



Eco-Friendly Life Series:Greenwashing

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Is going green just a scam? With numerous companies claiming green credibility, we as consumers have to be able to make educated decisions to recognize which products are truly sustainable. A good way to sift through the duds would be to see if a company commits one of the [Seven Sins of Greenwashing](#).

The Seven Sins of Greenwashing

1. Sin of the hidden trade-off: committing to a certain "green" initiative but not drawing attention to more relevantly important sustainability issues.
o Ex: "Energy-efficient" electronics but the

more relevant issue is what hazardous materials are in electronics or how they are recycled.

2. Sin of no proof: lack of assessable evidence supporting sustainability claims or third-party certifications.
o Ex: "Certified responsible recycler" is a common claim [youchange](#) faces when choosing which companies to partner with because of the problem of [e-waste exportation](#).

3. Sin of vagueness: poorly defined claims that could be oblivious to the consumer.
o Ex: "All natural" when a lot of naturally occurring substances such as lead, mercury, and phosphorus are hazardous and not necessarily green.

4. Sin of irrelevance: committing to a possibly truthful sustainability claim that is irrelevant or unhelpful to the consumer.
o Ex: "CFC-free", when CFCs were banned by law 20 years ago.

5. Sin of lesser of two evils: committing

to possibly true sustainability claims which run the risk of distracting the consumer from a greater environmental issue.

- o Ex: "Green cabs for blue skies" is an example we see in Arizona of hybrid taxi vehicles that get more miles per gallon but drive hundreds of miles a day possibly emitting as much GHGs as an average commuter.

6. Sin of fibbing: making false environmental certification claims.

- o Ex: Stating that a product or company is EnergyStar, Green Seal, e-Stewards, or R2, etc. but really is not.

7. Sin of worshipping false labels: Stating in words or logo a non-existing third party supporting body.

- o Ex: fake labels

Terra Choice created the Seven Sins of Greenwashing in 2010 after its 2009 report of the Six Sins of Greenwashing. Their purpose was to expose falsely marketed green products and companies.

TerraChoice's most updated report from last year notes that of the 5,296 products they examined only 4.5% of them were sinless. Also, that more than 95% of the examined consumer products claiming to be green committed at least one greenwashing sin.

The green market is growing; from 2009 to 2010 there was 73% more "green" products in the market. Part of living a more eco-friendly life is being fully aware of these types of products.

"Buyers beware" and do your research to avoid falling for these greenwashing scams. One last way to make more educated purchases is to look up a manufacturer's Green Ranking. Being green is more than just a slogan or label; it's a way of life.