashing. It also provides a good starting ground for research as this raises questions on why these consumers feel this way.

However, even though the methodology of the Drum (2019) study was comprehensive, it is hard to draw conclusions on whether these consumer fears are unfounded or not. As these statistics don't cover how many food companies with products in Finnish stores actually engage in greenwashing.

It could be problematic to use attribution theory to describe consumer behavior in the context of green marketing, as it hasn't been used in many past research papers. Parguel et al. (2011) is one of the few that has utilized attribution theory to describe the effects of greenwashing. However, it is important to consider that attribution theory has been used by many researchers in different areas of consumer research, such as sales and advertising (Folkes 1988; Mizerski et al. 1979). There has also been a lot of research suggesting that attributional processes have an effect in consumer evaluation of a company's overall CSR messaging (Ellen et al. 2006; Swaen and Vanhamme 2004; Yoon et al. 2006). Since green marketing is a part of CSR as a whole, it could be feasible to apply this same explanation to consumer attitudes in green marketing.

However, De Jong et al. (2017) argue that consumer attribution processes are only part of the puzzle. De Jong et al. (2017:11) also argue that since "Attribution theory assumes that consumers believe that a greenwashing organization actually behaves in an environmentally friendly way and only assign different motives to this behavior", that this assumption seems unlikely. Nyilasy et al. (2019) also focused their study on two extremes of a clean company and a company causing an environmental catastrophe. The study was conducted using hypothetical companies with made up environmental performance. This means that consumers were not able to question the truthfulness of the environmental claims made by the company as they were either true or false. This seems like an unrealistic situation in the real world, as greenwashing is often more ambiguous and complicated (De Jong et al., 2017; Jones, 2019). The theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) could be utilized here. It explains that when people are given two conflicting claims about something, they will try to reduce the dissonance that results, meaning that they will choose to either believe the company's claim of greenwashing or not. This seems to be more in line with reality as it is hard for consumers to know whether something if a company is clean or not due to lack of information (Jones, 2019). To back this up, Jones (2019) found in his study that both greenwashing companies and clean companies use the same advertising techniques in their green marketing, so it was impossible for the average consumer do distinguish between the "honest" and "dishonest"

companies. This could partly explain the Drum report (2019) results on Finnish consumers.

Another issue with the use of attribution theory as an explanatory tool is with the interoperation of Nyilasy et al. (2013) findings. Though there is a clear problem that has been discovered with responsible firms having lower brand attitude if they have green advertisements, it is hard to say whether these issues stem from consumers believing that firms that run green advertisements are greenwashing, as Nyilasy et al. (2013) suggests. This is because the study did not conduct qualitative research on the subjects so the reasons for the data are largely left to speculation.

## **2.5 No information firms**

Nyilasy et.al (2013) also concluded in their study that when consumers have no knowledge on a firm's environmental performance, green advertising has significant beneficial consequences for consumer attitude towards the firm.

These results are in line with some other green washing literature on the matter. Parguel et. Al (2011), state that responsible firms that communicate about their responsible activities could be better off by stopping their responsible actions whilst still communicating about them. Lyon and Maxwell (2011) also agree with this. They believe that if you are a green company it's not worth advertising this to consumers, as you may risk being attacked and accused of greenwashing.

Bragging is seen as bad Yoon et. Al (2006) states and can lead to bad consumer perception. However, Yoon et. Al also notes that the source of information matters. The consumer reaction won't most likely be negative if the information about a companies' green activities comes from a neutral source. This is important to note as many studies have only taken into account direct marketing of green activities from the company itself, such as Nyilasy et. Al. (2014).

In critique of this finding De Jong et al. (2017) points out that this sort of situation where consumers have no information on a company's environmental performance is highly unlikely in real life. Accordingly, De Jong et al. (2017) states that no solid indications of these effects can be drawn from the study itself. The study itself leaves

no room for scepticism, which in a realistic situation would complicate the results, as these situations would be more ambiguous to the consumer in real life. However, these results can still offer some insight to nuanced situations where consumers have no or very little knowledge of a firm's environmental behaviour i.e. when buying new products from unknown companies at the supermarket.

Nguyen et al. (2019) also suggest that the frequent use of eco-labels in the food market may in fact cause green consumer scepticism. This goes against the findings of Nyilasy et al. (2013). Consumers are overwhelmed by the number of different eco-labels and due to lack of information lose trust in products with labels altogether, as some labels are known to be false. Nguyen et al. (2019) notes that often, at least in Vietnam, the companies fail to provide any evidence proving they are deserving of the label and thus consumers have to buy products with little to no knowledge. So, Nguyen et al. (2019) suggests that these situations where consumers have little information to work with do in fact take place in real life.

## **2.6 Purchase intent**

It is clear that greenwashing has an effect on the attitudes a consumer has towards an organisation or brand, but what effect does it have on consumer actions? It was mentioned in the earlier sections of this literature review that greenwashing, according to some researchers, has negative effects on consumer purchase intent (Nyilasy et al., 2014). However, this is a point of contention for scholars as De Jong et al. (2017) concluded in their study that greenwashing, in fact, has no significant effect on the purchase intent of consumers. This is further supported by a study by McKinsey & Company global (2007) where they found that out of 7,751 consumers who participated 87% say they are concerned of the environmental and social impacts of the products they purchase. Another study found similar results: 90% of American consumers are concerned about the environmental impacts of their purchases and 75% would consider the environmental effects of the product they are purchasing (Kleiner, 1991). However, in the McKinsey & Company Global (2007) study only 33% say they are ready to buy green products or have already done so. The study argued that this was due the high prices, low availability, and distrust

towards the companies' claims about the greenness of the product by McKinsey & Company global (2007). Even though availability is usually no longer a factor, as it might have been in 2007, this study still resonates the same old attitude that consumers today are likely facing. It is hard to say whether these reasons mentioned are the root cause of why consumers are still not changing their purchase habits despite caring for the environment as research is lacking in this department. Despite the high percentage of people who care for environment, the market share for green products is still relatively low. (Wang et al., 2019)

The overall conclusion drawn from this is that, despite consumers having high concern for the environment when making purchase decisions according to studies, it is not translating into actual purchase behaviour. To put it into other words, having green product knowledge does not lead to green purchase intention (intention to buy green products) (Wang et al., 2019).

The research is still rather inconclusive when it comes to the relationship of green product knowledge and green purchase intent. Some studies have shown that green product knowledge is a necessary precondition for green purchase intent (Kanchanapibul et al., 2014; Newton et al., 2015), whereas some studies have pointed out that this is not necessarily the case (Liobikienė et al., 2016; Wheeler et al., 2013). Some researchers have even found in their studies no significant relationship whatsoever between green purchase intent and green product knowledge (Zhao et al., 2014). However, this study was conducted in China which has vastly different acreage household income and purchase habits so the generalizability to Finnish consumers is limited when it comes to consumer purchase intent. When it comes to greenwashing, it was suggested that consumers with more knowledge on green products would suffer a stronger negative effect of greenwashing than ones with less knowledge (Nguyen et al., 2019). This effect according to Nguyen et al. (2019) may even lead the consumers to stop buying green products overall.

Overall, these findings are not only interesting as they contradict each other, but some of the studies would also suggest that it makes no or little difference whether a



consumer has knowledge on green products when it comes to green purchase intention. Therefore, this area of greenwashing requires more research.

## **2.7 Brand avoidance**

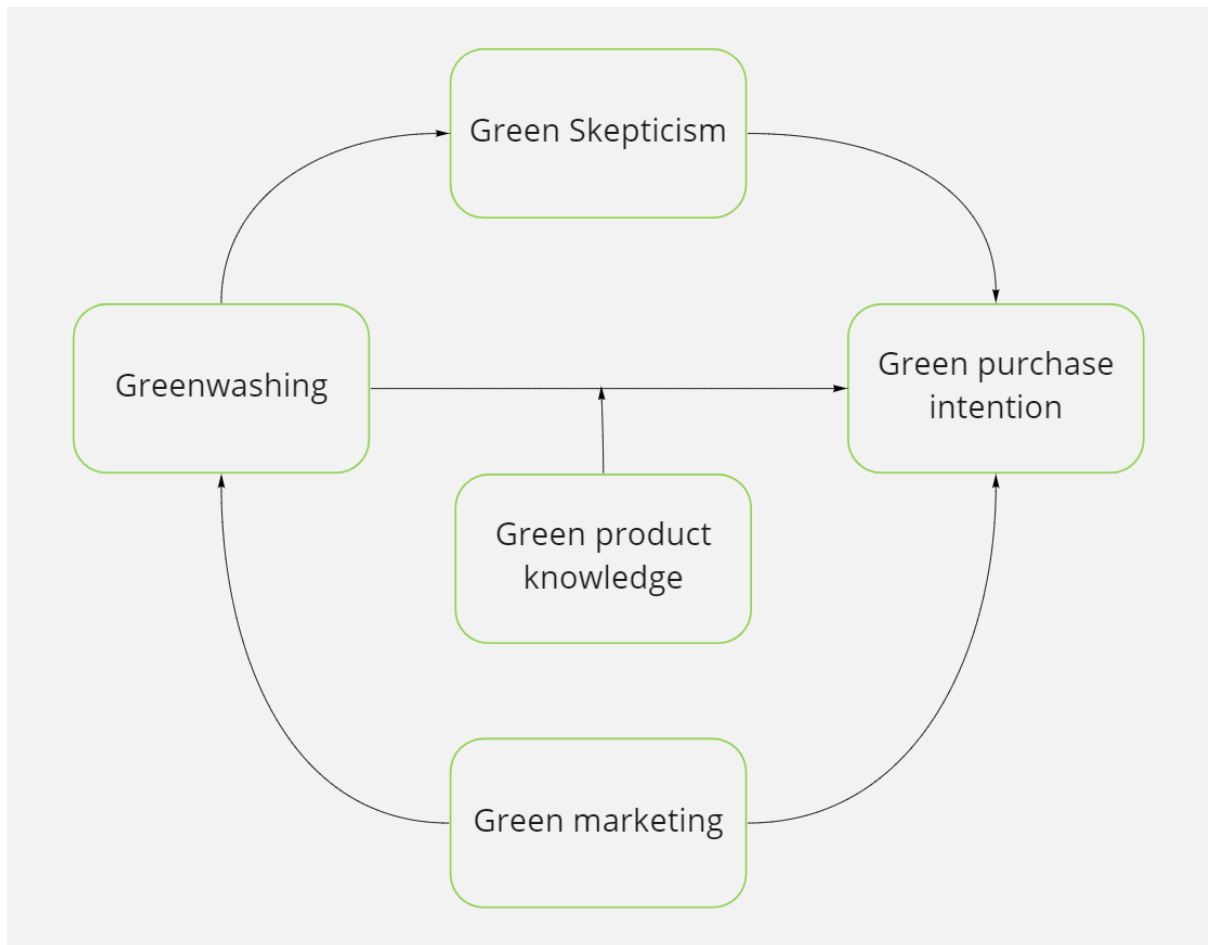
Brand avoidance is when consumers deliberately decide to reject a specific brand (Lee et al., 2009). Lee et al. (2009) argue that when consumers purchase products, they make a comparison between their initial expectations and the performance. Confirmation is likely a result of satisfaction and disconfirmation a result of dissatisfaction. This section will focus on consumer disconfirmation, especially in the case of greenwashing, where expectations of the product don't meet reality, and thus can lead to brand avoidance from the consumer. It is suggested by many scholars that people distance themselves from organizations or simply boycott their products if their values are not in line with the brand's values (Bhattacharya and Elsbach, 2002; Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001). Boycotting a brand meaning a refrain from purchasing products from said brand, whereas brand avoidance can take many forms (Friedman, 1985). Boycotting will have more focus on this thesis as it directly links to negative purchase intent and is thus under the direct topic area of this thesis. Boycotting a product, however, isn't meant to be a final decision according to some scholars. Hirschman (1970) states that boycotting comes from an implicit commitment, from the boycotting consumer to re-enter into a purchasing relationship with the boycotted brand once they have fixed the issues that caused the conflict.

From the different types of brand avoidance mentioned by Lee et al. (2009), brand avoidance due to poor environmental behaviour seems to fit the category of moral brand avoidance. Moral brand avoidance takes place when the ideological beliefs of a consumer don't match values of a brand. Rindell and Strandvik (2014:115) agree on this and add, "Moral avoidance relates to consumers' perception of brands, beyond their own personal and immediate well-being, to include the perceived impact on the wider society."

A brand communicates a constellation of values and is a marketing tool according to Lee et al. (2009). However, Rindell and Strandvik (2010) argue that it's better to view a brand as a consumer's perception and experience over time of a brand. Viewing a brand as the experiences and perceptions of consumers have with that brand over time is a good way of seeing it as consumer's perceptions change over time. Also, not all brands necessarily represent the same values to all consumers. This might be the case with a consumer who is unaware of a company's greenwashing, and believes the company's claims, and a consumer who is aware of the greenwashing. However, this thesis won't place much focus on the distinction between the brand and the company to simplify the research. Instead, a brand will be seen as an extension of a company and its values, as consumers often see the company and the brand as a part of the same entity.

### 3. Data and Methodology

#### 3.1 Conceptual Framework



This theoretical framework relates green marketing directly into greenwashing and green purchase intention. Knowledge that a brand or a company engages in greenwashing has an effect on green purchase intent according to some studies (Kanchanapibul et al., 2014; Newton et al., 2015). Green product knowledge might make the negative effect stronger according to some studies (Nguyen et al., 2019). Green marketing also has a direct link to green purchase intent, as the goal of green marketing is to promote consumers' green purchase intent. Green scepticism is caused by consumer knowledge of greenwashing in the industry and thus will potentially influence green purchase intention.

### **3.2 Data and Demographics**

The data in this study consists of semi-structured group discussions and semi-structured interviews which were partly transcribed as necessary to answer the research questions. The interviews were conducted to further explore the answers of some of the participants after the group discussions. The group discussions lasted 42 minutes (A) and 56 minutes (B) and the interview lasted 10 minutes. The interview was held because a participant informed that they hadn't had a proper opportunity to voice all of their ideas and answers. The groups consisted of 4 (A) and 6 (B) participants, with 3 males and 1 female (A) and 4 males and 2 females (B). All the group discussions and interviews were recorded. The participants are all aged between 19-23 and are currently university students. The Nationalities of the participants varied as many of the students have international backgrounds. Still, all the participants were at least half Finnish if not fully Finnish and all participants have a Finnish citizenship. Table 1 lists all the participants of this study.

Participants were provided with a definition of green products before the interview. Participants were also encouraged to focus mainly on environmental problems rather than ethical problems during the group discussion as ethical problems are outside the scope of this study.

These participants were chosen as there is a research gap when it comes to the effects of greenwashing on consumer perception and purchase intent of green products in young Finnish people. Students were also interviewed as they are more likely to be more educated on the issues of green products and be more aware of the effects that their purchases have on the environment. The students were also selected on a basis of a convenience sample.

**Table 1: Participants**

Focus group	Participant	Age	Gender	Green consumer
FG 1	A1	21	Male	Somewhat
	A2	21	Male	Yes (Vegan)
	A3	21	Male	Somewhat
	A4	19	Female	Yes (Vegan)
FG 2	B1	21	Female	Yes
	B2	21	Male	Somewhat
	B3	21	Male	Somewhat
	B4	21	Male	Somewhat
	B5	21	Male	Somewhat
	B6	20	Female	Yes

The interviews generally focused on the three main topics of green knowledge, greenwashing, and green purchase intent. Green marketing was also discussed overall as a concept as well as overall scepticism towards companies that perform green marketing. The different kinds of greenwashing and how it affects the participants' attitude towards a company and their purchase intention towards said company emerged as one of the main talking points. The participants often gave their personal examples of greenwashing that they had encountered. These included companies such as Oatly, Nestle, Coca-Cola, and Tyson's Chicken. However, an example was also provided by the moderator in both discussions for the participants to discuss. This was Chiquita's Rainforest Alliance greenwashing controversy in 2014.

The discussions were conducted in English. However, some Finnish words were used now and then by the participants and have been translated into English in these cases. The questions for the focus groups and interviewees are given in Appendix 2.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Reasons for green product purchase

When trying to determine how the participants purchase intent is affected by greenwashing it is important to first know the reasons for them buying green products in the first place.

Most people expressed concern for the environment and stated that they do pay attention to the greenness of a product, at least to some extent:

*“I try and always buy plant-based foods. Because generally, I think if you, if it doesn't go through an animal, or if it's not coming from an animal, in general, it's quite a lot more sustainable.” (B1)*

*“I mean, I still eat meat. So, I know meat production uses way more water, way more energy per like calorie compared to like, you know, plant based substitutions and stuff like that. I still sometimes eat like vegetarian foods without any meat products. And I will try to like go for organic produce...” (A3)*

For the people who stated that they are somewhat of a green consumer (someone who buys green products) they stated that the greenness of a product is not a primary criterion for purchase. Also, it depended a lot on the product for people who considered themselves at somewhat of a green consumer.

*“Yep, I'd say in theory, I would like to be a green consumer and I support green products, but in practice usually, other factors such as the cost of things will outweigh, or I will take priority over how green a product is. And also, for me quite often it depends on the product, or depending on what product I'm looking at will also depend on how much I consider like if it's green.” (B2)*

*“...it really depends on like, what I'm buying because like, for example, in certain things, like for example, clothes, I'm much more like, conscious about like, you know, sustainability in that sense. But then like, I guess when it comes to like food products, I'm still constrained by like costs, because usually green products are more expensive. So, I guess because like I'm living on a*

*student budget, I kind of go for the more cheaper options most of the time.”*

(B4)

Cost was a more important criterion for many participants. However, they still stated that they would attempt to purchase the green option when possible.

Many still pointed out that they would be willing to pay a premium for green products, showing their attention towards the environment when it comes to their food purchases.

*“I generally say that the organic label is worth about 50 cents to me.”* (B2)

*“I feel like I'm, I'm like ready to pay like a small premium for, like, if it's healthier, it's greener than another product.”* (B3)

*“But I don't mind paying a little bit more, if I know that it's going to have a big impact.”* (B1)

#### **4.2 Vague greenwashing cases**

It became clear throughout the group interviews that the type of greenwashing plays a significant role in the participants reaction towards the company or product.

Participants brought up their own examples, which were then discussed with the group.

An example that was brought up in both discussions by the participants is when Oatly, a Swedish oat milk company known for its sustainability and vegan products, accepted an investment from the company Blackstone in 2020. This investment represents a 10% stake in Oatly. Blackstone has been linked to companies that further the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest which has caused backlash from the public (Helmore, 2020).

This is a not so obvious form of greenwashing; it could be put into the category of “lesser of two evils” defined by Terra Choice (2010) as adapted by Jones (2019).

Therefore, this case provided mixed responses from the participants. Some said that it doesn't bother them.

*“So, I think it's kind of like, like, there's two sides to the thing, like, on one hand, I don't support it support at all... like it's not okay. But then again, I think about like what has Oatly has done in the bigger picture... like in the grander scheme, I feel like, like, of course, it's not ideal. So, you just kind of have to think about it, are they doing more good than bad?” (A2)*

*“Yeah, I feel like that's not like, a big enough reason to stop buying from them.” (B6)*

*“I don't think it changes my perception of Oatly per se. Like, they made a bad choice in that, you know, that one thing, but it's not like they're producing unethically. You know, if they were producing unethically. That's a whole different story.” (B3)*

Many participants didn't see this form of greenwashing as too serious. Many point out that as long as the company itself acts sustainably it doesn't affect their perception of Oatly too much and has very little effect on their purchase intent. However, some of the others were more concerned about Oatly's actions.

*“Definitely bothers me quite a bit. Because like, if you know, other companies are getting away with it.” (A3)*

*“Like, it's a bit of a grey area. Yeah, that's like not directly their functions, but you could interpret it as them supporting it.” (B5)*

For one participant this caused serious negative perceptions of Oatly as company, and they stated that they boycott Oatly as a result.

*“I think another good example is like, oh, like, even though they are like, you know, making oat milk and stuff like that, like the whole like scandal that like happened with them makes me like, never want to buy from Oatly ever again.” (B4)*



However, it was pointed out that this was due to the availability of alternatives that were perceived just as good by the participant, so the boycott caused little to no changes in the consumption habits of this consumer. Only the company being bought from changed.

*“I mean, I've found like, another alternative, like the Valio's Oddlygood is like the thing that I always buy now. I think it tastes better, too.... Like, I don't really want to support Oatly after that.” (B4)*

There was also a case where a participant mentioned that when buying eggs labelled as “free” chicken eggs (vapaan kanan munat, in Finnish), that this just meant that they were kept in larger cages. This is a clear form of a vague greenwashing technique. Where a term is so broadly defined that it can be misunderstood (TerraChoice, 2010).

*“I was one day I was just buying it really quickly and then I like looked into the label and said, oh my goodness, like this is not okay. And just because it was misleading me. I decided that I'm not going to buy that sort of eggs anymore.” (B1)*

When finding out about the greenwashing, thought it was only misleading, had a clear negative effect on the participants perception and purchase intent towards the product. Though, yet again, the participant expressed her willingness to buy the product in lack of alternatives.

*“I wouldn't necessarily boycott but if I have other options, I would definitely choose them... but if I don't have any other options, and I will buy them.” (B1)*

### 4.3 Blatant greenwashing cases

When discussing companies that have been caught blatantly lying the perceptions were pretty unanimously more negative than with more vague cases.

*“If they're not like, doing what they actually say on the labels, and then on top of that, they're treating all their like factory employees like absolute garbage. It's just like, why give money to that company?” (B2)*

This negative perception became especially apparent when the participants were told the case of Chiquita's rainforest alliance label, which is a sustainability label. However, only 15% of Chiquita bananas came from rainforest alliance certified farms despite them claiming that 75% came from these farms in 2014. Chiquita's banana farms have been contaminating Guatemalan waterways (Shemkus, 2014).

*“I heard scandals of Chiquita. So therefore, I didn't want to. I've not been buying them as sort of a choice.” (B1)*

*“That's definitely like a big trust issue right there.” (B6)*

When further asked whether or not they would buy products from Chiquita, some said no and most people answered that they, would at least try to avoid them having this information.

*“No.” (B6)*

*“After you said that, I don't want to buy any... I feel like another problem is like, I don't know any other banana brands... what other choice? Do I really have if they have like, more or less a monopoly on the money?” (B2)*

*“...if there were other options, and I knew the other options were more reliable, and I trusted them more than I would obviously buy the other options. But if there was nothing else, I'd probably still buy the product, even though I don't necessarily trust the company.” (B5)*

*“I mean, of course, now that I know about the Chiquita thing, I look at them differently. But I don't know if it really stopped me from buying... I think the only reason for that is that they have such a monopoly. Yeah.” (A1)*

It becomes apparent from these answers that the number of alternatives plays a big role in product avoidance for these participants. For some the knowledge of this blatant greenwashing had no effect on their purchase intent if there were no alternatives present, despite the participants voicing their negative attitude towards the company for these actions.

#### **4.3.1 No effect cases**

This lack of effect of greenwashing on participants goes even further. Despite having green knowledge, blatant greenwashing had not effect on some participant's purchase intent whatsoever.

*"But then I remember ... many years ago, there was this whole scandal or the this like issue about how Coca Cola was just using literally all of like India's water resources or something like that. And like, ever since I heard about that. I've always been like, I don't like Coke, but like as a company are, but I have bought so much coke in the past years, because I just can't stop drinking it."*  
(B6)

*"I guess it's, it's like, what, like, for the example with Coke, like, I'm still gonna buy Coca Cola, because I just feel like the taste is so unique, and nothing else comes close. So, I feel like I maybe prioritize my own well-being over, like, maybe the sustainable issues like in that sense, but it really depends on the product. Because if there's, if it's like a product that we're talking about, if the product we're talking about, can be replaced easily, like in my eyes, then obviously, I'm gonna prioritize like, you know how green it is. Versus examples like Coke. It's just like, I feel like because I can't find something better."* (B4)

The reasons for this can be linked back to the lack of alternatives to an extent. But also, the overall "like" for the product was seen as an important factor in the lack of product avoidance towards greenwashing companies, despite participants having green knowledge in these situations.

Nestle was also brought up by the participants as a greenwashing company. Many participants stated that they don't believe Nestle's chocolate is sustainably produced, and this was then discussed in the groups.

When asked if participants could give up nestle chocolate milk if there were no alternatives:

*"I really like chocolate milk. I don't know."* (B2)

*"I think it really depends on the product. Like personally chocolate milk, I could give up but something like rice or pasta or something, you know, I guess more essential I don't think I could."* (B5)

#### **4.3.2 Changing their ways cases**

Another interesting point that a few participants made regarding greenwashing was about companies that had done it in the past but are no longer doing it. A couple stated that they would be willing to buy green products from a company that has "changed their ways" over non-green products. However, one even said that they would be willing to buy from these companies over more sustainable options if they truly had changed their ways.

*"Alright, like for, like, hypothetical example, if Tyson's chicken, actually, you know, they brought back that label, they did something about it and help the workers' rights as well. Maybe not, you know, as important like in terms of green, like stuff, but if they were to actually do something about that, have proof for that. I think I would actually buy Tyson's chicken over something that might be even more sustainable, because they've admitted that and been like a good corporate, you know, player."*

*"And then if I do find out that they've sort of learned from their mistakes, then I will be more inclined to buy the product compared to a product that is not like green."*

This gives some hope to greenwashing companies as some participants showed that they would be willing to forgive the company if they changed their ways and proved themselves to be sustainable.

### 4.3.3 Ethical issues

It was also pointed out by the participants, when asked what kind of firm behaviour would negatively affect their purchase behaviour the most, that poor ethical behaviour is seen as the worst. Things such as animal and human right violations came up in the discussions.

*“If it leads to the death of other humans...if it’s a serious human rights violation, or an animal rights violation.” (B2)*

*“A serious human rights violation.” (B5)*

*“But I feel like I tend to care more about the ethics than the environment. So, like human rights violations, or child labour and stuff like that.” (A4)*

When asked what types of poor environmental behaviour would lead to participants not buying a product or from a company:

*“I mean, food wise, honestly, no, I feel like I care a little more about the ethics than the environmental stuff. So, like, if I knew that there was like, like, if I heard that there was like child labour or human rights violations going on, then I feel like then I would.” (A4)*

Though there was one participant who disagreed.

*“Personally, rain forest is number one for me, because I've seen like what's happened to the rain forests and through like, you know, different mediums and different media, I feel like that's, that's one thing that I care most about because it's like the Earth's lungs. And I would actually be less inclined to buy from a company that's deforesting major rain forests, then a company that's committing human rights, human rights violations.” (B2)*

#### 4.3.4 Lack of knowledge

A lot of the participants brought up the issue of a lack of knowledge when it comes to corporate greenwashing. Many stated that it is near impossible to know or have the time to find out about the sustainability of every company.

*“And the issue nowadays you notice is like a company isn't just a company, it's like owned by a parent company that owns like 50 other companies and that parent company can be doing terrible things including deceit, lies, whatever. Like Nestle for example...I haven't personally gone through like the list of 100 different brands or whatever there are. So, like, yeah, it's very hard to know like, exactly like, if a company does have good faith.” (A3)*

*“(Nestle)...they're like daughter company could be fully eco-friendly without them doing anything. Just because it's owned by Nestle doesn't mean that their subsidiary is like unsustainable.” (A1)*

When asked whether they would buy green products from a company that they knew was owned by a non-sustainable parent company, some of the participants said they would try to avoid them. However, it also became clear that it would be very hard to always know whether a company was owned by a non-sustainable parent company.

*“I don't really but like you, you don't know like, you could be buying Nestle without even knowing it because Nestle owns so many other brands.” (A3)*

*“If a small producer that I liked a lot sure that I trusted a lot was suddenly bought by a company and now the parent company is a less sustainable company, I'll definitely start to kind of be more worried and more critical, I guess, towards the smaller company... I'm not saying I'd necessarily stop buying their products, but I wouldn't be more like, attentive towards their policies.” (B5)*

#### 4.4 No information cases

It became apparent in the interviews that consumers often find themselves in situations in supermarkets where they have little to no information about a firm's environmental performance.

*"It's like almost impossible for a normal consumer to like, know, if a company is actually eco-friendly, if there hasn't been any major, like, articles or any way, like info that they are lying about it." (A1)*

Related to these ambiguous situations, when asked how often they think companies or products making green claims in the food industry are being truthful, many participants expressed some level of scepticism.

*"Depends, 30% just for a rough number. Because I know that like there's a lot of companies that aren't doing it. Still going to buy them Because I think like, most of the times, it's accurate. But I know that even like when I'm looking at, like, long label or whatever, I'm like, well, there's a chance that is not true." (B2)*

*"I feel like probably like, usually, it's not that they're not true. It's that they're not necessarily saying the whole truth." (B5)*

Although these results don't show any attitude increase, it shows that there was an increase in purchase intent towards these products over conventional products. This shows, for the participants, that green marketing leads to higher green purchase intent in these ambiguous situations.

Even if consumers didn't fully trust the company's they had no information about, they would still choose them over the other conventional food products. These participants said that if there was even a chance that the other product is more environmental, they would choose it over the conventional product.

*"Maybe I would just kind of hope. I mean, if there's two products, that one advertises to be environmentally friendly, and the other one doesn't, then I would hope that there's at least some truth to the one that advertises to be environmentally friendly, and that it's at least a little better than the other one." (A4)*

*“I mean, like, I don't know if it's true, but like, I don't know, I do question it. But there's nothing I can really do about it. Like, I can do a quick Google search. But if I find nothing, then there's nothing really. There's no, of course I so choose the one that claims to be friendly, versus one that has nothing about it.” (A1)*

*“If there were other options, and I knew the other options were more reliable, and I trusted them more than I would obviously buy the other options. But if there was nothing else, I'd probably still buy the product, even though I don't necessarily trust the company.” (B5)*

This shows that despite consumers having scepticism towards a product or company it still might not affect their purchase intent towards said company. However, it was also pointed out that it depends on the availability of alternative products.

For some participants, however, greenwashing in the food industry had more negative effects on their trust towards green claims overall. With one participant it even affected her purchase intent in some situations.

*“But then if I find out that, you know, if people are lying, or the companies are lying about how green they are, then sometimes just out of like spite, I will buy the less green one... So, although it doesn't necessarily fit my beliefs as much, then I would sort of like want to, in a way, incentivize people not to lie about the greenness of their products.” (B1)*

*“Because like, if you know, other companies are getting away with it, you really don't know, how many other companies are also getting away with it, and just haven't been caught yet. So, it like forces you to be way more critical with like, who you believe pretty much, especially if it's like, the source is just the company itself.” (A3)*

It was also pointed out by some of the participants that even if they had suspicion towards a company it might make them consider buying an alternative, though it wouldn't be enough to stop these participants from buying the product.

When asked whether participants would buy from a company of whom they suspected might be untruthful in their environmental claims:



"Yeah, Nestle, I'm pretty sure, yeah."(B5)

"I think suspicion makes me look at the competitor more, but I think facts makes me buy the competitor more." (B2)

Most people in the group agreed with B2's statement.

#### **4.4.1 Type of company**

Many participants pointed out that their attitude and purchase intent in these ambiguous situations depends heavily on the type of company. Companies known for their green practices or who's image is largely based on green identity were always trusted more over normal companies. These companies' products were purchased more often in these ambiguous situations.

*"Yeah, I think for some companies, I don't think it's misleading. For instance, if your whole business model or your whole business is related to sort of sustainability or like greenness... then I generally trust them, because that's their whole, you know, business model." (B1)*

*"...if, like a green company is saying that they're green, then, like, I usually trusted more, because they probably have like an inclination to be green, because you know, like, they probably lose a lot of customers." (B3)*

Small companies were also preferred over larger companies as their intentions were seen as purer and it was observed that small companies have more to lose with greenwashing and so are less likely to do it.

*"I keep thinking about like Unilever lever, like a big company like that, who in the past has been labelled as pretty unsustainable... if like someone like Unilever or you know, starts like promoting sustainability, I would definitely be very hesitant at the beginning, because of their past. And I guess, yeah, their size as well." (B1)*

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This section aims to answer the research questions of this topic by linking the findings to the literature review section.

### 5.1 Summary of main findings

The first research question (RQ1) of this study was:

How do different situations of perceived greenwashing by food companies affect consumer perception of green food companies?

According to the results greenwashing has quite a clear negative effect on the perceptions of the participants towards the greenwashing company. However, the type of greenwashing seems to play a large role in the extent of the negative perception that participants had towards these companies. This is something that Jones (2019) suggested, as he was against the idea of discussing greenwashing as a dichotomy in research.

During the discussions, it became evident that some forms of greenwashing have little to no effect on consumer perception. This came up in the “lesser of two evils” Oatly case, where a company accused of being unsustainable had bought a share in Oatly. Most people, even those who saw themselves as environmentally conscious consumers, had minimal problems with this, though they still said that it was undesirable. Some were also indifferent to this form of greenwashing. This is more in line with De Jong et al. (2019), who in their study found that greenwashing will have inconsequential effects on a company’s image. However, with cases of blatant lying by firms, such as the cases with Coca-Cola and Chiquita, the perceptions were pretty unanimously negative among the participants.

The second research question (RQ2) of this study was:

How does perceived greenwashing affect consumers’ purchase intent of green food products?

The type of greenwashing played a significant role in the effect that perceived greenwashing has on green purchase intent. With more ambiguous cases the effect

was very minimal, such as with the aforementioned Oatly case, and was more severe with more blatant cases such as with the Coca-Cola case. However, purchase intent was only perceived to be affected by such knowledge if there was an adequate substitute.

When participants brought up the Oatly case many stated that they are indifferent to the form of greenwashing and thus their purchase intent towards them was unaffected. This shows that the effects of perceived greenwashing depend heavily on the type of greenwashing.

With more blatant cases such as with Nestle and Chiquita, the purchase intent was more severely affected by greenwashing. However, most participants stated that they would still continue to buy from these companies if there weren't adequate substitutes for them. This shows that brand avoidance doesn't always take place the way Rindell and Strandvik (2010) theorized. Even if the consumer's ideological beliefs don't match the values of the brand it might not have an effect on the purchase intent of the consumer towards said brand according to the findings of this thesis.

However, most participants stated that they would buy an alternative product when possible if they perceived a company to be greenwashing.

The third research question (RQ3) of this study was:

How does green knowledge affect consumer reaction to perceived greenwashing and green purchase intent?

It became apparent in the results of this study that consumers often find themselves in situations with limited knowledge when it comes to the greenness of a product. This lack of knowledge of a company's environmental performance was quite a common scenario among the participants. This runs contrary to what De Jong et al. (2017) suggested when they stated that it is unlikely that a consumer would find themselves in a situation where they have no information about a firm's environmental performance.

Lack of green knowledge didn't seem to affect consumer purchase intent towards green products, however. Even with limited or no knowledge at all consumers would buy green products over-non green options at the supermarket. Many stated that the reason for this behaviour was that they still trusted or at least hoped that companies selling green products were genuine about their promises. This is somewhat supported by the findings of Nyilasy et. al (2013), as they found in their study that green advertising, when consumers have no knowledge of a company's environmental performance, has significant benefits to consumer attitudes. The results of this thesis further show that a lack of knowledge of the product or company paired with green advertising leads to positive purchase intent towards the company. This can be the case even if the attitudes stay unchanged.

It can also be seen with the participant's response to this (Oatly) form of greenwashing that their green knowledge has little effect on their purchase intent, in this case. This is similar to the findings of Wang et al. (2019), who found that having green product knowledge does not lead to green purchase intention in their study.

It can be deduced from the results of this thesis that the negative effect of greenwash isn't necessarily stronger on high-knowledge consumers as Nguyen et al. (2019) suggested in their study. As many participants with high green product knowledge would continue to buy from companies such as Coca-Cola and Nestle, despite knowing that they harm the environment and greenwash.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

According to the findings greenwashing didn't seem to have dire consequences on the actual purchase intent towards greenwashing companies, when substitutes were seen as lacking. Though greenwashing was seen as undesirable by most. According to the findings, consumers were often unwilling to change their purchase habits or to stop buying a greenwashed product if there were no good substitutes, though they would be quick to switch the product to a substitute. Green knowledge didn't seem to affect the amount of negative effect greenwashing has on purchase intent. Overall, this still shows that greenwashing generally should be avoided, as it decreases consumer perception of the company significantly in more blatant cases even if it has

no serious effect on purchase intention. Overall, the effects of greenwashing depend on many factors, however, if there are adequate alternatives to a greenwashing product greenwashing will backfire when discovered.

### **5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research**

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, there are some clear limitations to the conducted research. The biggest limitation is the lack of generalizability of these results to the population, as all the participants were Finnish students between the ages of 19-21. This is an issue when comparing the findings of this study to the findings of more comprehensive studies that have measured the population unbiasedly. Also, as all the participants were university students, and thus quite highly educated, their views and actions might differ quite heavily from the average Finnish young adult. Due to this, the participants of this study only represent a small part of the overall consumers of green products in Finland. Further research should aim to incorporate a large proportion of the consumers into the research.

There are also limitations due to the qualitative nature of the research design. The artificial scenario created by the group discussion setting might have discouraged some people from voicing their opinions or influenced their answers. Not all participants might feel comfortable voicing their opinions in a group setting. Though the effect was attempted to minimize by incorporating the possibility of interviews for these participants. Due to the limited sample size and lack of qualitative research to back the findings, it is also impossible to determine the number of people that would hold these views in a population.

Also, due to the lack of resources, the participants were allowed to give their opinion on previous cases of greenwashing. Participants might have formed biased views on the companies beforehand. With more resource's artificial examples of different types of greenwashing could be developed in future studies to investigate the effect of greenwashing on consumer's perception and purchase intent towards green products.

#### **5.4 Implications for international business**

The goal of this research was to examine the effects of greenwashing on consumer perceptions, and subsequently, purchase intent towards green products. Despite the limitations, due to the qualitative nature of this study, it offers insight into the reasons why participants might or might not continue to purchase products from greenwashing companies. According to the results of this study, greenwashing doesn't seem to offer any real benefits when it comes to consumer purchase intent, except potentially in certain ambiguous situations if it isn't discovered. In the most blatant cases, greenwashing was more likely to lead to reduced purchase intent towards those companies. With greenwashing, trust towards those greenwashing was lost, and consumers became more suspicious of the company's claims, which would be undesirable for any company. Greenwashing can thus be seen as a waste of resources.

Even if greenwashing can bring short-term benefits in ambiguous situations, where consumers blindly trust a company's claims, it will have negative effects on the company in the long-run, when discovered. Though it is important to point out that in these situations greenwashing can give an unfair advantage to these companies over their honest non-green competitors. This is why more legislation on un-truthful environmental claims should be implanted by the government to make competition fair.

Truly green companies should also keep up their green advertising, as the results of this study suggest that people still trust companies whose business model is based around sustainability. Consumers are also willing to pay a premium for sustainable products which provides an incentive for companies to be more sustainable.

It was also pointed out by some participants in the study that they would be willing to buy products from greenwashing companies once they changed their way. This is backed by Hirschman's (1970) study on brand avoidance. This gives hope and reason for greenwashing companies to change their ways.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix A: Questions for the Groups

**Green product:** A product that fits one/many of these criteria: less harmful or not harmful at all to the environment, replaced artificial ingredients with natural ingredients or products that are non-toxic, energy and water-efficient, recyclable, and biodegradable.

Do you see yourself as a green consumer?

Where do you purchase your food?

How much do you consider the sustainability of the food product before buying it?

How likely are you to choose the green (green product) option at the store?

How much would you consider yourself to know about green products/sustainability in the food market?

What kinds of green food products have you purchased?

Have you ever had doubts about a food company's/product's green claims?  
Does the knowledge that some food brands have been caught making misleading or unfounded sustainability claims bother you?

How often do you think green claims made by green products are deceptive or untrue?

Have you seen anything like this?

Would you purchase a product whose green claims you have suspicions or knowledge of being untrue?

Have you purchased green products from a company knowing that they have been disingenuous about their sustainability in the past?

Have you purchased products knowing or having suspicions that their environmental claims are untrue?

Have you ever found out a company/brand was greenwashing whose products you had previously purchased?

How did this affect your opinion, and did you purchase said product or from said company again?