



# Art as a Catalyst for Sustainable Business Practices: A Comparative Study of Eco-Friendly Design Approaches

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## Introduction

With the increase in consumer awareness regarding adverse environmental impacts, companies have started to invest in implementing eco-friendly design concepts through art. This research paper aims to explore art as a catalyst for sustainable business practices by conducting a comparative study of different eco-friendly approaches used by businesses. The main objective of the research paper is to compare the different art-inspired design approaches businesses use to promote sustainability and investigate how eco-friendly design concepts derived from art principles lead to reduced environmental impact, increased resource efficiency, and positive brand perception. The research paper seeks to do this with the help of a literature review that explores what scholars have said regarding art-inspired design approaches used by businesses to promote sustainability, and eco-friendly design concepts derived from art principles lead to reduced environmental impact, increased resource efficiency, and positive brand perception. The methodology used for the report, i.e. Research Design, Research Strategy, Data Collection and Data Analysis methods, was listed and justified. The literature review regarding art-inspired design approaches used by businesses to promote sustainability and eco-friendly design concepts derived from art principles that lead to reduced environmental impact, increased resource efficiency, and positive brand perception was then analysed by contrasting them with real-world art-inspired business practices through which findings were made. Finally, a conclusion was given, including an overview of the report.

## Literature review

### Art-inspired design approaches used by businesses to promote sustainability

#### *Sustainable Art*

Sustainability through art is an approach rooted in the principles of sustainability development and freedom of creative expression. It aims to implement artistic and cultural activities in societies. According to Lopes, (2017), art and culture, which are often neglected, can play an important role in promoting sustainability in society. They have been indisputably behaving as a catalyst of society and culture due to the fact that humans feel the need to express themselves creatively through art which has always led to the evolution of society. Therefore, utilising art as a social development tool can help overcome various social issues and enhance the quality of the environment.

#### *Upcycling and Repurposing*

Zhao *et al.* (2022) believe that sustainable technologies and approaches like upcycling can be used to turn plastics into chemical feedstocks and value-added materials. They said that although plastic and other synthetic polymer products have become indispensable in daily lives, it has led to serious environmental issues by accumulating in landfills, oceans and waterways. Therefore, Michałowska, (2021) observed that artistic activities are highly focused on spreading awareness about the need for proper sewage treatment. Upcycled art, environmental art, eco-aesthetics and sustainable design have become a new trend of the 20th century. Upcycling plastic through art has provided artists to convey a story about the future of the planet derive a metaphorical meaning of the state of contemporary culture and form an alliance with nature and culture.

#### *Biophilic Design*

Ibrahim, (2019) said that humans feel the need to connect with the natural environment psychologically, physically and spiritually and this is known as the biophilia hypothesis. However, due to urban construction, they are becoming isolated from nature and dealing with severe environmental impacts. This gave rise to the need for a restorative environmental design which manifested in the form of a biophilic design which promotes a nature-based environment for humans to work and live in. Zhong *et al.* (2022) explored the various benefits of biophilic design for sustainability. This design can improve water management, decrease energy consumption, increase livability and promote the use of indigenous materials and local plant varieties.

#### *Eco-Public Art Installation*

According to Kennedy *et al.* (2023), eco-public art installations can contribute to addressing sustainable ways of urban renewal. She suggested the need for artists to abandon creating art for museums and use their radical ideas to address ecological issues. Public art installations promoting sustainability have the power not just to raise awareness but to implement new models and prototypes for sustainability. Through public awareness, they inspire communities to participate in activities that address environmental issues and climate change. Barea, (2021) also said that apart from sustainability components of environmental issues, public art is also used to promote responsible consumption, social inclusiveness, gender equality and so on.

## ***Sustainable Brand Storytelling***

Huang *et al.* (2022) observed that consumers have become more concerned with the effects of global warming and several such environmental issues on their health, which are pushing companies towards adopting sustainable storytelling for their brand image. Green storytelling strategies tend to fulfil consumer needs related to society and the environment. Woodside and Fine, (2019) attempted to analyse these strategies in luxury brands through their sustainable fashion storytelling. This innovative storytelling is against the unsustainable practice of fast fashion and is used by luxury brands to promote sustainable fashion and reach responsible and ethical production goals in supply chains.

## ***Sustainability in Business***

According to Hoffman, (2018), sustainability in business has come a long way and has become a strategic concern for companies all over the world. They are implementing sustainable strategies, building sustainable products and services, creating new positions for sustainability officers and promoting their sustainable activities to investors, consumers, activists and the general public through reports. Businesses have started to move away from the enterprise integration phase which was founded on a model that involved responding to shifts in the market and implementing sustainable practices to gain a competitive edge (Breuer *et al.* 2018). In its place, they have dived into the market transformation phase where companies are not waiting for a market shift but leading it by initiating sustainable development in business.

## **Eco-friendly design concepts derived from art principles**

### ***Importance of Eco-Friendly Design Concepts***

Fernández, (2024) described eco-design as the way companies demonstrate their commitment and respect to natural resources and the environment by improving their product life cycle through actions that exemplify such commitments. It aims to reduce environmental impacts in its life cycle through a systematic incorporation of environmental components into product design. Therefore, incorporating eco-friendly design concepts into companies can help them have greater environmental awareness while still functioning in the same way without any need to charge a higher price (Mustafa *et al.* 2022). This can also help the company to better fulfil environmental legislations.

### ***Reduced Environmental Impact***

Eere.energy.gov, (2024) is of the view that eco-friendly design concepts can reduce air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, solid wastes and the use of natural resources, which will have lower ecological impacts on the planet. Eco-friendly design concepts can help decrease air pollution and the emission of greenhouse gases like CO<sub>2</sub> by reducing energy use through the use of renewable energy, energy-efficient design and building commissioning. Eco-friendly design concepts can help reduce the strain on landfills by reducing solid waste through recycled content, waste prevention, construction waste management and storage and collection of recyclables. This also creates a scope for the development of businesses that produce recycled products, which further reduces waste disposal (Sha *et al.* 2021)l. Eco-friendly design concepts such as sustainable sitting approaches, erosion and

sedimentation control, sustainable landscaping and stormwater management, design of reuse and so on help reduce the use of scarce natural resources.

### ***Increased Resource Efficiency***

According to Peças, (2019), using eco-friendly design concepts is crucial for companies promoting sustainable development not just for the added value that it has but for their environmental impacts. Eco-efficiency has three objectives, i.e. to increase the values of products and services, to optimise the usage of resources and to reduce environmental impacts. This is done by using fewer resources and creating less pollution and waste while also producing more goods and services. Eco-efficiency has four main variants, namely environmental intensity of production, environmental productivity, environmental cost-effectiveness and environmental improvement costs (Cherry *et al.* 2018). It can help by improving environmental performance through a reduction in toxic emissions and an increase in the reuse and recovery of waste material.

### ***Positive Brand Perception***

Nagaty, (2022) said that eco-friendly marketing has become a crucial strategy for companies because of consumers' increased consciousness of environmental issues. Therefore, producing environmentally irresponsible products, degrading the environment or disregarding the rights of the customers can harm a brand's perception and reputation. Leveraging eco-friendly design concepts can increase a brand's corporate social responsibility which has been proven to create a positive brand perception among consumers as well as stakeholders (Olasiuk and Bhardwaj, 2019). Companies do this by meeting the current environmental requirements while also increasing their potential to impact future generations.

### ***Suggestions***

O'Hare *et al.* (2015) suggested ways that improve the environmental performance of products through eco-design. They said that companies need to be clear about the drivers of eco-design and the potential value that can be derived from investing in it. It was suggested that product marketing, corporate social responsibility and brand value should be tailored to meet environmental concerns, as although false claims can increase sales, brand value and share prices, verification of these claims can lead to a negative effect on all those spheres. Introducing environmental legislation on the use of energy and hazardous substances can drive companies to indulge in eco-designing activities and cover the entire product lifecycle (Reilly and Larya, 2018). Eco-designing enables companies to reduce manufacturing costs which can motivate them to take initiatives for cost benefits.

### ***Methodology***

A research methodology is the specific techniques and procedures used to identify, choose, process and study information on a particular topic (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). For the purpose of this research, the explanatory research design, qualitative research strategy, secondary data collection and thematic data analysis were used.

### ***Research Design- Explanatory***

For this report, the explanatory research design was used since the research had to be conducted on the topic of sustainable art design, which not many scholars have explored. Using this method, the researcher was able to

understand the issues concerning sustainability more in-depth by predicting the cause or creating a hypothesis and even predicting future occurrences (Asenahabi, 2019).

### **Research Strategy- Qualitative**

The qualitative research strategy was used in this research paper because art-inspired eco-friendly design concepts and their impact on sustainability cannot be measured through numerical data. This strategy also allowed the researcher to make speculations regarding the future of such concepts and their impacts in a fast-evolving world (Busetto *et al.* 2020).

### **Data Collection- Secondary**

The researcher made use of the secondary data collection method to conduct this research because the materials that were needed to do this research paper were easy to access and provided information from a wide variety of resources regarding topics such as sustainability, art, design and business (Ruggiano and Perry, 2019).

### **Data Analysis- Thematic**

This research paper makes use of the thematic data analysis method because this method is usually preferable to analyse qualitative data. Furthermore, the thematic data analysis method can identify common themes, ideas, topics and patterns of meaning, which was helpful in conducting the comparative analysis among different art-inspired design approaches used by businesses to promote sustainability (Herzog *et al.* 2019).

### **Findings and Analysis**

#### **Art-inspired design approaches used by businesses to promote sustainability**

##### ***Nike***

Nike frequently collaborates with artists and designers to create limited-edition sneakers and apparel. For example, collaborations with artists like Virgil Abloh and Takashi Murakami bring unique artistic perspectives to their products. In 2021, Nike SB and Supreme collaborated to create the SB Dunk Low Supreme Hyper Royal, a colour and form reversal of the original 2003 SB Dunk High Supreme (Dawntown, 2024). In 2023, Nike SB released two pairs of sneakers in collaboration with the New York-based artist Rammellzee. In July 2023, Nike Women collaborated with New Zealand choreographer, dancer, artist, athlete, and actress Parris Goebel for an event called "Goddess Awakened" at Paris Accor Arena (Thecoconet, 2024).



**Figure 1: Goddess Awakened**

(Source: INKL, 2023)

### ***IKEA***

The minimalist, functional, and uncomplicated aesthetic characteristic of Scandinavian design is frequently on display in IKEA's furniture designs. The minimalist art movement and this design philosophy are committed to simple forms and minimal decoration. An instance of this is the OBEGRÄNSAD collection, a joint effort between IKEA and the Swedish House Mafia that aimed to increase accessibility to music production, which was unveiled in October 2022 (Ikea, 2024). Collaboration between IKEA and the Dutch design firm Raw Colour has resulted in an investigation into the psychological and social impacts of interior colour schemes (Ikea, 2023). Unexpected colour palettes and playful combinations will be the focal points of the upcoming TESAMMANS collection, which will be released globally in April 2024.

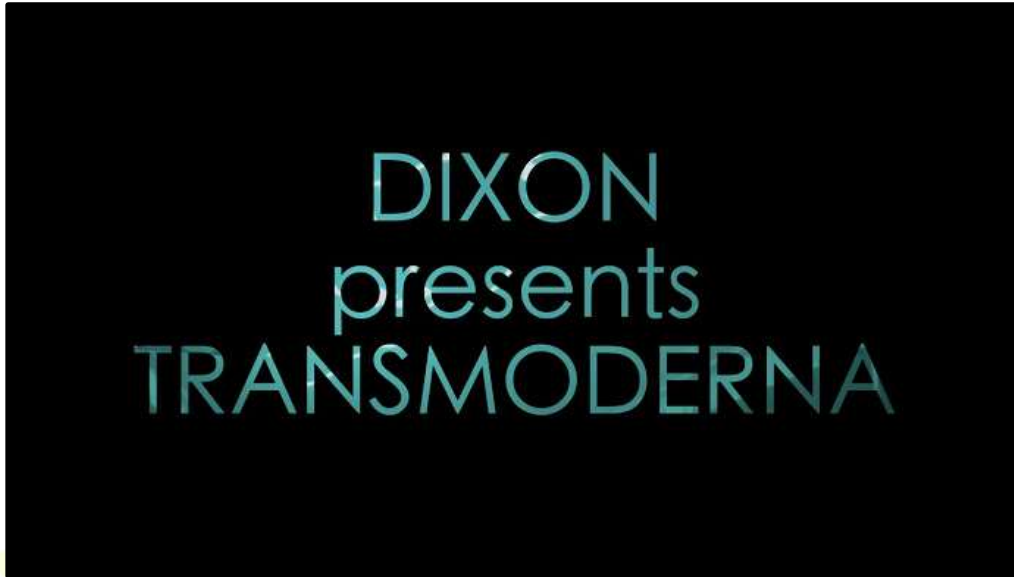


**Figure 2: OBEGRÄNSAD collection**

(Source: Saraswat-Satpathy, 2022)

**Google**

At Google events and offices, interactive art installations are a common sight. The boundaries between art and technology are often blurred in installations that use technology to create immersive artistic experiences; one such example is Google's headquarters. Lots of artists are getting together in 2020 for Dixon Presents Transmoderna (Music.apple, 2024). There are eight tracks totaling 56 minutes on this electronic music album. Stream it on Apple Music, or download it from Google Play or Discog.



**Figure 3: Transmoderna**

(Source: Youtube, 2024)

**Tesla**

The electric vehicles manufactured by Tesla are aesthetically pleasing in addition to being highly efficient. Tesla cars are sculptural in appearance, with their elegant curves and spare interiors belying an artistic approach to automotive design. The CEO of Tesla (TSLA), Elon Musk, would like to be known not only as a tech billionaire but also as an arts patron (Holmes, 2021). On Wednesday, he took to twitter to invite street artists to propose designs for Giga Berlin, the company's enormous new mega-factory in the world-famous German city. After ten months of construction, Giga Berlin is finally ready for Tesla to unveil its Model Y vehicle in Europe (Holmes, 2021). It should be easy for Musk to get his wish granted since he has adoring followers all over the globe.

**Starbucks**

Local art and culture inspire the artisanal design elements often seen in Starbucks stores. Some Starbucks stores foster authenticity and a sense of community by incorporating handmade ceramic mugs or murals made by local artists. Artist Damon Brown and Starbucks have collaborated on a limited-edition cup collection (Retailwire, 2024). Car cartoons, superheroes, and Japanese anime were Damon Brown's early artistic influences. He delves into the complex realm of colour, shape, narrative, and texture as his awe for urban art intensifies.



**Figure 4: Limited-edition cup collection**

(Source: Retailwire, 2024)

### **Eco-friendly design concepts**

#### ***Patagonia***

Instead of buying new clothes all the time, Patagonia promotes the idea of "Worn Wear," which means fixing and reusing old ones (Montes, 2017). This method reduces waste and increases product longevity, which is in line with the aesthetic principle of sustainability via craftsmanship. In line with a more eco-friendly, circular fashion approach, they also encourage consumers to repair instead of replacing their belongings. An important part of Patagonia's strategy to reduce demand for new products and increase the longevity of existing ones is the Worn Wear programme, which offers discounts on previously owned Patagonia apparel (Help.patagonia, 2024).



**Figure 5: Worn Wear**

(Source: Montes, 2017)

## ***Interface***

The creative freedom and experimental spirit characterising Eileen Fisher's work inform the brand's exploration of new materials and production techniques (Interface, 2024b). They have taken steps to lessen their products' environmental effects, such as introducing collections made from organic cotton, recycled fibres, and responsibly sourced wool. Biophilic design is something that Interface, as an industry leader in sustainability, strongly supports because of the importance of incorporating natural systems and processes into man-made environments for the benefit of human health. Many studies have shown that being outside or in an environment similar to nature can improve health and well-being (Interface, 2024a). One of these studies was the Human Spaces Report with psychologist Professor Sir Cary Cooper.



**Figure 6: New Materials and Production Techniques**

(Source: Interface, 2024b)

## ***Eileen Fisher***

The creative and experimental principles that guide the work of the fashion house Eileen Fisher inform the exploration of new materials and production techniques (Futurefitbusiness, 2024). To lessen their products' effect on the environment, they have launched lines made from organic cotton, recycled fibres, and wool that are ethically sourced, among other materials. Using recycled synthetics in Eileen Fisher's garments dates back many decades. For example, the business has been using post-consumer waste (such as water bottles), recycled polyester (from other sources) and pre-consumer nylon (from other manufacturing processes) as raw materials since 2009 (Futurefitbusiness, 2024).

## ***Tesla***

Aesthetic and functional principles in art inform Tesla's aerodynamic designs for their electric vehicles. Sleek lines and smooth surfaces not only make the vehicle look better, but they also increase its range on a single charge by decreasing air resistance (Auto.economicstimes, 2023). The Model S, for instance, features a flat under tray, suction

on the outer corners of the front fascia, flush-mounted door handles, and an aerodynamic overall design. One of the most aerodynamic car designs ever is the Model S, which has been in production since 2012 (Tallodi, 2024).



**Figure 7: Model S of Tesla**

(Source: Auto.economictimes, 2023)

### **Method**

Incorporating creative and environmentally conscious packaging design, Method is a sustainable cleaning products company. Their dedication to sustainable design practices that minimise waste and environmental impact is evident in the visually appealing packaging that uses recycled materials and environmentally friendly inks (Linkedin, 2023). They extensively use polymers 1 and 2 and ensure that all of their packaging is designed to maximise recycled content, material efficiency, and recyclability. No alcohols present (Methodproducts, 2021). They avoid using the unclean packaging material known as Plastic 3 (PVC) (Methodproducts, 2021). The recyclability of Plastic 6 (polystyrene) makes it an unsuitable material for use in hard packaging.



**Figure 8: Packaging of Method**

(Source: Linkedin, 2023)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it was evident businesses all over the world have finally begun to realise the importance of developing eco-friendly approaches in their corporate strategies. This research paper conducted a literature review where the concept of sustainable art was introduced along with the role of art-inspired design approaches such as Upcycling and Repurposing, Biophilic Design, Eco-Public Art Installation and Sustainable Brand Storytelling. Next, the role of Eco-friendly design concepts was examined through literature reviews on its Reduced Environmental Impact, Increased Resource Efficiency, and Positive Brand Perception. The methodologies used for the research were the explanatory research design, qualitative research strategy, secondary data collection and thematic data analysis. Finally, by analysing the literature review, findings were made that suggested that Nike, Ikea, Google, Tesla, Patagonia, Interface, Eileen Fisher, Method and Starbucks were among the companies that utilised art-inspired design approaches to promote sustainability. Through this, the research was able to determine that there is a need for businesses to incorporate eco-friendly approaches to sustainable development through artistic design to reduce adverse environmental impacts.

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