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Green marketing and sustainability reporting influence millennial prospective student interest in aviation schools in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines how green marketing and sustainability reporting influence millennial prospective students' interest in aviation schools in Indonesia. Using data from 212 respondents and Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings show that both green marketing and sustainability reporting significantly enhance student interest. Sustainability reporting demonstrates a stronger effect by reinforcing institutional credibility and transparency. The model explains 58% of the variance in enrollment intention and exhibits strong predictive relevance. These findings highlight the strategic role of sustainability communication in shaping student decision-making and provide practical implications for aviation education institutions in emerging economies.

Introduction

Sustainability has emerged as a key strategic priority across industries, as organizations confront growing environmental pressures and rising expectations from stakeholders (Bao et al., 2024). In the higher education sector, sustainability has expanded beyond curriculum innovation and campus management to play a vital role in shaping institutional branding, strengthening reputation, and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Millennials, who now represent the largest segment of prospective higher education students, are widely acknowledged for their strong environmental awareness and clear preference for institutions that demonstrate genuine social and environmental responsibility (Núñez, 2025; Sivanandam et al., 2024).

The aviation sector represents a highly significant arena for sustainability discussions because of its substantial environmental impact and the intense global attention it attracts (Kale et al., 2021). As a result, aviation education institutions carry a dual responsibility: they must not only prepare technically skilled aviation professionals but also instill sustainability principles in the future participants of the aviation ecosystem (Xu et al., 2022). In emerging economies like Indonesia, where air travel demand is expanding rapidly, aviation schools are under increasing pressure to showcase credible and measurable commitments to sustainability.

Green marketing and sustainability reporting have become important strategic tools that organizations use to communicate their environmental responsibility and demonstrate institutional accountability (Rahmatullah et al., 2024). Green marketing focuses on promoting environmentally responsible values, initiatives, and practices, while sustainability reporting involves the structured disclosure of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance (Alenezi & Alanazi, 2024). Although prior research has highlighted the positive influence of sustainability communication on stakeholder perceptions and behavioral intentions, empirical studies examining its impact on prospective students' interest particularly within specialized education sectors are still relatively scarce.

In Indonesia, aviation education institutions increasingly compete not only on academic quality but also on institutional values and image alignment with prospective students (Saraswati et al., 2023). As a result, understanding the role of sustainability-focused communication in shaping millennial students'

enrollment interest has become strategically significant. To address this gap, the present study examines how green marketing and sustainability reporting influence the interest of millennial prospective students in aviation schools across Indonesia. Drawing on stakeholder theory and signaling theory, this research broadens the scope of sustainability and marketing literature by situating it within the aviation education sector of an emerging economy.

Green marketing refers to an organization's initiatives to design, promote, and communicate products or services in ways that demonstrate environmental responsibility (Shaik, 2016). Viewed through the lens of stakeholder theory, green marketing can be understood as a strategic response to the growing expectations of stakeholders for stronger environmental accountability, which in turn enhances an organization's overall appeal. Previous studies have shown that sustainability-driven marketing efforts can positively shape attitudes, build trust, and strengthen behavioral intentions especially among environmentally aware consumer groups such as millennials.

In the context of education, green marketing efforts such as highlighting eco-friendly campuses or sustainable training practices can shape how prospective students perceive an institution's core values (El Tayib & Alhiti, 2025). Based on signaling theory, green marketing serves as a constructive signal that helps reduce information asymmetry between institutions and prospective students. In doing so, it strengthens confidence and enhances institutional appeal. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Green marketing has a positive effect on millennial prospective students' interest in aviation schools.

Sustainability reporting, meanwhile, functions as a formal disclosure mechanism through which organizations communicate their environmental and social performance (Bajdor & Bhambri, 2024). Transparent sustainability reporting strengthens organizational legitimacy, builds credibility, and fosters stakeholder trust. Prior empirical research indicates that sustainability disclosures positively affect corporate reputation and stakeholder engagement (Izah et al., 2025).

Within higher education, sustainability reporting can signal long-term commitment and institutional accountability factors that may be especially important to prospective students who prioritize sustainability. Therefore, this study advances the following hypothesis:

H2: Sustainability reporting has a positive effect on millennial prospective students' interest in aviation schools.

Literature review

Green Marketing and Institutional Attractiveness

Green marketing refers to organizational initiatives aimed at promoting environmentally responsible values, services, and operational practices (Kumar et al., 2025; Osman et al., 2025). While it has

traditionally been linked to consumer goods industries, green marketing has increasingly extended into service sectors, including higher education (Deliana et al., 2017). In this context, green marketing may involve communicating eco-friendly campus initiatives, sustainable training practices, environmental certifications, the use of renewable energy, or partnerships focused on environmental stewardship (Spais, 2011).

Prior studies consistently show that green marketing positively shapes consumer attitudes, enhances perceived brand authenticity, and strengthens purchase intentions—particularly among environmentally conscious groups (Dahhan & Arenkov, 2025; David et al., 2025; Su & Li, 2024). Millennials, known for their strong environmental awareness and orientation toward social responsibility, tend to respond favorably to sustainability-focused messaging. Drawing on value congruence theory, individuals are more inclined to engage with institutions whose communicated values reflect their own beliefs and principles.

In the field of aviation education, green marketing may carry even greater significance. The aviation industry's environmental impact has been widely scrutinized, making sustainability a central theme in its ongoing transformation. Educational institutions that clearly and proactively communicate their sustainability commitments can position themselves as progressive, responsible, and future-oriented, thereby shaping perceptions of long-term relevance and reputational strength.

At the same time, the literature warns of the potential risks of superficial environmental claims. Greenwashing—where sustainability messages are exaggerated or lack substantive support—can erode trust and harm institutional credibility (Álvarez-García & Sureda-Negre, 2023). As such, the effectiveness of green marketing depends heavily on perceived authenticity and the availability of verifiable evidence. This highlights the importance of formal sustainability reporting as a complementary mechanism that strengthens credibility.

Based on stakeholder value alignment and signaling theory, green marketing is therefore expected to positively influence millennial prospective students' intentions to enroll.

Sustainability Reporting and Institutional Legitimacy

Sustainability reporting refers to structured disclosure of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance (Goh, 2025; Rusu et al., 2024; Sivanandan, 2024). Initially rooted in corporate governance and investor communication frameworks, sustainability reporting has increasingly been adopted within higher education institutions as part of transparency and accountability reforms.

Formal sustainability reports provide measurable indicators of institutional environmental performance, carbon management initiatives, diversity policies, community engagement, and long-term sustainability strategies (Shygun & Bezverkhyi, 2026). Through systematic disclosure, institutions demonstrate not only commitment but also measurable progress. Such transparency strengthens organizational legitimacy and reduces stakeholder skepticism.

Empirical evidence consistently shows positive associations between sustainability disclosure and corporate reputation, stakeholder trust, and behavioral intentions (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019). Transparent reporting strengthens perceptions of institutional responsibility and long-term orientation qualities that are especially valued by younger generations.

In higher education settings, sustainability reporting serves several strategic purposes (Sepasi et al., 2019). First, it reduces information asymmetry for prospective students assessing institutional credibility. Second, it substantiates green marketing claims with verifiable evidence. Third, it signals governance maturity, a particularly important consideration in emerging economies where institutional accountability may face closer scrutiny.

For millennial prospective students, sustainability reporting can act as a trust-building mechanism that reinforces enrollment intentions (Schemken & Berghaus, 2018). When sustainability communication evolves from purely promotional messaging to formal accountability structures, perceived risk diminishes and institutional attractiveness increases.

Accordingly, sustainability reporting is expected to have a positive influence on enrollment intention among environmentally conscious prospective students.

Millennial Students and Sustainability-Oriented Decision-Making

Millennials are often characterized by their strong values, social consciousness and environmental awareness (Heo & Muralidharan, 2019; Steffy, 2023; Wilson, 2019). Millennials have higher expectations that institutions behave ethically and transparently than previous generations. This generation often incorporates sustainability into decision-making processes in consumerism and institutional selection contexts.

Intention to enroll, a well-recognized construct in higher education marketing literature (Toussaint et al., 2026). serves as a predictor of subsequent enrollment behavior. And it is influenced by several factors, from the reputation of institutions to perceptions of quality and career prospects, to alignment with individual values. Recent literature recognizes that sustainability commitments influence student attraction and retention (Miller, 2013).

Engagement with sustainability might seem like a sign of innovation, responsibility and globality to Millennials. Such environmentally responsible educational institutions may thus be awarded greater symbolic capital in developing economies such as Indonesia where the conversation about sustainability has started to align with national development goals.

In addition, in aviation education where future professionals will be actively engaged in direct participation with an environmentally sensitive industry sustainability orientation may provide further signaling of future readiness. Traditional universities are at risk especially because students seeking

career viability in the long run may prefer institutions that keep pace with trends aligning with global sustainability transformations.

Thus, sustainability-oriented communication might impact not only affective attitudes but also rational assessments concerning institutional legitimacy and industry relevance.

Methodology

The design of this study is a quantitative explanatory research (Arias et al., 2021). The population is millennial prospective students aged 18–30 years who had shown interest in enrolling to aviation education institutions in Indonesia. A purposive sampling technique was used and 212 valid responses were obtained through an online questionnaire (Guarte & Barrios, 2006).

Measurement of green marketing and sustainability reporting adapted items from previous studies published in Scopus-indexed journals, while the interest of students was measured on enrollment intention scales developed in prior research. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale for all constructs. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant criteria were used to assess the measurement validity and reliability.

Table 1
Respondent Demographic Characteristics (n = 212)

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	128	60.4
	Female	84	39.6
Age	18–21 years	96	45.3
	22–25 years	78	36.8
	26–30 years	38	17.9
Education interest	Pilot training	74	34.9
	Aircraft Maintenance	68	32.1
	Aviation Management	70	33.0

Source: Authors' own research.

Demographic characteristics of the 212 millennial prospective students in this study are summarized in Table 1. 60.4% of the respondents are male and 39.6% female. The respondents are mostly 18–21 years (45.3%), followed by 22–25 years (36.8%) and 26–30 years of age (17.9%), implying that, most respondents were in the earlier phase of higher education decision-making process.

Educational interests are evenly distributed between pilot training (34.9%), aviation management (33.0%), and aircraft maintenance (32.1%), indicating balanced representation among most major aviation study routes. That distribution helps the generalizability of the findings across a range of aviation education pathways.

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

This study is conceptualized in Fig. 1. The model places green marketing and sustainability reporting in exogenous variables influencing the student interest in aviation education as an endogenous variable. Drawing from Stakeholder Theory and Signaling Theory, the framework suggests that sustainability-oriented communication is a strategic signal that increases institutional attractiveness and enrollment intention among millennial prospective students.

Green marketing is the institution's promotional focus on environmental responsibility; sustainability reporting serves as formal transparency and accountability of performance in this area. It is postulated that both constructs yield direct positive impact student enrollment intention.

Results

Assessment of the measurement model shows that all constructs are presented with an adequate level of reliability and validity. Composite reliability values are above the recommended threshold of 0.70, while AVE values exceed 0.50 threshold as well, confirming sufficient convergent validity (Cohen et al., 2017). Discriminant validity is assessed by the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The results of reliability and convergent validity assessment are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Green marketing	0.86	0.90	0.64
Sustainability reporting	0.88	0.91	0.66
Student interest	0.84	0.89	0.62

Source: Authors' own research.

The structural model analysis indicates that green marketing has a positive and significant impact on millennial prospective students' interest in aviation schools. Meanwhile, sustainability reporting has a strong positive effect, as it increases enrollment intention and approval to assign such information.

Table 3
Structural model and hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	Decision
H1	Green marketing → Student interest	0.37	5.42	Supported
H2	Sustainability reporting → Student interest	0.41	6.08	Supported

Source: Authors' own research.

The results of hypothesis testing of the structural model are presented in Table 3. H1 is supported, as Green marketing has a positive and statistically significant impact on student interest (β = 0.37; t = 5.42). The result suggests that sustainability-themed promotions increase millennial would-be applicants' desire to enroll.

Likewise, sustainability reporting has a positive and significant impact on students' interest (β = 0.41; t = 6.08), thus confirming H2. The stronger path coefficient indicates that formal sustainability disclosure has an additional effect on enrollment intention in comparison to promotional sustainability messaging.

Table 4
Coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2)

Construct / Path	R^2	f^2	Q^2
Student Interest	0.58	–	0.36
Green Marketing → Student Interest	–	0.18	–
Sustainability Reporting → Student Interest	–	0.22	–

Source: Authors' own research.

Model Fit summary as shown in Table 4 displays the explanatory power, effect size and predictive value. The R^2 student interest value is 0.58 which shows that green marketing and sustainability reporting explain together 58% of the enrolment intention variance. This is a moderate-to-strong level of prediction in PLS–SEM analysis.

As for effect size (f^2), sustainability reporting shows a moderate effect (0.22) and green marketing shows a small-to-moderate effective size of 0.18, indicating that both constructs have a meaningful contribution to students interest prediction. The Stone–Geisser predictive relevance value ($Q^2 = 0.36$) also exceeds the recommended threshold of zero and suggests excellent predictive capability of the model.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the strategic importance of sustainability-oriented communication in shaping the enrollment intentions of millennial prospective students in aviation education. Both green marketing and sustainability reporting were found to exert significant positive effects on student interest, confirming that sustainability has evolved beyond operational practices to become a critical component of institutional positioning and attractiveness in higher education markets.

First, the positive relationship between green marketing and student interest supports the relevance of stakeholder theory in the context of educational institutions. Millennials are widely recognized for their heightened environmental awareness and value-driven decision-making. As a result, they tend to favor organizations that visibly demonstrate environmental responsibility. Aviation education institutions that communicate sustainable campus initiatives, environmentally responsible training practices, or green innovation strategies may therefore strengthen their institutional image and appeal among prospective students. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that sustainability-oriented marketing enhances organizational trust, brand authenticity, and behavioral intentions among environmentally conscious audiences (Dahhan & Arenkov, 2025; Su & Li, 2024).

Second, the results reveal that sustainability reporting exerts a slightly stronger influence on student interest than green marketing. This finding underscores the importance of transparency and formal accountability in sustainability communication. From the perspective of signaling theory, sustainability reporting functions as a credible signal that reduces information asymmetry between institutions and prospective students. While marketing messages may communicate sustainability values, formal sustainability reports provide verifiable evidence of environmental and social performance. Such transparency strengthens institutional legitimacy and reinforces stakeholder trust. The findings therefore support prior studies suggesting that sustainability disclosure contributes positively to organizational reputation and stakeholder engagement (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019; Sepasi et al., 2019).

The results also provide important insights within the specific context of aviation education. The aviation industry faces increasing scrutiny due to its environmental footprint, which has intensified global discussions surrounding sustainable aviation development. Consequently, aviation education institutions are expected not only to develop technically competent professionals but also to cultivate future industry actors who are capable of supporting sustainability transitions. Institutions that actively communicate their sustainability commitments may therefore be perceived as forward-looking and socially responsible, enhancing their attractiveness to prospective students who are concerned about the long-term sustainability of the aviation industry.

Furthermore, the relatively strong explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.58$) suggests that sustainability communication represents a meaningful determinant of millennial enrollment intention. The effect size analysis also confirms that both green marketing and sustainability reporting contribute substantially to explaining student interest. These findings indicate that sustainability communication should be viewed not merely as a promotional activity but as a strategic institutional capability that influences stakeholder perceptions and competitive positioning.

From a broader perspective, the findings are particularly relevant for emerging economies such as Indonesia. As competition among higher education institutions intensifies, sustainability-oriented communication may become an important differentiating factor that enhances institutional credibility and global competitiveness. By integrating sustainability into marketing strategies, governance structures, and reporting practices, aviation education institutions can simultaneously strengthen student attraction and contribute to the development of sustainability-oriented aviation human capital.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of green marketing and sustainability reporting on the interest of millennial prospective students in aviation schools in Indonesia. The empirical findings demonstrate that both green marketing and sustainability reporting significantly and positively influence students' enrollment intentions. Green marketing enhances institutional attractiveness by communicating environmental responsibility, while sustainability reporting strengthens credibility through transparent disclosure of environmental and social performance. Together, these results indicate that sustainability communication plays a critical role in shaping the decision-making processes of millennial prospective students.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by extending stakeholder theory and signaling theory to the context of aviation education in an emerging economy. The findings highlight that sustainability communication functions as an important signal that reduces information asymmetry and strengthens trust between educational institutions and prospective students. In doing so, sustainability communication not only influences marketing outcomes but also reinforces institutional legitimacy and stakeholder relationships.

From a practical standpoint, the results suggest that aviation education institutions should integrate sustainability into their strategic communication and institutional governance practices. Green marketing initiatives that highlight environmentally responsible campus operations and sustainable aviation training practices can improve institutional attractiveness. At the same time, the publication of transparent sustainability reports can strengthen credibility and provide measurable evidence of institutional commitment to environmental and social responsibility. Such strategies may be particularly effective in attracting environmentally conscious millennial students.

The findings are especially relevant for emerging economies such as Indonesia, where the aviation sector continues to experience rapid growth and increasing global scrutiny regarding environmental sustainability. By embedding sustainability within institutional communication strategies, aviation schools can not only enhance student recruitment but also contribute to the development of future aviation professionals who possess stronger sustainability awareness.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research focuses on prospective students in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other national contexts. Additionally, the study examines only two determinants of student interest. Future research could

incorporate additional variables such as institutional reputation, perceived career opportunities in sustainable aviation, or environmental knowledge. Comparative cross-country studies and the exploration of mediating or moderating mechanisms would also provide deeper insights into the role of sustainability communication in higher education decision-making.

Declarations

Ethical approval

This study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Akademi Penerbang Indonesia Banyuwangi, Indonesia. The research protocol was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent to participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Consent to publish

The authors confirm that all participants provided consent for anonymized data to be used for research and publication purposes.

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Author Contribution

D.A. and R.W.P. wrote the main manuscript text and M.F.A. and W.P. translating the manuscript. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Figures

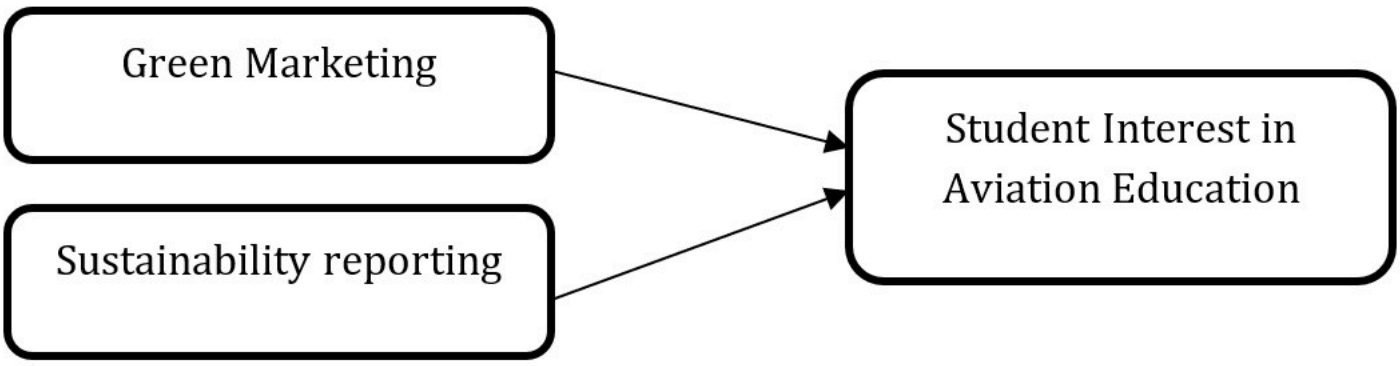


Figure 1

Conceptual framework of the study

Source: Authors’ own elaboration.