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ARTICLE

# Sins of Greenwashing

Greenwashing is the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service. There are more green products than ever before, and our Sins of Greenwashing tips can help you sort out the truly green

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on products carried on category-leading big box store shelves. Based on the results of the original study and subsequent studies, the Seven Sins of Greenwashing were developed to help consumers identify products that made misleading environmental claims.

Today, the Sins of Greenwashing remain a popular learning tool to help consumers evaluate sustainability claims. [Contact us](#) for permission to highlight the Sins of Greenwashing in publications and media.

## Sin of the hidden trade-off

A claim suggesting that a product is green based on a narrow set of attributes without attention to other important environmental issues. Paper, for example, is not necessarily environmentally preferable because it comes from a sustainably harvested forest. Other important environmental issues in the paper-making process, such as greenhouse gas emissions or chlorine use in bleaching, may be equally important.

## Sin of no proof

An environmental claim not substantiated by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification. Common examples are facial tissues or toilet tissue products that claim various percentages of post-consumer recycled content without providing evidence.

## Sin of vagueness

A claim that is so poorly defined or broad that its real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer. All-natural is an example. Arsenic, uranium, mercury, and formaldehyde are all naturally occurring, and poisonous. All natural isn't necessarily green.

## Sin of worshipping false labels

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frequent claim despite the fact that CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) are banned under the Montreal Protocol.

## Sin of lesser of two evils

A claim that may be true within the product category but that risks distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole. Organic cigarettes or fuel-efficient sport-utility vehicles could be examples of this sin.

## Sin of fibbing

Environmental claims that are simply false. The most common examples are products falsely claiming to be ENERGY STAR® certified or registered.

## Related insights

Learn more about making effective sustainability claims



WHITE PAPER

### Making Effective Sustainability Claims

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