



Greenwashing – Nothing to do with laundry!

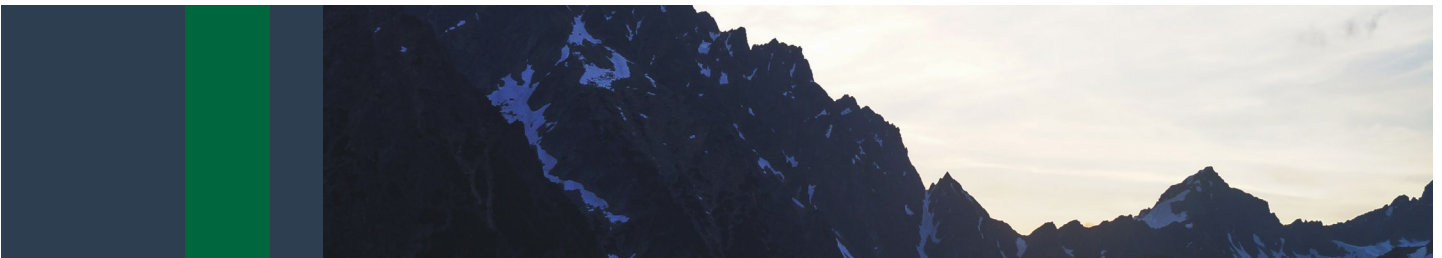
Our vision is to make Sustainable Business a Choice
for companies and organizations around the world



In the free market the consumer is king! Companies compete for the loyalty of their customers in an effort to retain their market share and profitability. We, as consumers, care about the practices of companies in relation to the environment and society and the way they produce their products. We love companies that want to make a change and do good! We love companies that have environmentally friendly policies, a sustainable supply chain, disclose their sustainability performance and goals. Our power as consumers is in our purchasing behavior. It's a way to send strong messages to companies that have no respect for the local communities, internationally proclaimed human rights, corruption, environment and no willingness to become responsible. Of course companies are aware of that.

Paint it Green!

Some companies lead the sustainable economy by introducing and abiding to sustainable strategies. Others spend more money in trying to convince the consumer, through advertising, that their product is green or sustainable, instead of adopting responsible practices. The goal is of course to mislead through advertising and unsubstantiated claims, and promote themselves or their product(s) as being green and sustainable in order to attract customers and investors. This marketing practice is called Greenwashing! For everyone interested in buying green products/services and supporting responsible companies, here are some tips to help you tell apart the companies that actually are sustainable. Next time keep in mind the signs below to avoid being misled!



Signs of Greenwashing

- Advertisements that misleads with words. The terms used have no clear meaning. What do you mean by eco-friendly, all natural etc?
- Green products vs dirty company. Green products are usually produced by companies with overall sustainable business practices
- The advertisement misleads with visuals and/or graphics. Because the packaging is green it doesn't mean it is environmentally friendly
- Jargon or too scientific information that is vague, too broad and cannot be easily understood
- Making a green claim about the product without providing any proof to back up that claim
- The advertisement overstates or exaggerates how green it actually is
- The advertisement provides data that is totally fabricated
- Worshipping false labels, claiming that a product is endorsed or certified by a third party when that is not true or the party does not exist
- Hidden Trade off, a product is not green just because it is made out of paper for instance; we have to examine the whole life cycle of the product.
- Lesser than two evils. Claiming to be more sustainable than other similar products, does not make a product sustainable
- The advertisement leaves out important information making any green claim sound better than it is.

Is something missing from the ad?

Does the ad exist to divert attention from something else that the company is doing? A very good solution to this is to Google the company and find out for yourself what it really does. The internet is an endless source of information and can be very helpful

Greenwashing may seem annoying or even funny some times, but it is beyond pointless and reckless; it is dangerous and risky. Any practice which misleads and lacks transparency possess great risks for companies. The impact of being accused of Greenwashing has long term negative effects, greater than any short term benefits of misleading customers that may boost your sales. Bad reputation, poor brand image, reduction of sales and market share to name a few. Investment of millions to recover brand perception and bring back loyal customers. Stakeholders are neither naive nor blind. From NIKE to NESTLE and DOVE to Disney, they have all experienced and regretted it! It is true, they have come out stronger but in order to strengthen the trust contract with your customers, there is no need to break it first!

The Greenwashing index is a great way to rate advertisements based on the signs mentioned above. The higher the score, the worse the ad does on the index. **Visit <http://www.greenwashingindex.com/ads/>**, to watch products that are Greenwashed and learn how to read the signs of Greenwashing.





Sustainability Knowledge Group is a global advisory firm dedicated in creating value for businesses through **strategic advisory** and **training solutions**.

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