

The Experiences and Reactions to Greenwashing from The Perspective of Green Consumers in Sri Lanka: A Qualitative Research

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Greenwashing is pervasive in the global market. Evidently, greenwashing is a phenomenon that must be eliminated from the market. Though the majority of the research on greenwashing is available in developed country contexts, the knowledge on the experiences of greenwashing and responses to greenwashing by consumers are scarce in developing Asian country contexts such as Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study explores the consumers' experiences of greenwashing and the reactions to greenwashing in Sri Lanka. Being based on the Interpretivism paradigm, we used the qualitative methodology. We purposefully selected eleven supermarket consumers who have done higher studies in environment-related study streams and conducted in-depth interviews to collect rich data. We employed thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data gathered from the respondents. The respondents revealed that they had experienced two main types of greenwashing activities: false green claims and false green images. Notably, green supermarket consumers react to greenwashing in various ways, such as taking actions against greenwashing, expressing feelings against greenwashing, and suggesting ways to react against greenwashing. This paper contributes to greenwashing literature by uncovering the green supermarket consumers' experiences of greenwashing and the reactions to greenwashing in Sri Lanka. Since greenwashing continues to damage Sri Lankan green market space in various ways, the authorities should establish adequate regulatory measures to prevent greenwashing and reposition the authentic green products within the Sri Lankan green consumers' minds. Also, with the heightening consumer awareness of greenwashing, organizations need to refrain from greenwashing practices to sustain and prosper in a green market.

Keywords: *False Green Claims, False Green Images, Greenwashing, Green Consumers, Sri Lanka*