

## Marketing Green and the Rise of Greenwashing

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There are reports of greenwashing in the news pretty much constantly. However when [TIME reports](#) that “nearly all products’ eco-friendly claims are bogus or misleading” you begin to take notice, worry or both. A study by Terrachoice last year suggested an increase of 73% in the number of items with eco-credentials that are sold by retailers. However, it also found that 95% of these products had manufacturers overstating or misleading consumers about the true sustainability of the products and services.

Buying a [truly green product](#) is close to impossible although there are many brands on the market trying to come as close to zero-impact as possible. Marketing of a product to an ethical consumer is different from that of speaking to the masses. This

may be stating the obvious but there are various grade of green when it comes to consumer behavior. According to Tom Szaky CEO of [Terracycle](#), consumers can be banded into “light green” and “dark green.” This describes buying behavior even within a niche market.

Light green consumers do not prioritize the environmental benefits of the products that they buy whereas dark green consumers put a premium on this criteria. Consumers buy green products for a variety of reasons – environmental concerns, health concerns, [toxicity](#), money savings etc. Of all of these reasons, health concerns especially with chemicals are the foremost reason that people make the switch. When it comes to household purchasing, marketing to women is said to work more effectively because [they make 95% of all purchasing decisions](#).

One of the key ways people make make buying decisions is by reading the package. Consumers may be looking for information on the ingredients, nutritional information or list of chemicals in a formulation like [cosmetics](#), cleaning products etc. These hold the key to telling us how healthy or green a product is. Labeling therefore, is the most important tool of green marketing. However, since there is seldom any regulation when it comes to it marketers take full advantage of this black hole.

GM food for example, has no labeling laws in the United States. No cleaning product is required to list all ingredients on the label. All this leads to ambiguity and a certain degree of confusion. A consumer could be spending money on a product that is labelled green when it actually isn't when she could be buying something that is actually green without knowing it exists.

The most obvious reason why [greenwashing is unfair](#) is because it takes away from those companies that actually are manufacturing products that make a difference. As the demand for ethical products continues to rise, industry must tackle several issues like labeling and ethical marketing. There is also the need for consistent government policies, lobbying and awareness groups. A combination of all this will make the phenomenon of false marketing a thing of the past, but I don't see it happening anytime soon.