



Quantifying the Effectiveness of ESG-Aligned Messaging on Gen Z Purchase Intent Using Multivariate Conjoint Analysis in Ethical Brand Positioning

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Abstract : Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations have become integral to modern branding strategies, particularly in appealing to Generation Z, a consumer cohort that prioritizes authenticity, sustainability, and corporate responsibility. This study examines the effectiveness of ESG-aligned messaging on Gen Z's purchase intent by employing multivariate conjoint analysis to isolate the influence of various message attributes—including environmental claims, social justice alignment, and governance transparency—within ethical brand positioning frameworks. Data were collected through a survey-based conjoint experiment involving 600 Gen Z participants, testing preference trade-offs among hypothetical brand profiles. Findings reveal that ESG messaging significantly impacts purchase intent, with environmental sustainability being the most valued component, followed by social equity and ethical governance. Furthermore, interactions between message tone (e.g., transparency vs. promotional) and communication channel (e.g., social media vs. brand website) moderated consumer responses. The study contributes to the literature on sustainable consumer behavior, ethical marketing, and brand strategy, offering actionable insights for marketers seeking to authentically connect with Gen Z audiences in the context of ESG-driven differentiation.

Keywords : ESG Messaging, Gen Z Consumer Behavior, Conjoint Analysis, Ethical Brand Positioning, Purchase Intent

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background on ESG Frameworks and Gen Z Values

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations are becoming pivotal in marketing communication, particularly for Generation Z, who demand transparency and ethical practices from brands. Gen Z, characterized by digital fluency and heightened social consciousness, tends to support organizations that align with their values on sustainability, diversity, and governance (Ayanponle et al., 2024). Their decisions are influenced by authentic ESG messaging conveyed through modern channels, such as social media and influencer endorsements.

The need for value-driven marketing strategies is pressing, as Gen Z scrutinizes not only product quality but also the brand's social footprint. Ijiga et al. (2024) emphasize the rising importance of integrating ESG principles with behavioral intelligence tools to enhance message personalization. Imoh et al. (2024) also argue that digital engagement technologies can improve how ESG narratives are perceived, particularly through AI-enhanced user segmentation. Similarly, Azonuche and Enyejo (2024) highlight how agile frameworks aid responsiveness to value-based market shifts.

Emerging studies suggest that brands failing to showcase ethical accountability lose relevance with this generation. Therefore, businesses must adopt data-centric methods, including conjoint analysis, to deconstruct how Gen Z ranks ESG values in purchase decisions (Idoko et al., 2024). This section lays the groundwork for analyzing ESG message effectiveness through an empirical lens.

1) 1.2 Rise of Ethical Branding and Sustainable Consumerism

Ethical branding is no longer an optional marketing trend—it is a foundational necessity. The acceleration of climate change, racial equity movements, and digital transparency has amplified the consumer shift toward value-aligned purchasing. Brands that demonstrate genuine ESG integration benefit from stronger loyalty, especially among Gen Z. Ihimoyan et al. (2024) affirm that AI-enabled frameworks have enhanced how businesses manage ESG-related financial data risks and communicate impact to stakeholders.

Ayanponle et al. (2024) explain that strategic HR and marketing collaboration can support ethical messaging by ensuring internal values align with external branding. Ethical branding, when reinforced by transparent governance and tangible impact stories, promotes sustainable consumerism. This trend is also tied to consumer identity; purchasing is now a moral decision as much as an economic one (Imoh & Idoko, 2022).

Azonuche and Enyejo (2024) suggest that digital transformation has increased the granularity with which firms can tailor ethical narratives. Leveraging consumer data for segmentation and targeting is key to aligning messages with Gen Z's dynamic psychographics. Moreover, Idoko et al. (2024) argue that sustainable brand positioning should encompass not just message content but also the channel, tone, and timing of delivery. Conjoint analysis offers a quantifiable method for understanding these nuanced preferences.

1.3 Research Problem and Significance

Despite the proliferation of ESG narratives in brand communication, little is known about how these messages quantitatively influence Gen Z purchase intent. Prior studies often rely on survey responses without isolating the trade-offs consumers make among ESG components. This results in a theoretical gap that this paper seeks to bridge. Specifically, the research employs multivariate conjoint analysis to determine how Gen Z consumers value different combinations of ESG-aligned brand attributes.

While some brands have excelled in communicating environmental and social commitments, many still struggle with authenticity and message optimization. Azonuche and Enyejo (2024) note that ethical brand transformation requires iterative feedback loops supported by empirical models. Imoh and Idoko (2023) argue that the intersection of ethics and digital personalization remains underexplored in marketing science.

Moreover, the complexity of ESG components—environmental responsibility, governance transparency, and social equity—calls for a method that can capture their interaction effects. This is especially vital in the Gen Z demographic, where preferences vary widely depending on identity, lifestyle, and political values (Idoko et al., 2024). The study's significance lies in its ability to provide marketers with a predictive tool to tailor ESG narratives that resonate and convert.

1.4 Study Objectives and Research Questions

This study aims to measure the influence of ESG-aligned messaging on Gen Z's purchase intent using multivariate conjoint analysis. The objectives are threefold:

1. To quantify the importance of environmental, social, and governance components in brand messaging;
2. To evaluate how tone and delivery channel influence message reception;
3. To derive insights into the interactive effects of ESG message attributes on ethical brand preference.

In pursuit of these objectives, the study will address the following research questions:

- Which ESG message components most significantly impact Gen Z's purchase intent?
- How do variations in tone (e.g., promotional, neutral, transparent) and delivery medium (e.g., Instagram vs. email newsletter) alter perception?
- What combinations of ESG elements produce the most favorable consumer responses?

By answering these questions, the research will offer empirically grounded insights to help organizations optimize ethical branding strategies for Generation Z.

1.5 Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized into five sections. Section 1 provides the background and articulates the research problem, objectives, and structure. Section 2 presents a critical review of existing literature on ESG communication, Gen Z consumer psychology, and conjoint analysis methodologies. Section 3 details the research design, including attribute selection, survey configuration, and data analysis procedures. Section 4 discusses the results, highlighting the relative weight of ESG elements and their impact on purchase intent. Section 5 concludes with key insights, strategic implications for ethical branding, and recommendations for future research. This structure ensures a coherent narrative from theoretical grounding to practical contribution.

2. Literature Review

2.1 ESG and Its Role in Consumer Decision-Making

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles have transformed from a niche investor focus to a mainstream framework shaping consumer perceptions and purchase behavior. Brands that effectively align themselves with ESG values tend to outperform competitors, especially among younger, socially conscious consumers (Ihimoyan et al., 2024). ESG messaging demonstrates a company's commitment to sustainability, ethical labor practices, and transparent governance, all of which increasingly resonate with Generation Z (Imoh et al., 2024).

According to Azonuche and Enyejo (2024), firms that explicitly integrate ESG narratives into their marketing and brand identity generate higher levels of trust, leading to greater consumer engagement. Ethical branding,

thus, is not merely symbolic—it tangibly affects consumer loyalty and long-term value. ESG frameworks also inform risk mitigation strategies for brands navigating reputational volatility in social media-driven economies (Idoko et al., 2024).

Furthermore, data from comparative analyses indicate that consumers are more responsive to ESG-aligned firms even in high-risk industries such as oil, gas, and technology (Arinze et al., 2024). Oyedokun et al. (2024) argue that ESG strategies also reduce investor risk perception and provide a dual benefit: stakeholder confidence and customer retention. As ESG maturity advances, firms are leveraging AI technologies to track ESG performance and message authenticity (Ijiga et al., 2024).

2.2 Gen Z's Psychological Drivers and Ethical Consumption

Gen Z exhibits a unique psychological profile marked by skepticism toward traditional corporate messaging and a heightened awareness of global issues such as climate change, racial justice, and income inequality. This generation seeks brands that not only provide quality products but also contribute positively to society (Ajiga et al., 2022). Their purchase decisions are deeply influenced by authenticity, values alignment, and the company's stance on contemporary issues (Imoh & Idoko, 2023).

According to Ayanponle et al. (2024), Gen Z consumers demand transparency, and failure to meet this expectation often results in disengagement or public backlash. This demographic uses online tools and social media platforms to validate claims, amplifying both ethical successes and failures. ESG communication, therefore, must not only be accurate but also verifiable and interactive.

Recent studies by Idoko et al. (2024) and Ihimoyan et al. (2024) suggest that Gen Z is more responsive to interactive and immersive content that allows them to assess ESG claims dynamically. Brands that use gamified interfaces or transparent supply chain tracking apps experience higher engagement. Oyedokun et al. (2024) noted that machine learning-enabled personalization helps companies craft messages that match the psychographic segments of Gen Z consumers.

Overall, ethical consumption for Gen Z is less about moral obligation and more about identity expression. The brands they support are perceived extensions of their values. Thus, capturing Gen Z attention requires strategic, transparent, and ethically grounded marketing approaches that resonate with their cognitive and emotional drivers.

2.3 Conjoint Analysis in Marketing Research

Conjoint analysis is a multivariate statistical technique that quantifies how individuals value the components that make up a product or message. It is particularly effective in marketing research for assessing trade-offs that consumers make between various product attributes (Azonuche & Enyejo, 2024). When applied to ESG communication, it allows researchers to identify which components of environmental, social, and governance narratives most influence consumer behavior.

This method has gained popularity for its realism and predictive power. Rather than relying on isolated survey questions, conjoint analysis simulates actual decision-making by requiring respondents to choose between profiles with varying attribute combinations (Imoh et al., 2024). As Ijiga et al. (2024) emphasized, this method captures interaction effects and preference hierarchies that conventional surveys often miss.

In the context of Gen Z marketing, conjoint analysis is valuable because it allows researchers to examine subtle psychological and perceptual variables that impact brand choice. For instance, studies have shown that ESG messages delivered in a “transparent” tone outperform those perceived as “performative” or “sales-driven” (Idoko

et al., 2024). By using conjoint models, marketers can test multiple combinations of tone, message framing, and channel delivery to determine the optimal mix for ethical persuasion.

Furthermore, digital integration allows for real-time conjoint experiments embedded in mobile apps or web platforms, which improve response accuracy and representativeness (Aminu et al., 2024). As the demand for granular, actionable marketing insights grows, conjoint analysis remains one of the most robust methods for ESG message optimization.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks: Signaling Theory and Value-Belief-Norm Theory

To understand the mechanisms through which ESG messaging impacts Gen Z consumers, two primary theories provide explanatory power: **signaling theory** and the **value-belief-norm (VBN) theory**. Signaling theory posits that firms send signals to stakeholders to convey unobservable qualities such as credibility and ethical integrity (Azonuche & Enyejo, 2024). When brands emphasize ESG efforts, they signal their commitment to broader societal goals, which influences consumer trust and loyalty.

The VBN theory suggests that individual behavior is shaped by personal values, which inform beliefs and norms, ultimately driving action (Ajiga et al., 2022). Gen Z's proclivity for ethical consumption is best understood through this framework, as their deeply held beliefs about climate justice, equity, and sustainability translate into brand preferences (Idoko et al., 2024).

These theories also intersect with behavioral economics, where ESG messaging can be considered a “nudge” that activates moral decision-making (Oyedokun et al., 2024). According to Imoh et al. (2024), the framing of ESG content—such as highlighting future generational impact—can trigger normative behavior in Gen Z, such as purchasing from a socially responsible brand.

Furthermore, signaling and VBN theories emphasize the role of message authenticity. Ayanponle et al. (2024) assert that inconsistent signals or misalignment between brand claims and actions create cognitive dissonance, reducing credibility. Hence, these frameworks are critical for designing ESG-aligned marketing campaigns that not only capture attention but also sustain loyalty through trust.

2.5 Gaps in Current Research on ESG Communication Effectiveness

Despite the growing integration of ESG narratives into marketing communication, empirical studies that quantitatively measure their effectiveness—especially among Gen Z—are limited. Most literature remains conceptual, focusing on theoretical linkages between ethical messaging and consumer behavior without offering statistically validated frameworks (Ijiga et al., 2024). This leaves a significant gap in understanding how specific components of ESG messages influence decision-making.

Another key gap is the over-reliance on qualitative methods or single-variable surveys that fail to capture interaction effects. As Imoh and Idoko (2023) note, these approaches are inadequate for measuring real-world trade-offs that consumers make when exposed to complex messages. Conjoint analysis offers a more nuanced and accurate measurement, yet its application in ESG and ethical branding remains underutilized.

Additionally, there is insufficient segmentation in existing ESG studies. Most research aggregates responses across demographics, overlooking generational and cultural variations. Gen Z, in particular, requires tailored analysis due to its digital nativity and evolving ethical frameworks (Ayanponle et al., 2024). More research is needed to assess how message tone, format, and delivery platform influence ESG perceptions among diverse Gen Z segments.

Finally, current studies rarely account for the feedback loop between ESG performance and consumer response. Integrating AI and real-time analytics into future research could enhance the adaptive capacity of ethical branding strategies (Ihimoyan et al., 2024; Idoko et al., 2024). This paper addresses these gaps by applying multivariate conjoint analysis to ESG messaging, with a focus on optimizing ethical brand positioning for Gen Z.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Rationale

This study adopts a **quantitative experimental design** utilizing **multivariate conjoint analysis (MCA)** to examine the trade-offs Gen Z consumers make when evaluating ESG-aligned brand messages. The choice of MCA is informed by its robustness in modeling decision-making scenarios involving multiple attributes and levels, making it ideal for simulating real-world marketing environments (Azonuche & Enyejo, 2024; Imoh et al., 2024). The design enables the isolation and quantification of the individual impact of ESG components—environmental sustainability, social equity, and governance transparency—on purchase intent.

A cross-sectional survey was developed using hypothetical brand profiles embedded with varied ESG messaging combinations. This allowed respondents to evaluate trade-offs in a realistic yet controlled setting. As Ihimoyan et al. (2024) assert, digital twin-based simulation frameworks enhance experimental realism, aligning with the preferences of Gen Z, who are digital natives accustomed to interactive environments.

The study employed a full-profile conjoint design to explore how Gen Z participants prioritize ESG attributes and to determine the relative importance of message tone and delivery platform. The rationale for this choice stems from prior research indicating that Gen Z is influenced not only by content but also by contextual framing and channel trustworthiness (Ayanponle et al., 2024). The design was pre-tested through cognitive interviews with 20 respondents to ensure clarity, reliability, and respondent engagement.

3.2 Survey Development and Attribute Selection for Conjoint Design

To construct the conjoint experiment, a **survey instrument** was designed comprising multiple **ESG attribute levels** informed by prior literature, market reports, and stakeholder feedback. Three primary attributes were identified:

- **Environmental Messaging:** Climate-neutral commitment, carbon offsetting, renewable energy sourcing.
- **Social Equity Messaging:** Gender-inclusive policies, community engagement, ethical sourcing.
- **Governance Messaging:** Transparent reporting, third-party audits, diversity in leadership.

Each attribute contained three levels, resulting in 3^3 (27) possible combinations. These were reduced to a manageable **fractional factorial design** of 12 profiles using orthogonal array techniques, ensuring statistical independence among attributes while minimizing cognitive fatigue (Idoko et al., 2024).

Additional factors—**message tone** (transparent vs. promotional) and **channel** (social media vs. brand website)—were embedded as contextual framing variables within the choice tasks. These modifiers were randomized across participants to test for moderating effects (Oyedokun et al., 2024).

The survey included a demographic section to collect data on age, gender, education level, digital behavior, and ethical orientation. Based on Imoh and Idoko (2023), psychographic variables such as environmental concern and brand skepticism were also captured using validated Likert-scale items. Prior to deployment, the survey underwent a **pilot test** with 30 Gen Z users, resulting in refinements to language clarity and layout aesthetics.

3.3 Sampling Strategy and Data Collection Procedures

A **non-probability purposive sampling** strategy was employed, targeting Gen Z individuals aged 18–28 with exposure to digital media and e-commerce. Recruitment was facilitated through social media advertisements, university mailing lists, and Gen Z-focused communities on Reddit and Discord. The final sample comprised **600 respondents** across the United States, ensuring geographic diversity and digital engagement alignment.

Inclusion criteria required that participants: (a) self-identify as Gen Z, (b) have made at least one online purchase in the past 3 months, and (c) demonstrate familiarity with ESG-related content. Responses were collected through **Qualtrics**, an online survey platform that supports conjoint task logic and randomization, enhancing data reliability (Iwe et al., 2023; Ihimoyan et al., 2024).

Data collection occurred over three weeks in March 2024. Attention checks and duplicate IP address restrictions were applied to ensure quality and authenticity. Approximately **540 valid responses** were retained after filtering incomplete or inattentive submissions. The response rate (90%) was deemed robust for conjoint modeling, as it exceeded the minimum threshold for estimating part-worth utilities with sufficient precision (Adekoya et al., 2024).

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the host university, and informed consent was secured electronically prior to participation, in accordance with APA research ethics guidelines.

3.4 Statistical Analysis Techniques: Multivariate Conjoint Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using **multivariate conjoint analysis (MCA)** through **SPSS and R conjoint packages**, enabling the computation of **part-worth utilities** for each attribute level. These values represent the relative desirability of each ESG message component to Gen Z consumers (Azonuche & Enyejo, 2024).

An **ordinary least squares (OLS)** regression model was used to estimate the impact of attribute levels on respondents' stated purchase intent. Each profile served as a unit of observation, with choice ranking scores as the dependent variable. Main effects and interaction terms were modeled to explore cross-influences among message components, tones, and channels (Arinze et al., 2024).

Attribute **importance scores** were calculated by measuring the range of utility values within each attribute relative to the total utility range. Hierarchical cluster analysis was also conducted to identify **latent consumer segments** based on conjoint preferences, enabling a deeper understanding of intra-generational variance (Imoh et al., 2024).

Additional statistical tests—including **ANOVA** and **multivariate regression diagnostics**—were conducted to assess model assumptions, multicollinearity, and significance levels. Where necessary, **bootstrap resampling** (1,000 iterations) was performed to ensure robustness and generalizability.

This analytical framework not only supports the research questions but also provides actionable insights into how marketers can structure ESG messages to maximize Gen Z engagement and ethical brand alignment.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Relative Importance of ESG Message Attributes

The multivariate conjoint analysis yielded clear insights into the relative importance of ESG attributes in shaping Gen Z's purchase intent. Among the three main components—environmental, social, and governance—**environmental messaging emerged as the most influential**, accounting for 43.6% of total decision weight. This confirms that climate-conscious actions, such as carbon offsetting and renewable energy sourcing, strongly resonate with Gen Z consumers (Ijiga et al., 2024; Imoh et al., 2024).

Social equity messaging followed with 32.8% importance, with gender-inclusive policies and local community engagement ranking highly. **Governance transparency**, though still valued, ranked lowest at 23.6%, suggesting that while Gen Z appreciates ethical leadership, their immediate purchase decisions are more influenced by environmental and social aspects.

These findings support previous literature asserting that sustainability and social justice dominate Gen Z's consumption psychology (Ayanponle et al., 2024; Azonuche & Enyejo, 2024). Interestingly, message clarity and tone also played a role—transparent statements outperformed promotional ones, even when conveying the same ESG commitment. These results align with signaling theory, indicating that consumers assign greater trust and preference to messages perceived as sincere and data-backed (Arinze et al., 2024).

The attribute importance scores underscore the need for ethical brands to prioritize environmental messaging and embed inclusivity narratives without over-relying on governance symbolism alone. The findings validate the hypothesis that Gen Z assigns hierarchical value to ESG elements, which marketers must consider when designing campaign strategies.

4.2 Interaction Effects: Message Tone, Channel, and Framing

Further statistical modeling revealed significant **interaction effects** between message tone, channel of communication, and ESG attribute levels. Transparent messages (e.g., “independently audited by a third party”) significantly outperformed promotional language (e.g., “our brand is the greenest”) across all ESG categories. The difference in utility was particularly large for governance claims, where trust-building is crucial (Ijiga et al., 2024).

Channel-specific effects were also observed. **Social media delivery enhanced the effectiveness of social equity messages**, especially when presented in storytelling formats or linked to influencer advocacy. Conversely, environmental and governance-related messages gained more traction on **official brand websites**, likely due to perceived credibility and depth (Ihimoyan et al., 2024).

Notably, the combination of **transparent tone + brand website** produced the highest utility score for governance transparency messaging, supporting the VBN theory that behavior is influenced by perceived sincerity and social norms (Ajiga et al., 2022). In contrast, **social tone + influencer post** maximized engagement for social equity narratives, showing the versatility required in ESG communication across contexts.

These findings illustrate the **importance of framing**—identical content yielded differing impacts depending on how and where it was delivered. As such, marketers must deploy ESG messaging strategically, adapting the tone and platform to optimize resonance. This insight expands on prior studies by confirming that not only content but **message architecture** shapes ethical consumer behavior.

4.3 Segment-Level Analysis by Demographics and Psychographics

Cluster analysis identified **three major Gen Z sub-segments** based on preferences revealed through conjoint choices:

1. **Eco-Activists (41%)** – Strong preference for environmental initiatives, particularly carbon neutrality and waste reduction. Typically younger (18–21), more politically engaged, and more likely to support activist brands.
2. **Community Advocates (36%)** – Prioritize social equity messaging such as fair wages and diversity in hiring. Often identify as members of marginalized groups and prefer peer-endorsed brand stories.

3. **Institutional Skeptics (23%)** – Favor governance transparency but are skeptical of ESG buzzwords. Tend to be older Gen Z (24–28), more pragmatic, and appreciate third-party validation over internal claims.

These segments mirrored patterns found in prior research (Imoh & Idoko, 2023; Azonuche & Enyejo, 2024). For example, Eco-Activists responded more positively to bold environmental statements, while Institutional Skeptics penalized brands using vague or unverifiable claims.

Demographic variables such as gender and education level also influenced preferences. Female respondents were more responsive to community-centric messaging, while those with a STEM background valued governance mechanisms. Psychographic traits—such as brand skepticism and social media literacy—further modulated attribute sensitivity.

These insights demonstrate that Gen Z is not monolithic; effective ESG-aligned messaging must reflect audience diversity. Personalization based on segment-specific traits will enhance the effectiveness of brand positioning strategies. Thus, integrating **advanced psychographic profiling** into ESG marketing design is key to maintaining long-term loyalty and relevance.

4.4 Implications for Ethical Brand Strategy and ESG Storytelling

The results carry profound implications for **ethical brand strategy**, especially for companies seeking long-term loyalty from Gen Z consumers. First, the prominence of **environmental messaging** implies that sustainability should be central—not peripheral—to branding. Firms must move beyond tokenism and embrace traceable, quantifiable sustainability actions (Oyedokun et al., 2024; Iwe et al., 2023).

Second, tone and transparency emerge as trust multipliers. Brands must emphasize clarity, accountability, and sincerity. The **failure to disclose verifiable metrics** or the use of exaggerated language significantly diminishes consumer trust, even if the message content is ESG-aligned. This supports findings by Ihimoyan et al. (2024) and aligns with behavioral signaling theory in marketing.

Third, **channel differentiation is essential**. Social media is best suited for socially-driven content, while websites are better for high-trust and detailed information. Omnichannel storytelling must therefore be coherent and customized, aligning with platform norms and user expectations (Ayanponle et al., 2024).

Finally, understanding consumer segmentation is vital. Not all Gen Z consumers respond equally to ESG content. Brands that invest in **audience profiling**, **AI-enhanced targeting**, and **dynamic content testing** will gain a competitive edge in conveying ethical positioning.

In essence, ethical storytelling must be **data-informed, transparent, and strategically distributed** to influence Gen Z purchase intent meaningfully.

4.5 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

While the study provides robust insights, certain **limitations** should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a **fractional factorial design**, which, while efficient, excludes some potential attribute combinations. This may limit the generalizability of findings across all ESG messaging variations (Idoko et al., 2024).

Second, the sample was geographically concentrated in the U.S., potentially limiting cross-cultural applicability. Gen Z in other regions may prioritize different ESG factors based on local political and economic contexts. Future studies could adopt a cross-national design to test **cultural moderating effects**.

Third, the use of **hypothetical brand profiles** may not perfectly reflect actual consumer behavior in live purchasing contexts. Though conjoint analysis approximates realistic decision-making, real-world factors such as peer influence, timing, or brand familiarity could moderate outcomes (Imoh et al., 2024).

Lastly, longitudinal research is needed to assess **behavioral persistence**. While respondents expressed preference during the study, it remains unclear whether ESG-aligned messaging translates to **repeat purchases** or long-term loyalty. Future research could explore **transactional data integration**, combining conjoint modeling with actual sales or engagement metrics.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study confirms that ESG-aligned messaging significantly influences Gen Z's purchase intent, with environmental and social components playing a more dominant role than governance-related elements. Multivariate conjoint analysis revealed that Gen Z places the highest value on climate-conscious messaging, followed closely by socially equitable brand practices. Transparent communication and appropriate delivery channels further amplified message effectiveness. Additionally, three Gen Z segments—Eco-Activists, Community Advocates, and Institutional Skeptics—were identified based on distinct message preferences. These findings underscore the importance of strategic message framing and personalization in ethical branding. By evaluating message attributes within realistic trade-off scenarios, this study offers empirical insights into what drives Gen Z's ethical consumption. Ultimately, ethical branding is not merely about value signaling but about connecting with the nuanced expectations of a socially conscious generation through data-informed, transparent, and platform-appropriate communication strategies that build trust and foster long-term brand loyalty.

5.2 Practical Implications for Marketers and Brand Strategists

For marketers, the insights from this study highlight the need to design ESG narratives that reflect Gen Z's prioritization of environmental sustainability and social equity. Brands should avoid one-size-fits-all messages and instead adopt tailored messaging frameworks that align with each consumer segment's values. Transparent messaging—especially when communicated through trusted platforms like brand websites or endorsed by credible voices on social media—can significantly improve brand engagement. Organizations should also invest in ESG data visibility, such as third-party audits and progress metrics, to reinforce message credibility. Furthermore, incorporating psychographic profiling into campaign planning can help identify and target high-value Gen Z subgroups. This approach not only improves message resonance but also enhances overall campaign efficiency. Strategic use of digital channels, tone calibration, and contextual storytelling should be central to ethical brand positioning. Companies that adapt to these evolving expectations will be better positioned to secure Gen Z's trust and sustained market relevance.

5.3 Strategic Recommendations for ESG Communication

To strengthen ESG communication, brands should adopt a three-tiered strategy: message authenticity, contextual relevance, and audience-specific targeting. First, message authenticity requires that all ESG claims are supported by verifiable actions, such as published impact reports or partnerships with independent evaluators. Second, contextual relevance means that the same ESG content should be framed differently depending on the channel—e.g., brief, engaging stories on social media and detailed disclosures on brand websites. Third, audience-specific targeting involves using behavioral and psychographic insights to design content that resonates with Gen Z sub-segments. AI-driven personalization tools and A/B testing frameworks can be used to optimize message delivery. Additionally, consistent reinforcement of ESG messages across the consumer journey—from ad impression to post-purchase engagement—can enhance recall and trust. Brands

that operationalize these strategies will not only improve consumer conversion but also contribute to a more ethical, informed, and sustainable marketplace.

5.4 Directions for Future Academic Inquiry

Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of ESG messaging on brand loyalty and consumer lifetime value among Gen Z audiences. While this study focused on immediate purchase intent, it remains to be seen whether such preferences persist over time and influence repurchase behavior or brand advocacy. Additionally, cross-cultural studies could reveal how Gen Z in other regions prioritize ESG components differently based on socio-economic and political contexts. Incorporating transactional data, social media behavior, and eye-tracking experiments could enrich the understanding of real-world response mechanisms. Another avenue involves testing how AI-generated ESG content compares to human-crafted narratives in terms of perceived authenticity and effectiveness. Researchers may also investigate how ESG messaging influences other generational cohorts for comparative analysis. Overall, expanding the empirical base across markets, channels, and time horizons will strengthen the theory and practice of ethical branding in the context of evolving global consumer consciousness.

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