

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Student Research Symposium

Student Research Symposium 2022

May 4th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Reduce, Reuse and Deny: How Sustainability is Judged by Consumers

Madison E. Hill

Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Hill, Madison E., "Reduce, Reuse and Deny: How Sustainability is Judged by Consumers" (2022). *Student Research Symposium*. 31.

<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium/2022/posters/31>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Reduce, Reuse and Deny: How Sustainability is Judged by Consumers

Madison Hill

Department of Anthropology,
Portland State University

What is Greenwashing?

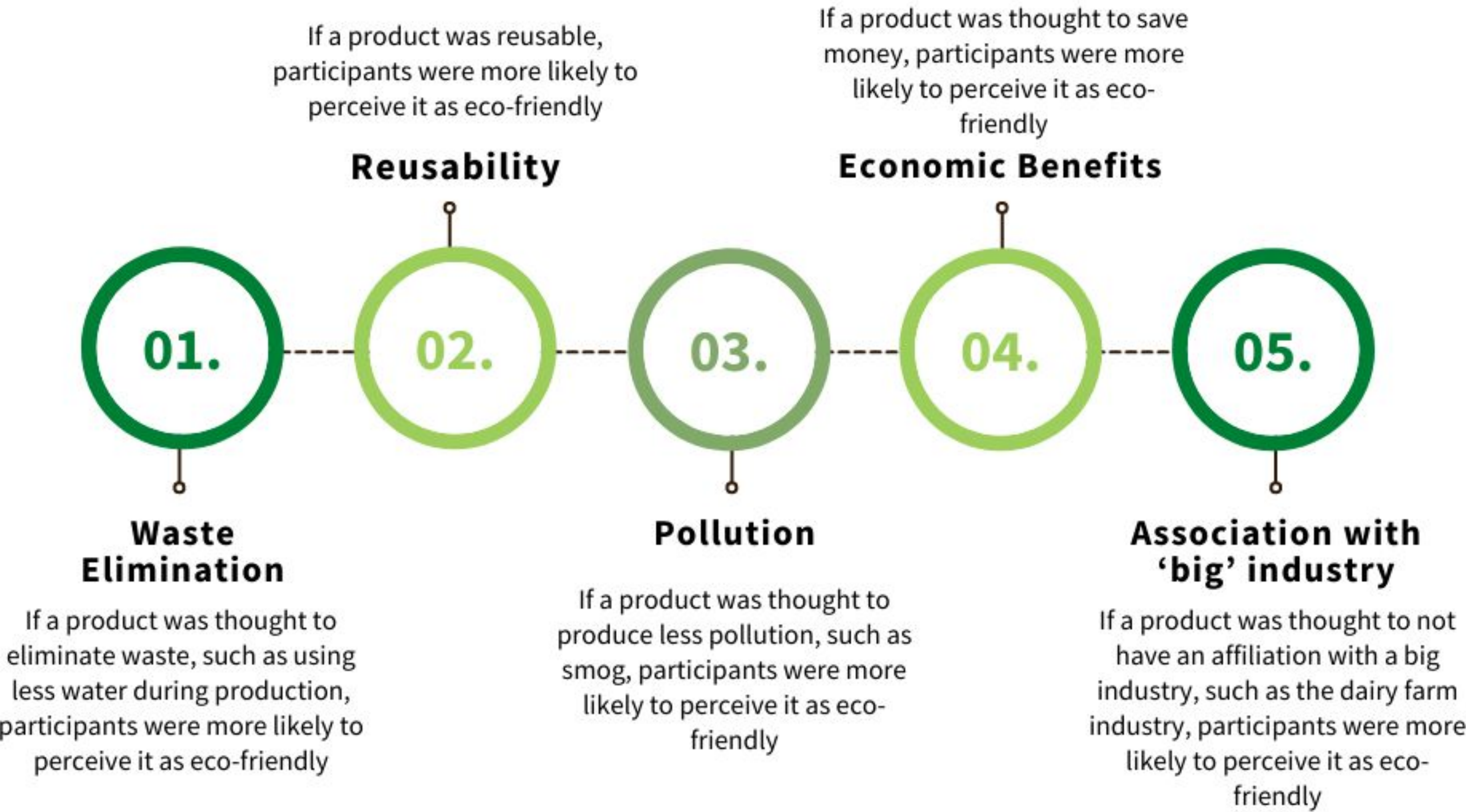
Greenwashing is a form of marketing to mislead consumers into believing that a company is more sustainable than they are. It can be through direct claims or using green packaging to imply they are sustainable products. This is harmful because corporations benefit from the support of consumers trying to do the right thing while causing significant harm to the environment.



Methodology

Participants were given a questionnaire in which they selected the more sustainable option between two products. They were then interviewed about their rationale for choosing one item over the other. This study is only concerned with the factors cited by the participant to determine its environmental impact, such as its reusability or the energy used to produce the product, not the option they chose itself.

FACTORS OF SUSTAINABILITY

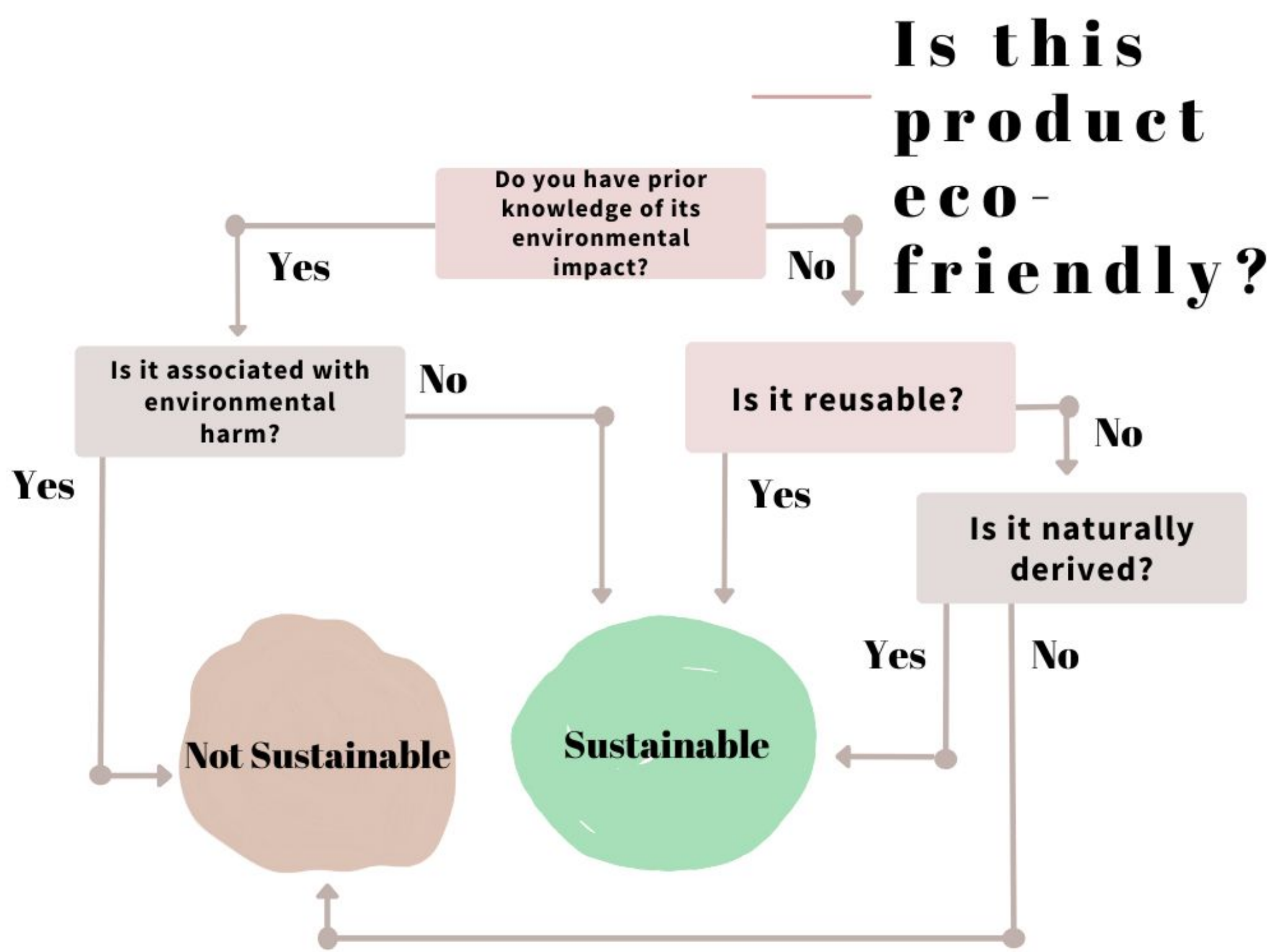


All descriptions of a sustainable product from participants fell into 5 factors, or categories. These factors determined if a product was considered to be eco-friendly, according to the participants.



Results

Participants highly valued the reusability of a product and considered it more environmentally friendly if it was naturally derived. If a product was thought to have any the 5 factors, such as eliminates waste or pollution, it was assumed to be environmentally friendly. Participants equated these factors with sustainability in a product.



This Ethnographic Decision Model (EDM) demonstrates how consumers make decisions when evaluating the sustainability of a product.

Impact

There are no strict regulations in the US on what products can be claimed as eco-friendly. This pilot project offers insight into the efficacy of greenwashing by analyzing what parts of sustainability marketing sticks with consumers. Having a better understanding of how we evaluate sustainability will allow us to foster skepticism and promote agency in shopping decisions. Furthermore, it is not enough to know about the environment impact of various products but instead focus on what companies can claim in marketing in the first place.