Green Brand Image and Sustainability: Marketing Implications of High-School Student Responses

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Abstract

This is a research paper that is focused on assessing issues relating to green brand image influences on high-school students and its implications sustainability.

An interpretive methodology was utilised in order to help understand high-school student perceptions of Brand Image in terms of Sustainability. The scope for this research were high-school students with the population of interest made up of 11 private schools, located at independent school sites, situated in Bangkok, Thailand.

Findings: The research outcomes comprised of Five (5) Main Themes: Emotional Engagement, Green Brand Trust, Green Brand Loyalty, Functional Benefits, Sustainable Corporate Image; and Twelve (12) sub-themes created through the focused analysis of 133 conversation targets.

The paper addresses the raised issues and implications for managing Green Brand Image and Sustainability. These indications are synthesised from major research actors in the field that show that socio-political strategies, economics and marketing Brand developments that should be made clearer and a paradigm shift made to strengthen strategies to engage younger people in positive Brand Image management.

Keywords: green brand image, climate change, sustainability, high-school students

1. Introduction

Climate change awareness is the use of green branding as a global underpinning mechanism (Lin, Lobo, & Leckie, 2017) supporting Product-consumer engagement. Subsequently, green brand images have emerged as a powerful tool for marketers to engage climate change through a prominent focus on gaining consumer purchaser attention (Adams, Smith, & Straume, 2012). This has led to transformative green marketing practices (Polonsky, 2011), highlighting the possibilities of green brands through images associated with sustainability outcomes (Yadav, Kumar, & Pathak, 2016) and inspire consumers to behave as "advertised". Hansen (2002) suggested that advertising gains were possible with the developing relationship of brand image and climate change issues as a way to create strong connections to issues considered by individuals—who had clear opinions and intentions surrounding climate change. Thus, making the connections of brand image through advertising and connecting this to climate change has been a powerful move in the advertising industry. However, this has been tried many times previously. For example, Benneton in the early 80's introduced shock images to connect the brand to social justice orientations (Barela, 2003). Today, high-school students are seen as viable groups worthy of directing specific brand messages and images in order to influence their buying power—especially through myriad digital channels.

Presently, brand image and climate change issues are connected through advertising to high-school student to make them actively aware of a brand's eco-friendly products and services through a resource-based orientation (Barney, 2001). This leads to the building of green brand equity (Adner & Zemsky, 2006). Sustainability is therefore a related consideration, but the posit of the brand image appears to be a much more focused underpinning to sustainability notions of brand imaging (Aaker, 1997). Developing a brand to match company intent (Schmitt, 2012) also poses problems for both the company (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), and the targeted group in this case high-school students.

1.1 Brands and Climate Change Communications Strategy

Brands are considered by many groups as instruments to build a better world (Grubor & Milovanov, 2017). Brands appear to follow symbolic connections to their targeted groups through brand identity (Kotler & Keller, 2006) and many appear to follow sustainability trends to ensure their visibility (Horlings, 2010). This engagement of the consumer with the brand rests on reference points such as social image, self-image (Lee, Su, & Yang, 2016), representing personal attitude, brand preference and brand loyalty (Miller, 1988). The complex engagement of brand awareness (Esch el al., 2006) within a collective competition (Heath, 2009) makes these other reference points of less importance, and the primary mode for connection—hence brand image through advertising gaining brand recognition (Zhou, Yim, & Tse, 2005) and ensuring heightened brand personality (Lucia et al., 2011).

Connecting with the targeted consumer requires for high-school students who for many, are adept with specific kinds of technology channels and appear to be bombarded through multi-channels and influenced faster through advertising yield and where such targets are influenced by group/peer pressures (Nandan, 2005). However, research provides some understanding that at different stages of the purchase process, high-school students are more focused on the social aspects of being a consumer. There is however, a paucity of research underpinning high-school students express their engaged consumer orientation (Bunce, Baird, & Jones, 2017). This is the focal point for many brand awareness programmes. Subsequently, consumer socialisation patterns serve to give high-school student confidence in making appropriate choices between brands offset by their social grouping influences. This coupled to potential or real expected environment messages (Hartmann, Ibanez, & Sainz, 2005) suggest that high-school students become really tuned into adjusting their responses to such marketing presentations. Further, personal products would appear to become a major connection to the high-school group as their personalities are developing and they become more focused on products that match their internal green brand attitudes (Raska & Shaw, 2012). It would also appear that high-school students are conditioned to accept or reject brand images according to their own internal green constructs based on their peer grouping and their channel sponsors notions of green brand images (Chen & Chang, 2012) resulting in brand consciousness and attachment (Park et al., 2010).

Brand image that works with this group appears to be a combination of attributes seen in the product or services that uphold issues such as visible activism, local position/focus, and subsequent efforts of the company to rationalise the greening product/service supply chain. This means making the whole supply chain visible and ensuring that there is no violation of the greening requirements surrounding this target groups climate change orientation.

Many high-school students appear to focus on the notion that they will inherit the world's climate change problems and issues and thus show conclusively that they have a right to have their views made known and understood by companies who supply them with product/services. This builds on a mantra from McDonalds marketing—"get them while their young and they will be a customer all of their life". Enabling such groups requires companies to engage in a sustainable strategy and generate appropriate data surrounding the relevance of that strategy to the high-school student's group. However, today with severe issues surrounding child-relevant data management, it is difficult in some countries to actually generate such data demands, and this leaves the group considered as an outlier—when in fact they want to be treated the same as any other group for marketing purposes.

What is it that high-school students want from products and services? and does this change?

In order for a brand image to be successful it must translate its brand message so that it is relevant to its target group and influence its buying behaviour (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010). This message is often now directed specifically to high-school student through technology (Hudders et al., 2017), rather than through their parents affecting the child's consumer socialization (Dotson & Hyatt, 2005). However, today more sophisticated messages that are more personal engage each child is considered more important and this is often through digital components, such as the mobile phones. Successful brands do this through specific and distinct offerings such as goods that are produced on-demand to their specification and wants. This leads primarily to good business engagement because of repeat business. In this respect, a good brand image creates product/service demands and ensures the business survival and profit. Companies must embed green DNA in all operational pursuits and this takes imagination, time and effort to change the company culture. The company must then transform how it engages with customers, and in this case conduct appropriate and measured marketing research related to finding out what high school students want, but also deliver this consistently through the brand image.

Being green and being accepted by the high-school student group is a complex problem that is difficult to engage

with and that signifies a continuing issue for marketers—how to engage those that will be important to your business operating model?

The literature on brand image and high-school student's views are very rare as the extant literature of brand image has mainly focused on competitive advantage and financial performance of adult populations. Further, a customer orientation is required by using brand image capabilities to continuously update their brand image to match changing consumer demands (Han, Kim, & Srivastava, 1998). This is especially important in this type of group. Consequently, this raises some necessary and informed issues (Househ, 2011), and produces the context for the research question, *In what ways are high-school students influenced by Green Brand Image and Sustainability?*

2. Method

Examining green brand image and sustainability developments for a target group with so little derived data, demands a qualitative study to help distinguish between the many raised climate concerns (Walsh, White, & Young, 2008). The target respondents for inclusion in the research study are high-school students whose opinions are considered authentic and authoritive as 'knowledge agents' (Benn et al., 2008; Sbaraini et al., 2011) reflecting distinctive personal and continuing climate change experiences. These knowledge agents are focused on the research concerns (Cassell & Symon, 2004) by offering material observations regarding important topical "expert" opinion in relation to green brand image and sustainability perceptions (Hansson & Bryngelsson, 2009).

The interview process employed semi-structured interviews underpinned by a subjective "knowledge" viewpoint (Kvale, 1996) designed to ensure the safety of the high-school students and necessary to ensure their security/protection and confidentiality of their opinions (Williamson & Burns, 2014), as well as being conducted from a known safe location—school (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Parental, student, and school manager informed consent was provided in writing. No video was recorded, but the interview audio was recorded, and additional non-identifiable notes were made according to appropriate and purposeful qualitative practices (Nowell et al., 2017). No high-school student was interviewed alone, and no student was without a school representative present. The research method was also reinforced by utilising an inductive/theory building approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This methodology is devised for constructing useful contextual data outcomes (Qu & Dumay, 2011) which informs richer theory development (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2007) and underpinned through reflexivity (Malterud, 2001).

2.1 Participant Characteristics

Eleven (11) high-school students associated with independent schools interested in climate change, located at a variety of separate and in-scope private schools, were randomly targeted and engaged through distributed online video linkages as part of taught Climate Change online sessions. This work is focused on the material issues raised associated with high-school student opinions. This materially impacts on the purposeful actualisation and provision of future developments of high-school students relating to environmental effects by informing this aspect of climate change discussion. The students provided the data during the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, the targeted closed population of eleven (11), were all contained within an identified research frame (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Fink, 2000), which was made up of all high school students who had on-going climate change experiences thus informing empirical adequacy (Spanos, 1990).

2.2 Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out with one (1) respondent—chosen at random (James & James, 2011)—from the population and excluded from the main interview process following Maxwell (2013)—leaving 10 high-school students as a focus for the main interviews. The outcome of the pilot study validated changes to language and the logic of the probing questions to respondents (Kim, 2011).

2.3 Interviews

All interviews were conducted in English and took approximately 45 minutes (Ward et al., 2015; Sbaraini et al., 2011), and recorded with permission (Duranti, 2006). An identical set of prepared open questions for each individual was used (Gray & Wilcox, 1995; James, 2014; Kvale, 1996) and modified through the use of conditional probing questions (Balshem, 1991; Punch, 2014; Meurer et al., 2007). Whole-process validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) underpinning methodological coherence (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2018) was preserved by connecting the main research question to the data outcomes (Stenbacka, 2001).

2.4 Data Analysis

In terms of the data analysis procedure, each interview was independently and manually coded (Dey, 2005)

leading to the thematic and sub-theme analysis and outcomes using NVivo 11 (Glaser, 1992; Walsh, White, & Young, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). The analysis fully represented the respondent's views (Buston, 1999; James, 2015). The outcome was based on employing 'credibility' (Johnson, 1997) and 'dependability' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as a replacement for 'reliability' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, this supports a rational outcome as "best explanation" (Achinstein, 1992) recreating through grounded theory towards the most valuable outcome (Noble & Mitchell, 2016; James & James, 2011). Finally, this research focus exploits authentic opinion reflecting the narrative and experience level of the high-school students through robust rigour (Seale & Silverman, 1997) and were designed to help construct an analysis committed to the 'interests of the public good' (Sinzdak, 2008).

3. Results

3.1 Figures and Tables—Illustrating the Data Outcomes

The research outcomes as shown in Figure 1 below is provided as a layered, considered choice (Reissmann, 2008). The outcomes are illustrated below in Table 1 and comprises of Five (5) main themes: Emotional Engagement, Green Brand Trust, Green Brand Loyalty, Functional Benefits, Sustainable Corporate Image; *and* Twelve (12) sub-themes underpinned by 133 conversation targets as in Table 1, below.
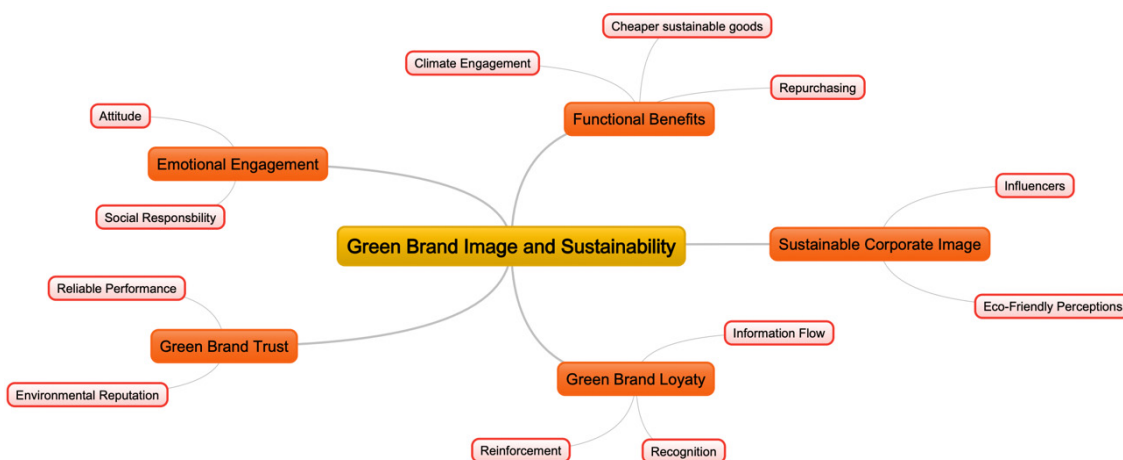

Figure 1. Research outcomes

Table 1. Primary outcomes—Research question, themes, sub-themes and conversation targets

Research Question		
In what ways are high-school students influenced by Green Brand Image and Sustainability?		
Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Conversation Targets
Emotional Engagement	Attitude	11
	Social Responsibility	09
	Total	**20**
Green Brand Trust	Reliable Performance	10
	Environmental Reputation	15
	Total	**25**
Green Brand Loyalty	Reinforcement	13
	Recognition	07
	Information Flow	06
	Total	**26**
Functional Benefits	Climate Engagement	10
	Cheaper Sustainable Goods	08
	Repurchasing	11
	Total	***29***
Sustainable Corporate Image	Influencers	15
	Eco-friendly Perceptions	18
	Total	***33 (133)***

The discussion focuses on the main-theme elements, where the respondent's voice is revealed by the stated ad-verbatim dialogue, reflecting the respondent's opinion (Cassell & Symon 2004), where the reporting format is directly informed/derived from Gonzalez (2008) and Daniels et al. (2007). Consequently, the explanations that are presented are considered internally coherent (Coombs, 2017) adding to the value of the consequent analysis whilst maintaining respondent confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009). The amount of numbers do not carry any weight in the analysis, but numbers are included to give some breadth to the stated theme development.

3.2 Data Discussion Reporting Process

The discussion focuses on the main-theme elements, where the respondent's voice is revealed by the stated ad-verbatim dialogue, reflecting the respondent's opinion (Cassell & Symon, 2004), where the reporting format is directly informed/derived from Gonzalez (2008) and Daniels et al. (2007). Consequently, the explanations that are presented are considered internally coherent (Coombs, 2017) adding to the value of the consequent analysis whilst maintaining respondent confidentiality (Kaiser, 2009). The amount of numbers do not carry any weight in the analysis, but numbers are included to give some breadth to the stated theme development.

The primary outcomes are presented below (after Gonzalez, 2008), using isolated data abstraction layers (Cassell & Symon 2004). Consequently, by considering the research question—*In what ways are high-school students influenced by Green Brand Image and Sustainability*, the outcomes are stated here as (5) Main-Themes, and (12) sub-themes as indicated in Table 1 above, where each sub-theme is located and examined within each respective associated Main-Theme.

3.3 Main Themes

This paper targets the opinions of high-school students who have an interest in climate change and how this influences their opinion of Green Brand Image and Sustainability. The relevant statements made by respondents are presented and each main theme is then immediately discussed.

3.3.1 Main Theme—Emotional Engagement

In terms of Attitude respondent (02/09) suggested that:

"…Yes, we have used the Greta effect because everyone has heard of her. However, she does not represent us, we don't agree with what she says, cos we need to do it differently for adults to take us seriously…"

"…We feel empowered now to go out and take the climate change message to people. It is about making sure that people hear, see us and be moved by our message of hope…"

In terms of Social Responsibility respondents (04/07) suggested that:

"…We expect all consumers to be SR. But they are not. Rich people are the worst. They can do something, but don't. We together respect others who like us think in the same way—and that goes for the producers…"

"…It is something we are taught here, but as soon as you go outside the school, it isn't seen—especially for multi-nationals here…"

The high-school students appear to understand very well the effects of an emotional engagement, as this is espoused through a group rational and modified reinforcement of localised group norms. Emotional positioning through green brand imaging has not been readily assessed in the literature and its impact is essentially unknown. However, the presence and perceived attributes of the target consumer provide an important level of emotional engagement and resulting attitude. Further, it would appear that high-school students understand their needs and make choices associated with the perceived green intentions of the green positioning strategy (Roozen & De Pelsmacker, 1998). Positioning of the brand and subsequent imaging effects is essential in competitive markets (Hooley, Saunders, & Piercy, 1998). However, in the high-school student group the level of emotional engagement is unstated, or ignored by the product producer, and thus, an essential outcome of the greening narrative through brand imaging is left out and can lead to perceptions of ambiguous greening claims (Pickett Kangun, & Grove, 1995).

The high-school students appeared to recognise the heightened need to see and experience the way in which product/service providers complied with business norms associated with social responsibility and more closely with environmental responsibility. They appear to be sceptical of larger businesses and multi-nationals who are thought to be less accountable than expected. The high-school students appeared to exhibit a narrow focus on assessing green corporate producer capability and orientation towards altruistic outcomes and to a larger extent a moral responsibility to do something good (Rodin, 2005). This appears to define their experiences and subsequent buying actions and also has raised their perceptions of how well companies show through green

brand imaging, their level of targeted emotional engagement with the producers through differentiation (Jamali & Mirshak, 2007) according to their stated social responsibility remit (Hąbek &Wolniak, 2016; Andayani, 2021).

3.3.2 Main Theme—Green Brand Trust

In terms of Reliable Performance respondent (07) suggested that:

> "…I trust certain brands because they deliver. We trust the same brands because we think the same and we support each other through the purchase and use of it…"

In terms of Environmental Reputation respondent (01) suggested that:

> "…I don't think that brands that have been going for more than 20 years can show that they are green brands, because they didn't do it in the beginning and are just jumping on the climate-change bandwagon…"

Green branding has only been a delivery strategy for most producers for a very short-period of time (Leonidou & Skarmeas, 2015) and high-school students expressed little confidence about brands that only just appear to have gone "green". This appears to be coherent with the high-school students group norms, as it is perceived as new, logical and dynamic to support. To the high-school students, underpinning green brand trust requires a continuing longer-term narrative (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). The student perceptions result from their own experiences and in this case also indicate that for trust development this would take a much longer time to enact. The sense of differentiation therefore polarises consistent messages associated with newer product strategy (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2005), from those brands that should have done something "green" previously but didn't. This issue is very relevant to high-school students, as such younger consumers have been treated as indifferent to historical data, as many consumers and corporates ignore their ability to make such marketing decision outcomes. Further, the data suggests that the high-school students act within a focused associated network, with functional and emotional entanglements (Lin, Lobo, & Leckie, 2017), and levels of restricted group trust and authenticity (Phung, Ly, & Nguyen, 2019) that openly and powerfully direct their consumer actions and reinforce green brand trust perceptions through group norms (Kong & Zhang, 2014).

3.3.3 Main Theme—Green Brand Loyalty

In terms of Reinforcement respondent (08) suggested that:

> "…We all agree on a product (mostly) that meets our needs. We buy this product as it matches our attitudes and to show eco-signals to others…"

In terms of Recognition respondent (10) suggested that:

> "…The products we like, are also seen by others, who tell us how much we support good eco-products. This helps with our ego and also shows that other recognise our good choices…"

In terms of Information Flow respondent (06) suggested that:

> "…It is our thinking that sustainability, information flow and knowing what is right with a green product that helps us differentiate between products and groups of products - whether sold by the same company or not. It is confusing sometimes…"

It would appear that the high-school students group concentrate on moving from innovative products (green imaging) that get their immediate attention and move towards more sustainable products (Engardio, 2007). This results from recognition of such innovative products within discernible levels of learned sustainability differentiation (Armstrong & Lehew, 2011). This is a significant outcome. This also shows an increase in pressure from independent stakeholders (Kumar et al., 2018) and a subsequent response to the differentiated communication of the brand imaging (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000) and underpins a readiness to accept brand imaging messages and green claims (Peattie, 1999) that "connect" to them (Bashir et al., 2020) through image/message reinforcement measures offered through consistent information flows.

Green brand loyalty appears to be important to student group cohesion (Carron & Brawley, 2000). In this respect, the high-school students show their cohesion and the linkage to green brand loyalty through in-group reinforcement processes that share green data across digital channels/platforms. There is no evidence of one following the other, and this is instrumental in that the high-school students seem to execute their group roles and experience interdependent relationships within the group, whilst having similar dispositions creating entitativity (Lickel et al., 2000).

3.3.4 Main Theme—Functional Benefits

In terms of Climate Engagement respondent (01) suggested that:

"…Our future requires us to act morally and ensuring product we buy are ethically produced and green. We wear such products to show others our concept too…"

<u>In terms of Cheaper Sustainable Goods respondent (06) suggested that:</u>

"…products supposed to last. We think though that this means weeks or a few months because we know we will change our minds soon. We accept that. So, we expect these products should be the same functionally for this time…"

<u>In terms of Repurchasing respondent (03) suggested that:</u>

"…It is better to buy products you know from information and experience. Many times we have moved to another product only to come back again. We consistently buy products that match our green needs…"

The core of the brand is functionality and how this enhances the perception of climate engagement and what it does for the purchaser. Subsequently, from the high-school student responses, this has implications, as major brands do not focus on their requirements, as this segment is considered an outlier or inferior to the main purpose of the brand rationale - despite the obvious imperative that young consumers become main consumers as they get older. Therefore, the lack of priority and focus, becomes a risk to the sustainability of the brand image. Green messages without the associated functionality lead to short-term involvement. Further, Grant (2008) indicates that the greening perspective associated with brand eco-image development is a short-term priority where features such as an eco-advantage is predominantly short-lived (Söderholm, 2020) as competitors see the outcomes of marketing strategy and change according to the merits (for the producer) relative to the level of gained profit. The coherence of high-school student consumer benefits associated with the producer stated corporate green brand imaging, results in enhanced trust that is subsequently reinforced for any subsequent repurchases. However, this needs to be viewed in the context of requiring cheaper products over time, that are consistently sustainable along with the measures adopted by the producer. Given that green products often cost more than products that are not considered green, indicates that the high-school students perspectives will quickly forget products that do not match their approach to product sustainability requirements.

Subsequently, consumers change and so must the green brand image narrative. Changes to language ensure focused connections to consumer tribes, but this is driven by the producer. Further, the high-school students view brand image sustainability to be a reactive measure, associated with dropping demand and requires increased attention to manage the consumer market share.

3.3.5 Main Theme—Sustainable Corporate Image

<u>In terms of Influencers respondents (05/07/03) suggested that:</u>

"…We read and test like any other buyers. Overtime we see what is sustainable and what is not. We make very quick decisions if they don't do it, we drop them as a group. Check out TikTok. The net is great for that…"

"…I know that we follow companies that show some sustainability outcomes. We follow and show what is important to us. I hope they see it too…"

"…We see companies supporting climate change and we are influenced to buy products that are green that they sell. It is that simple…"

<u>In terms of Eco-friendly Perceptions respondent (02/04) suggested that:</u>

"…Being eco-friendly requires their commitment. When we see that, we commit too—with our money…"

"…The key is in the consistent message of their advertising. They make mistakes, but if there is green consistency, we can support them…"

Corporate image issues embedded in contemporary advertising (Martínez, 2015) that now emphasise and integrate with client perceptions of green brand trust (Berry & Rondinelli, 1998) are also likely to discover a larger section of society wanting to support and trust such stated advertising outcomes (Chang & Fong, 2010). Influencing corporate image changes are the data corresponding to rational inquiry during marketing research activities (Reinartz, Wiegand, & Imschloss, 2019) indicating consumer preferences related to purchase intentions for eco-products (Namkung & Jang, 2013). This is signalled by the high-school students as being represented by "innovative methods" for eco-message reinforcement (Porter & van der Linde, 1995). Further, digital channels provide a quick means to encapsulate green corporate image development and communication capability and these can be done very quickly (Reinartz, Wiegand, & Imschloss, 2019). This coupled with the predominant digital culture of "online at all times", means that product producers can engage with appropriate apps and

thereby influence the main actors associated with the student groups (Shrum, McCarty, & Lowrey, 1995). In return, the high-school students also showed that they have some element of control over purchasing behaviour, which appears to be moderated by the group, as the purchasing behaviour can be assessed across the variety of digital touchpoints resulting in a buy or no buy situation (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Eco-friendly according to the high-school students suggests a continuing engagement of the corporate image which remain as stated by the producer consistently over time—where there is a congruency between eco-innovation in the production and process innovations.

Since research has indicated that sustainable corporate image has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Martenson, 2007), then a sustainable green corporate image may have the ability to widen the scope of the production, realise standardisation of the production process to meet consistent and controlled criteria and green image development to meet levels of competitiveness against the competition (Hart, 1995).

4. Conclusions

It would appear that there are different types of brand image that "connect" to specific groups of consumers (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001) and these have powerful implications especially for material green consciousness (Connolly & Prothero, 2010) of consumers including high-school students (Lee, 2010; Lee, 2008). The attractiveness between brand loyalty and brand reinforcement appears to be posited within their retention decision capability. Further, high-school students act as brand reinforcers to their group through the technology channels that are utilised which reflect their short time-frame of psychological engagements thus fostering brand loyalty (Calvert, 2001). Further, the evidence points to visible brand reinforcement accompanying environmental knowledge (Lee, 2010) through consumer group led socialisation patterns of engagement (John, 1999). Subsequently, such groups operate to continuously reinforce themselves using social-trust processes that operate openly and visibly within the group architecture. In this respect brand personality is personified in the brand positioning strategy and brand attributes of the company (Hartmann, Ibanez, & Sainz, 2005) and may be perceived as different by between differentiated groups.

The high-school participants appeared to understand that one product-one message could not be utilised effectively and that there are multiple consumer segments that can be satisfied with exactly the same product (Pomering & Johnson, 2009). Thus, mutually exclusive product messages do not appear to work with multi-segment product types and where no one is happy at the outcome, as messages become weakened through inadvertent attention to meanings and possibilities. Using digital connections/channels without understanding weakens the message and waters-down the capability of the brand. The data suggest that this is a major area of concern and unqualified differentiated messages may not provide the high-school consumer with an authoritive understanding that their needs are being met despite the group reinforcement mechanisms. Thus green-washing is an issue However, claims by producers/marketers weren't always understood by the high-school students and this may reflect on their lack of knowledge of the production processes associated with the product manufacture and delivery, as well as the technical terminology utilised in advertising or the image presented affecting the perception of the brand personality (Shrum, McCarty, & Lowrey, 1995).

High-school students appeared to encourage themselves to purchase products that were seen as green above all other products but still required to have products that matched their egos and the group purchasing norms (Lee, 2010; Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006). Searching for products and data about such products become a normal purchasing behaviour. The difference was the level of engagement in such searches. Outlier students were not seen as trustful and therefore only had short connections to the group. Whereas, those that purchased products that were accepted by all members as meeting the green conditions and the wider element of reinforcement of group norms were acceptable.

With brands so "everyday" that are perceived by the consumer as saturated and tired, where young consumers have begun to switch off from such company messages and ignore the associated products. However, the younger element of consumers cannot be ignored as indifferent or misunderstood, as these are the individuals who have pestered their parents for products that appear to have been important to them. In this way, much consumerism has been lost due to the inadequate understanding by the product manufacturers and even the marketers building consumer demand through climate change and product association (Ahearne et al., 2010). This research shows that high-school students already have the ability to make "political" decisions and disengage with products that do not provide the level of engagement necessary for them to use as a part of their "connected" experiences within the groups that they discuss, assess, decide and reinforce products to match their particular orientations as depicted by Straughan and Roberts (1999).

High-school students who demand and purchase green products do so, not only to satisfy their group influences

but also to reinforce themselves as visible and responsible consumers (Moisander, 2007) to their connected group and raising a consistent open attitude to green brand image and sustainability (Chen & Chai, 2010).

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