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Green Marketing and Its Implications for Business Performance and Reputation, Case of Adama Special Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia

Girma Negussie Hurrisa (PhD.Cand.)[1], and Dr. Raja Mannar(Assoc. Prof)[2]

Corresponding Author: Girma Negussie Hurrisa(*girmanegussie2018@gmail.com*)

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Abstract

As competition becomes bottlenecked, businesses should strive to add more value for their customers and other key stakeholders through their offerings. Currently, the issue of environmental concern is becoming a cross-cutting fact and one way of creating a better business image. Green marketing is one of the strategies towards this end. The study has focused on the implications of green marketing on business image and performance in the case of Adama special zone, Oromia regional state, Ethiopia. In this study, both descriptive and inferential statistics have been employed. The research randomly selected six companies in the zone, out of which 374 respondents were considered. The results revealed that there was a gap in environmental sustainability marketing in the zone as some issues about product reuse, recycling, and reverse engineering were concerned. Besides, green marketing has an effect on business corporate image and a mediated effect on business performance. On the other hand, a business reputation has a direct effect on performance. The study recommends that collaboration and integration of all the key stakeholders towards achieving green marketing are foreseeable practices.

Key Words: Green Marketing, Triple-bottom-line, Environment, Corporate Image and Performance

[1] *Haramaya University, Department of Management, Ethiopia.*

[2] *Global Humanistic University, Department of Finance, Thailand.*

1. Introduction

Environmental management has become a critical priority for many businesses due to increasing environmental concerns and the growing pressure to engage in eco-friendly practices (King, 2002). As a result, many companies are working to strengthen their environmental positioning by publicizing their sustainability efforts. Green marketing has emerged as a key strategy through which businesses promote their environmental initiatives, aiming to attract environmentally conscious customers and gain a competitive edge. However, not all green marketing claims reflect genuine environmental efforts. As noted by Webster (2020), while some businesses have successfully reduced their environmental footprints, others tend to exaggerate or make misleading claims about their sustainability practices.

It is unrealistic for businesses, which are socio-economic entities, to remain indifferent to the rising environmental awareness that significantly influences consumer behavior. Marketing managers, in particular, face the challenge of addressing the growing concerns of environmentally aware consumers. The traditional view of businesses as entities focused solely on profit has evolved. Today, businesses are increasingly seen as socially responsible institutions. Incorporating environmental consciousness into a company's culture goes beyond producing eco-friendly products; it involves adopting sustainable business practices across all facets of operations (Boztepe, 2012).

Despite the significant influence of marketing on a company's sales, performance, and market share, earlier research on green marketing has often shown mixed results, including declines in sales and market share. Consequently, encouraging consumers to adopt more sustainable behaviors has become a key focus for modern marketing strategies (D'Souza, 2002). Green marketing now encompasses a broad spectrum of initiatives aimed at creating value that meets customer needs while addressing environmental concerns. Naseem (2020) argued that convincing individuals to engage in more environmentally responsible behaviors remains a central goal of traditional green marketing research. Ultimately, green marketing seeks to foster long-term relationships with various stakeholders, including consumers, the environment, and society.

There is no universally accepted definition of green marketing. The term is often used interchangeably with concepts like "environmental marketing," "eco-marketing "or" ecological marketing." McDaniel (1993) defines green marketing as the practice of using environmental and consumer marketing strategies to address ecological concerns. Baker (2003) expands on this definition, describing green marketing as a comprehensive management approach that recognizes, anticipates, and satisfies societal and consumer needs in a sustainable and responsible way. Juraskova (2012) defines it as any activity aimed at meeting human needs while minimizing negative environmental impacts. Polonsky (2001) further notes that green marketing involves actions that help meet human needs with the least possible harm to the environment. The integration of environmentally friendly practices into a company's culture is essential, extending beyond the production of eco-friendly products to include the selection of sustainable markets and practices.

Empirical evidence suggests that green marketing plays a vital role in bridging the gap between human society and the environment. In the Adama Special Zone, for example, the improper disposal of packaging materials like plastic bags, bottles, and other waste has led to environmental issues such as clogged drainage systems and damaged landscapes, particularly

given the region's natural valley structure. These issues not only threaten the environment but also the daily lives of local residents. Furthermore, many companies in the zone fail to integrate environmental considerations into their promotional activities. Advertising messages, brochures, newsletters, and other promotional tools often neglect to address sustainability concerns (Nandakumar, 2010; Jamsa, 2011).

In addition, problems related to the handling and distribution of perishable goods, such as food items and bottled drinks have further exacerbated environmental concerns. Improper storage and logistics have contributed to product spoilage, posing health risks to consumers. Despite these challenges, this study aims to investigate the level of green marketing practices in the Adama Special Zone, examine the relationship between green marketing and business image, and evaluate how these practices can enhance business performance by cultivating a positive corporate image in the region.

2. Literature Review Summary

Green marketing has evolved as a strategic tool for businesses to address environmental concerns and gain a competitive edge. As businesses recognize the growing importance of environmental sustainability, green marketing has become a crucial element in shaping corporate strategies. It involves offering environmentally friendly products, reducing waste, using recyclable packaging, and adopting energy-efficient business practices (Kotler, 2010; Li, 2020).

The concept of green marketing emerged in response to traditional marketing's disregard for environmental and social issues, and it now emphasizes the importance of addressing both consumer wants and the broader social and environmental concerns (Fathi, 2009). Environmentally conscious consumers, who assess the environmental impact of their consumption and its long-term effects on future generations, are the target audience for green marketing initiatives (Chen Y. S., 2014). As businesses incorporate green practices into their operations, they not only promote environmental preservation but also enhance their corporate image and attract eco-conscious consumers (Jaini, 2019; Lizbetinova, 2019).

Research highlights that green marketing can lead to improvements in business performance through enhanced corporate image, market differentiation, and the development of new markets (Dangelico, 2010; Chen J., 2018). Green marketing strategies help companies gain customer loyalty, build brand equity, and improve their reputation, which in turn can lead to better financial performance (Shahzad, 2020; Sellitto, 2018). However, not all businesses can effectively leverage green marketing strategies. Successful green marketing campaigns require a commitment to sustainability and innovation, as seen in companies like Toyota and L'Oréal, which have successfully integrated sustainability into their business models (Ionescu, 2020; Chang, 2013).

Furthermore, an organization's environmental image plays a key role in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. A positive environmental image enhances the overall perception of the company and strengthens relationships with stakeholders across the supply chain (Lee, 2013; Lin, 2014). Effective green marketing can foster both environmental and business performance, creating a win-win scenario for companies, consumers, and the environment (Margareta Nadanyiova, 2020).

3. Developed Hypotheses

Based on the literature reviewed, the following hypotheses have been developed:

- **Hypothesis 1**:

- **Ho1**: Green marketing has no effect on business image.
- **Ha1**: Green marketing has a positive effect on business image.

- **Hypothesis 2**:
  - **Ho2**: Business image has no effect on business performance.
  - **Ha2**: Business image has a positive effect on business performance.
- **Hypothesis 3**:
  - **Ho3**: Green marketing has no mediation effect on business performance.
  - **Ha3**: Green marketing has a mediation effect on business performance.

These hypotheses aim to explore the relationship between green marketing, business image, and performance, providing insights into how environmental marketing can impact business success.

4. Research Methods

The study employed a **mixed-method approach**, incorporating both **qualitative** and **quantitative** research techniques. A total of six companies from the Adama Special Zone were selected using **simple random sampling**. To gather data, **stratified random sampling** was applied to select 374 respondents, with 323 employees and 51 management-level participants (ranging from operational to top-level managers). The survey instrument consisted of both **closed-ended** and **open-ended** questions.

The collected data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** to summarize the responses and **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)** for hypothesis testing and path analysis. For the statistical analysis, **SPSS Version 23** and **AMOS software** were used to evaluate the relationships between the variables and test the research hypotheses.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1. Result

Table- 5.1. Reliability test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.806	26

Based on table-4.01 above cronbach alpha is 0.806 with 26 items this will be take for grant as it is above the threshold 0.7. Hence, the items internal consistency is good.

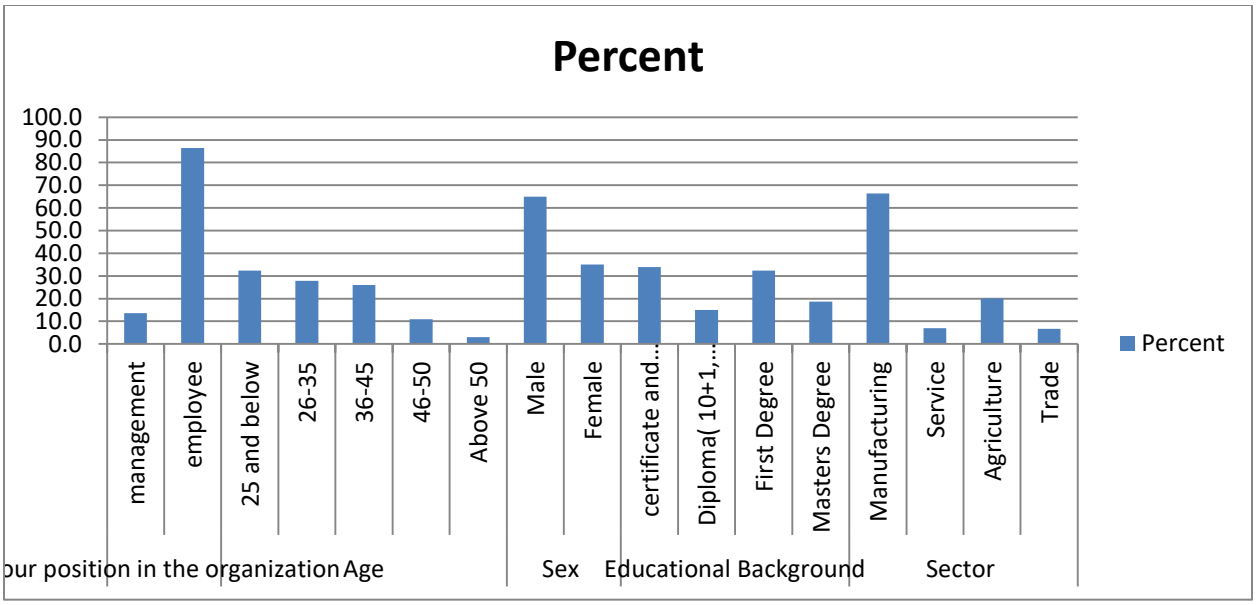
Table4-02 Demographic variables

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Your position in the organization	Management	51	13.6	13.6
	Employee	323	86.4	100.0
	Total	374	100	100
Age	25 and below	121	32.4	32.4

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	26-35	104	27.8	60.2
	36-45	97	25.9	86.1
	46-50	41	11.0	97.1
	Above 50	11	2.9	100.0
	Total	374	100.0	100.0
Sex	Male	243	65.0	65.0
	Female	131	35.0	100.0
	Total	374	100.0	100.0
Educational Background	certificate and below	127	34.0	34.0
	Diploma(10+1, 10+2, 10+3, 10+4 and 12+2)	56	15.0	48.9
	First Degree	121	32.4	81.3
	Master's Degree	70	18.7	100.0
	Total	374	100.0	100.0
Sector Category of Foreign Company	Manufacturing	248	66.3	66.3
	Service	26	7.0	73.3
	Agriculture	75	20.1	93.3
	Trade	25	6.7	100.0
	Total	374	100.0	100.0

Figure-4.02 Demographics of respondents

Given the above table and figure 4.02, the vast majority of respondent's positions in their organization were employees (86.4%), while management-level respondents were (13.6%). Most respondents were 35 and younger (60.2%). The genders of respondents were male (65%) and female (35%). Besides their educational background, the majority became first-degree or below (81.3%). Respondent sectors were manufacturing (66.3%), service (7%), agriculture (20.1%), and trade (6.7%).



5.2. Model Summary

Table-4.1.1 Model Summary

Model Fit Index	Result	Good fit Criteria	Chi-square	DF	P. value
GFI	0.91	≥ 0.9	1980.083	54	0.000
AGFI	0.90	≥0.9			
CFI	0.96	≥0.95			
RMSEA	0.058	≤0.06			
NNFI	0.96	≥0.95			

Based on Table 4.1.1 above, the result compared with the overall fit criteria indicates the CFA is satisfactory. The chi-square (χ^2)=1980.083, DF=54, and P-value<0.01, indicating significance. GFI (goodness of fit index) is 0.91 above the threshold, showing there is a fit between the hypothesized model and the observed covariance parameter. Likewise, AGFI (aadjusted goodness of fit index) also showed that it was above the minimum requirement criteria (0.9). In addition, all the other criterions, like the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) > 0.06, above the minimum requirement, and the Tucker Lewis index (non-normed fit index), are also above 0.95, indicating it met the criteria. Hence, the overall result indicated that the model fit criteria have been met.

5.2 Path Analysis

Figure-4.2.1 Path diagram

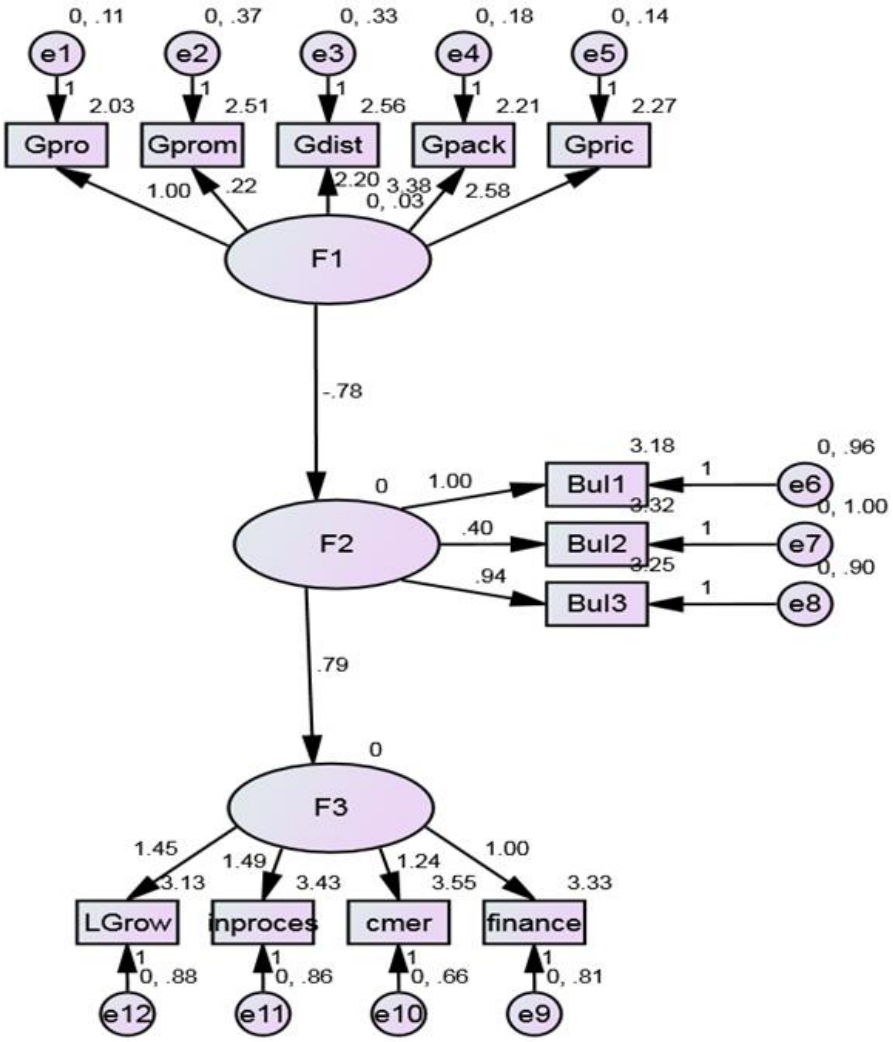


Figure 4.2.1 shows the structural equation modelling (SEM) path diagram. It entails the relationship or causality between latent and observed constructs. This makes a possible link between endogenous and exogenous variables that have been depicted on the diagram, showing the magnitude of the effect between them. It explains the association between the measurement in the rectangle and the latent variables such as F1 (green marketing), F2 (business image), and F3 (business performance). Green marketing consists of green product design, green promotion, green distribution, green packaging, and green pricing strategies. On the other hand, business performance has been taken from the perspective of balanced scorecard measurement.

The table 4.3.1 hypothesis-1 result indicated that (p-value< 0.01, C.R.=-2.788, β=-0.783) shows significance. The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 2.788 in absolute value is.005. In other words, the regression weight for F1 in the prediction of F2 is significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). This entails rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternate one. This means green marketing has an effect on business image. Meanwhile, hypothesis-2 results indicate that (p-

vale<0.05, C.R.=1.896, β= 0.794) showing significance at the 0.05 significance level. The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 1.896 in absolute value is.026. In other words, the regression weight for F1 in the prediction of F2 is significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Thus, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. It means that business image has an effect on business performance.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing Using SEM

Table-4.3.1 Variable effects

			Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
F2	<---	F1	-0.783	0.281	-2.788	0.005**	par_10
F3	<---	F2	0.794	0.419	1.896	0.026*	par_11

Source: Authors computation

Note: F1= Green marketing, F2=Business Image, F3=Business Performance,

**=sig. at 0.01 and *= sig at 0.05

4.4 Direct Effect

Table-4.4.1 Direct effect

	F1	F2	F3
F2	-0.783	0	0
F3	0	0.794	0

The direct (unmediated) effect of green marketing on business image is -0.783. That is, due to the direct (unmediated) effect of green marketing on business image, when green marketing goes up by 1, business image goes down by 0.783. This is in addition to any indirect (mediated) effect that green marketing, which includes green product design, green promotion, green distribution, green packaging, and green pricing, may have on a company's reputation. The direct (unmediated) effect of business image on business performance is 0.794. That is, due to the direct (unmediated) effect of business image on business performance, when business image goes up by 1, business performance goes up by 0.794. This is in addition to any indirect (mediated) effect that company image may have on business performance according to balanced scorecard perspectives that constitute finance performance, customer satisfaction, internal business operations, and the learning and growth of employees.

Table 4.5.1, Hypothesis 3, shows the indirect (mediated) effect of green marketing on business performance is -0.622. Thus, reject the null hypothesis, which means that there is a mediated effect of green marketing on business performance via business image. That is, due to the indirect (mediated) effect of green marketing on business performance, when green marketing goes up by 1, business performance goes down by 0.622. This is in addition to any direct (unmediated) effect that green marketing, which includes green product design, green promotion, green distribution, green packaging, and green pricing, may have on business performance in

general, incorporating four perspectives of a balanced scorecard: finance, customer, internal process, and learning and growth.

5.2. Discussions

The structural equation modelling (SEM) path diagram entails the relationship between latent and observed constructs. This makes a possible link between endogenous and exogenous variables that have been depicted on the diagram, showing the magnitude of the effect between them. It explains the association between the measurement in the rectangle and the latent variables such as F1 (green marketing), F2 (business image), and F3 (business performance). Green marketing consists of green product design, green promotion, green distribution, green packaging, and green pricing strategies. On the other hand, business performance has been taken from the perspective of balanced scorecard measurement.

Moreover, the hypothesis-1 result indicated that (p-value< 0.01, C.R.=-2.788, β=-0.783) showed significance.

5.3. Mediated (Indirect) Effect

Table- 4.5.1 indirect effect

	F1	F2	F3
F2	0	0	0
F3	-0.622	0	0

The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 2.788 in absolute value is.005. In other words, the regression weight for F1 in the prediction of F2 is significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). This entails rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternate one. This means green marketing has an effect on business image. Meanwhile, hypothesis-2 results indicate that (p-vale<0.05, C.R.=1.896, β= 0.794) showing significance at the 0.05 significance level. The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 1.896 in absolute value is .026. In other words, the regression weight for F1 in the prediction of F2 is significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Thus, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. It means that business image has an effect on business performance. The direct (unmediated) effect of green marketing on business image is -0.783. That is, due to the direct (unmediated) effect of green marketing on business image, when green marketing goes up by 1, business image goes down by 0.783. This result has been confirmed by (Lin S. I., 2014).

Besides, other researchers' findings also support implementing green marketing strategies in order to promote a positive corporate image (Chen Y. S., 2006), (Dangelico R. M., 2010), and (Chen P. C., 2014) showing that there is an effect of green marketing on business image, although the magnitude is different. This is in addition to any indirect (mediated) effect that green marketing, which includes green product design, green promotion, green distribution, green packaging, and green pricing, may have on a company's reputation. Hypothesis-2 results revealed that the direct (unmediated) effect of business image on business performance is 0.794. That is, due to the direct (unmediated) effect of business image on business performance, when business image goes up by 1, business performance goes up by 0.794. This is in addition to any indirect (mediated) effect that company image may have on business

performance according to balanced scorecard perspectives that constitute finance performance, customer satisfaction, internal business operations, and the learning and growth of employees. Likewise, (Lin S. I., 2014) also get similar results.

Besides hypothesis 3, the indirect (mediated) effect of green marketing on business performance is -0.622. Thus, reject the null hypothesis, which means that there is a mediated effect of green marketing on business performance via business image. That is, due to the indirect (mediated) effect of green marketing on business performance, when green marketing goes up by 1, business performance goes down by 0.622. This is in addition to any direct (unmediated) effect that green marketing, which includes green product design, green promotion, green distribution, green packaging, and green pricing, may have on business performance in general, incorporating four perspectives of a balanced scorecard: finance, customer, internal process, and learning and growth. The mediated effect of green marketing on business performance has been confirmed by (Lin S. I., 2014).

As a firm, we work hard on green product design, labelling, promotion, distribution, and pricing. It creates a viable fit between the physical environment and all concerned stakeholders, thereby building a positive business image. Consequently, customers would be attracted, and business performance would be enhanced. Green product design starts with product conception that is eco-friendly, utilizing raw materials that maintain environmental well-being in terms of human health, safety, and biodiversity (Dangelico R. M., 2010). It also connotes symbols, marks, tags, and any written aspects of the product packaging that consider environmental issues a priority. Packaging items should include biodegradable materials as well as recyclable items. To sum up, green marketing affects business image and performance in the long term. Some researchers contend that green marketing is a long-term breakthrough for the company while maintaining competitive business performance and environmental sustainability (Lin S. I., 2014) and (Soewarno, 2019).

5.2.1. Green marketing issues in Adama special zone

These findings similar with other scholars such as (Dangelico R. M., 2010) and (Chen P. C., 2014) in themes:

- Packaging-related issues: plastic carry bags are commonly used. Some plastic bottles were not recycled. In addition, no decomposable packages were used for some products. In some areas, these materials were thrown in the garbage, and some drainage in the city has been filled with plastic. During rain, floods would overflow and damage some houses, causing loss of life and property damage.
- Product/Service Core benefit-related issues: Health safety problems of some products like medical drugs, chemical bi-products, and hazardous technical materials. Safety of some products, such as electronics, has disposal mechanism problems.
- Price-related issues: Pretty few companies set a portion of the price on the product label so that some percent of the margin can be used for tree plantations and environmental rehabilitation.
- Reverse Logistics: Reuse or recycle bi-products and their packages at their salvage value.

Spending on planting trees and making their local areas green, thereby create a good image in the local community as well as the government. Pretty few firms were considering a small portion of their price value for environmental

rehabilitation and customer safety. Previous studies, such as (Lin S. I., 2014) and (AlQershi, 2020), confirmed that green marketing is one of the fundamental components of marketing.

5.2.2. Implications of Green marketing for business image and performance

Green marketing has become a core component of corporate social responsibility, focusing on marketing components through optimizing stakeholder welfare (customers, shareholders, the local community, and others). Green marketing promotes business performance and image by enhancing:

- Profitability of the firm by brand positioning
- Building the brand image of the firm
- Maximizing future generation's welfare through sustaining natural resources management.
- Promoting sustainability in business
- Conserve nature and enhance sustainable ecosystems. Minimizing social and environmental challenges (climate change, floods, and drought)

The findings of the study were supported by various scholars findings that the competitiveness of the firm as well as better business performance require concern for the environment through green marketing (Webster S. S., 2020), (Nandakumar, 2010) And (Jamsa, 2011)

6. Conclusion

Green marketing plays a paramount role in attaining sustainability in business as one of the strategies towards environmental rehabilitations. The study has focused on green marketing implications for business image and performance in the case of Adama special zone, Oromia regional state, Ethiopia. The result revealed that green marketing enhances environmental welfare by producing products and services that are eco-friendly and conserve natural resources through efficient and proper utilization. It constitutes a green product (an environmentally friendly product), green promotion, green distribution, and green pricing. Green promotion includes the message delivered to the target audience, incorporating both human and physical well-being. Green distribution and pricing strategies consider the sustainability of our planet for the coming generation via environmentally friendly logistics, product storage, and pricing strategies that share some portion of it for environmental rehabilitation.

Green marketing enhances a business by obtaining new resources and transforming existing ones by producing products and services of value to users by assuming ecological issues. It is one of the vital ways that a firm can differentiate itself against competing rivals. Hence, creating a better reputation in the minds of key stakeholders is an inevitable action. The study also confirmed that there was a strong effect of green marketing on business performance and image. Despite the prior focus of business, which is profitability, success would come after all sustainability practices. Therefore, there should be strong collaboration between industries, the local community, local administration, and all key stakeholders to improve and sustain green marketing. Industries should work hard on the issue of green marketing, considering its value- chains across business activities.

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