

# Green marketing or green washing

[Environment](#)



In the competitive market place, companies will do anything to draw consumers attention towards their products or services. Today, many businesses are engaging in green marketing, the practice of promoting environmentally-safe products. Concerns are rapidly growing that some green marketing is just green washing. Companies are guilty of green washing when they mislead their buyers into thinking that their products are environmentally-friendly. They tend to hide the fact that their goods are mostly made up of harmful ingredients.

Green marketing is the promotion of various goods or services that are based on their environmental benefits. These products are said to be environmentally safe and have little to no negative impact on the external surroundings in which one lives. Many of these goods actually help the natural environment instead of harming it. Numerous writers have given various definition of what green marketing is.

According to Polonsky, green marketing “ consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment.”<sup>1</sup> What Polonsky is saying is both the consumer and the environment are protected and neither one is being harmed. He is implying that green products should be referred to as “ less environmentally harmful,” rather than being “ environmentally friendly.” Stanton and Futrell stated that green marketing is,

“... all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs and wants; therefore it ensure that the interest of

the organization and all its consumers are protected, as voluntary exchange will not take place unless the buyers and sellers are mutually benefited.”<sup>2</sup> This definition is similar to what Polonsky had stated, however it does not mention anything about the protecting the natural environment. It is strictly for the satisfaction of the buyer and seller. Evidently, green marketing can cover a broad range of topics. It covers the way a business modifies its products, changes the process of production, the way the product is packaged, and the way it is advertised.

Most companies today believe that investing in environmentally preferable products and technologies can give them an advantage to their competitors. Practicing green marketing has drawn the attention of numerous policy makers and most importantly, the consumers. Although consumers are addressing their demand for more and more green products, businesses are questioning whether they are willing to pay at such a high price. Consumers direct the way a business markets and produces its product. Since they favor more and more green products and services, many companies are making significant changes in all activities.

In Table A-1 below, it is clear what percentage of Americans have different views on the environment. Concern of the environment influences nine percent of Americans more than any other social value. This group is mostly made up of older, educated, white Americans. They are ones who best represent the market for green products.

Fortunately, only three percent of Americans have the weakest level of concern when it comes to the environment. Twenty-four percent of

Americans are concerned about the environment, but life is too busy as majority are family-focused women. Although some Americans have an important perception on keeping the environment safe, most of the population choose not to be involved.

The approach to green marketing encourages the combination of all environmental issues with the activities of a corporation. It ranges from formulating and planning a strategy to producing the product and directing themselves with the consumers. Sellers begin to question how their company can remain competitive with others. According to Esty and Winston, “ Smart companies seize competitive advantage through strategic management of environmental challenges.”<sup>3</sup> The companies that are most competitive are those who are creating value and an advantage for themselves. They create new products to meet environmental needs. They do not just modify their products as other companies do. These leading companies keep in mind that working to protect the planet also protects their company. In addition to keeping the environment safe, it helps to inspire existing employees and attract new workers who are interested in more than just making money.

Many existing corporations have been investing their time and effort in becoming green. The pressure from consumers, business partners, or even groups in their community may be the cause of businesses considering this change. In addition, green products and policies are known to be profitable. Green policies can minimize costs and positively adjust the future of a company. Firms that are socially responsible are likely to attract more buyers, therefore, many companies are deciding to promote themselves as environmentally concerned establishments. Some companies that are

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investing in eco-friendly activities choose not to advertise themselves in that manner.

It is clear that some firms are using green marketing as a marketing tool while others are choosing not to promote themselves at all. An increase in the concern of customers may also bring a business to switch to green. The fact that buyers are more interested in the way a product is made and how much better it is for the environment plays a major role in motivating businesses to making the change. Competition also takes over an extensive part of the business world. Every business wants to have a basic idea of their competitors next move as far as marketing its products, whether it is positive or negative. This helps them to learn from others and also avoid difficulty in the future.

Companies that are striving for green marketing are inevitable to go through numerous problems. Before they actually move in the direction of green, they must be certain that their consumers are in no way confused and that they abide by the laws regarding green-marketing.

Businesses must state the environmental benefits of their product or service clearly and truthfully. According to Makower and Pike, "... simply saying that a product is green is not enough. Environmentally motivated consumers want to know not just a list of ingredients but also the environmental impact of the materials used and the waste generated." 4 They must explain how the benefits are carried through, confirm that the negative factors are taken into account, and should only use significant words and pictures. Reacting to

their competitors actions it is not always a brilliant idea. They can easily make the same mistake that someone else has made.

Making the mistake of misleading customers to thinking that a company is green is known as green washing. There are many actions that have taken place which attribute to green washing. When a product is not proven to be green or the claim is poorly defined is a common act of green washing. A business may also be truthful about their product, however, it is not important to the consumer and is not what they are seeking to read about the product. A declaration that is simply false may be the most common action taken when a company is green-washing.

Companies can easily avoid the process of green washing. Before a company produces anything, it should be aware of their consumers expectations. It is also crucial to be sure that no part of your business can contradict you green statements. A business should always be honest. The customers will appreciate the truth instead of being lied to. Before a business makes any claim, they should gather feedback from customers, staff, and experts to make sure that they are on the right track to green marketing. Most importantly, a business should stress to its consumers that going green is not the end. They should make clear to buyers of all the areas they intend to improve on. By following the few principles of what should not be done can easily help a business avoid being accused of greenwashing.

The concept of green marketing is growing more and more throughout the business world. Companies feel that green marketing is a great advantage to maximize their profits and gain more consumers. Some businesses, however,

may be guilty of green washing. In order to maintain a successful business, it is important to promote goods or services in a truthful manner and avoid misleading the customer in any way.