

Greenwashing

The Effect of Eco Living as a Trend In Capitalism

Being Eco Conscious : Why is it Trending Now?

Im sure we all have noticed the increasing trend of being “eco conscious”. We see it in so many ways being marketed to us. It seems that a lot of people these days want to reduce the impact they have on our earth, and it makes sense because of all the issues humans have caused such as global warming, deforestation, and animal extinction to name a few. We have seen lifestyle choices emerge such as minimalism, zerowaste and veganism as a result. Now that corporations know there is a large market out there for people who choose to live sustainably, they want to jump on the green bandwagon and market themselves as “green”.



What is Greenwashing?

Greenwashing is the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound. Greenwashing is considered an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly.

For example, companies involved in greenwashing behavior might make claims that their products are from recycled materials or have energy-saving benefits. Although some of the environmental claims might be partly true, companies engaged in greenwashing typically exaggerate their claims or the benefits in an attempt to mislead consumers.

This modern design is obviously meant to attract eco friendly hipsters. It's begging the question, is boxed water really better? No. It's not. It's still a disposable item and it's even less recyclable than bottled water. Plus the box is still lined with plastic. It's a tetra pak and unrecyclable in most municipalities.



The 7 Sins of Greenwashing

1. **Sin of the hidden trade-off:** committed by suggesting a product is “green” based on an unreasonably narrow set of attributes without attention to other important environmental issues (e.g., paper produced from a sustainably harvested forest may still yield significant energy and pollution costs).
2. **Sin of no proof:** committed by an environmental claim that cannot be substantiated by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification (e.g., paper products that claim various percentages of postconsumer recycled content without providing any evidence).
3. **Sin of vagueness:** committed by every claim that is so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer (e.g., “all-natural”).
4. **Sin of irrelevance:** committed by making an environmental claim that may be truthful but is unimportant or unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally preferable products (e.g., “CFC-free” is meaningless given that chlorofluorocarbons are already banned by law).
5. **Sin of lesser of two evils:** committed by claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater health or environmental impacts of the category as a whole (e.g., organic cigarettes).
6. **Sin of fibbing:** committed by making environmental claims that are simply false (e.g., products falsely claiming to be Energy Star certified).
7. **Sin of false labels:** committed by exploiting consumers’ demand for third-party certification with fake labels or claims of third-party endorsement (e.g., certification-like images with green jargon such as “eco-preferred”).

How Corporations Take Advantage

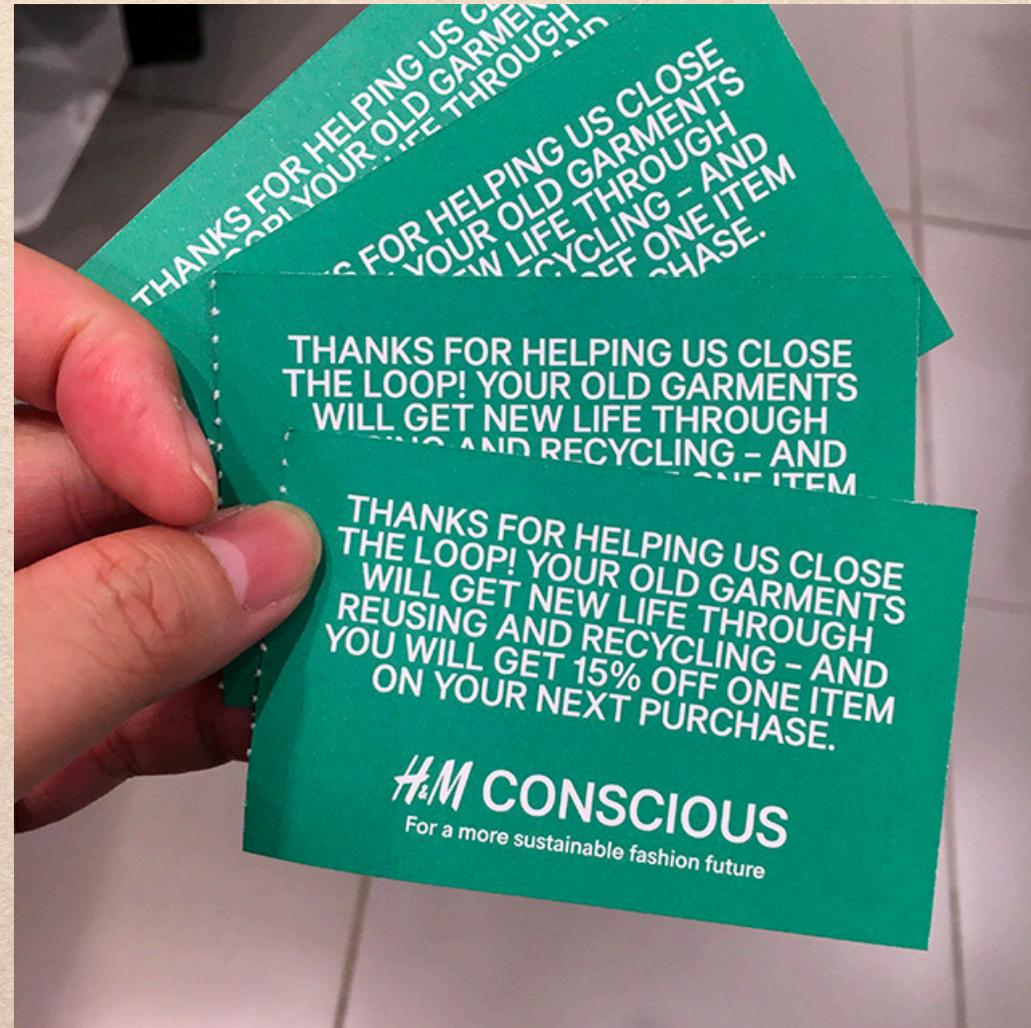
To give the *appearance* of being green companies use key words such as : Natural, vegan, plant based, organic, recycled, and sustainable. However these words are often not backed up with real evidence to support any of these claims. For example:

Eco-Conscious H&M

Each piece in H&M's Conscious collection includes at least some organic cotton, recycled polyester, or Tencel. Paired with the brands' in-store clothing recycling program, H&M might be looking pretty green; but these programs aren't indicative of H&M as a whole. Only 0.1 percent of donations to its in-store recycling boxes are recycled into new textiles, admitted Henrik Lampa, H&M's Development Sustainability Manager in 2016.

H&M's business model is to keep people coming back into stores often for inexpensive clothes—to do that, it brings cheap new looks into stores about every other day, which satisfies customers' tastes for novelty. It's a wasteful model—after the 2017 holiday season, H&M reported it had an inventory of unsold clothing worth \$4.3 billion.

The Clean Clothes Campaign included H&M in its 2019 Tailored Wages report and found that it was not paying its factory workers down the supply chain enough to pay for basic needs such as housing, health care, food, and education for children. In fact, none of the 20 global brands assessed in the report were paying a living wage.



Ford Motor Company

When pointing to greenwashing, one of the most cited examples is Ford Motor Company's "It Isn't Easy Being Green" campaign for the hybrid Escape SUV. While claiming to be environmentally friendly, Ford's cars were considered the worst carbon emitters and had the worst fuel efficiency trend of any major automaker according to Union of Concerned Scientists (Friedman & Mackenzie, 2004). Since its early and much-criticized entry into the hybrid market, Ford has backed away from promoting itself as the green car choice.

BP

In an industry considered to be anything but environmentally friendly, petroleum giant BP has decided to label itself as the green oil company. Admittedly, the company is not as "brown" as other oil giants, but by claiming to be earth conscious, BP has set itself up to be widely criticized. Since 2000, BP has used the tag line "Beyond Petroleum" as part of its green campaign. The overhaul of BP's image has been celebrated by some as a rebranding success. BP's less than green activities include lobbying efforts to open restricted spaces such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling and illegally dumping hazardous waste from the Endicott Island oil field between 1993 and 1995. The company was even named as one of the 10 worst companies in 2005 by Multinational Monitor.



Biofuels, solar,
hydrogen, natural
gas. We think it's
important to
diversify, too.

Building a diverse portfolio is one way we're investing in the new energy future. Over the last 5 years, we've invested \$10 billion in U.S. energy supplies, like cleaner burning natural gas. We're investing up to \$3 billion over 10 years to make wind, natural gas and hydrogen to provide low carbon electricity. And, we're expanding our long-term investment in biofuels, investing \$100 million to bring the next generation of biofuels to market.

It's a start.



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It's time
to go on a
low-carbon
diet.

Natural Gas Natural gas is a bridge to clean, renewable energy. By shifting the balance of the fuel mix from coal to natural gas, carbon dioxide emissions in new power generation can be reduced by 50%. Today, natural gas accounts for about 30% of BP's global production.

Renewables Cleaner power plants are vital to meet demand for energy and help meet Kyoto targets. BP is leading others with its partners in developing a power station in Scotland to run on hydrogens. This would produce electricity with 90% lower carbon emissions for 200,000 homes.

Solar Energy produced from the sun emits no carbon. Over the last 30 years, BP has helped solar energy to 100 countries worldwide. In both urban and remote locations - from solar solutions available in select retail outlets in California to the largest off-grid system in the world in the Philippines.



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Consequences of Greenwashing

vague and misleading environmental claims has caused consumers to question corporate honesty, and cry greenwashing at every turn.

The concern over greenwashing is not only that it misleads consumers, but also that if unscrupulous marketers continue to claim to be environmentally friendly, then companies true to their environmental mission lose their competitiveness. This is unfortunate for companies who are actually green because they are putting all this effort into being green yet other companies can simply market themselves that way without really being green.

In addition, overuse and misuse of the “green” claims can saturate the market to the point that the greenness of the product may become meaningless to the consumer.

Saturated “Green” Market = “Green” loses its power and its meaning. There will be no incentive to buy green if everyone is skeptical of the word because of the amount of times it’s been wrongly used.

Actual Eco-Friendly Companies

Allbirds - A company that makes its sneakers from merino wool, with laces made from recycled plastic bottles, and insoles that contain castor bean oil. Even the boxes used in shipping are made from recycled cardboard.

Patagonia - Their corporate philosophy is all about going green. They've built repair centers around the world to increase the longevity of their products and lower their carbon footprint. In 2016, they pledged \$10 million of their Black Friday sales to grassroots environmental groups dedicated to preserving and improving the planet.

Lush Cosmetics - Lush is dedicated to eco-friendly products and practices, like creating solid shampoo bars to reduce packaging waste and offering free products to customers who bring in empty product packaging to recycle. Their wild success and their dedication to eco-conscious practices and major green initiatives is paving the way for other beauty companies to follow suit.

Beyond Meat - Talk to any environmentalist, and they'll agree that the biggest problem facing our generation is climate change. And one of the biggest contributors to this environmental crisis? The meat industry. Beyond Meat is shaking up the food industry by creating delicious, plant-based "meat" products that are better for human health, the environment, climate change and animals.

Being "Green" is all about transparency, nobody can be perfect but Patagonia is honest with consumers and recognized where it needs improvement, such as using fossil fuels to produce shells for coats, which contributes to climate change.



Concluding Thoughts

As Nancy E. Furlow stated in *Greenwashing in the New Millennium*,
“The decision to use environmental claims in marketing communications is a serious one. Environmental claims must be honest, sincere and a reflection of the organization’s mission.”

Personally, I feel the same principle applies to individuals. Eco consciousness is a lifestyle choice. Any company can make you feel good by selling you the IDEA of being eco friendly but that won’t mean you actually are. Even products meant to be eco-friendly are simply things we can live without, for example metal straws. It is more eco friendly to just not use them. The best practice is to use what you have already and only when necessary buy green. Being eco - conscious is not something you could buy.

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