

## 'Green' seen as deceptive advertising

May 21, 2011

Marketing experts said the number of U.S. companies vying for environmentally friendly status has escalated sharply in recent years.

Marketing company TerraChoice in a 2010 survey found 5,000 items in U.S. stores that touted some level of ecological benefit, a large majority of which – 95 percent – were deemed to be false claims, the Los Angeles Times reported Saturday.

TerraChoice Chief Executive Officer Scott McDougall said a deluge of false advertising claims will turn consumers into cynics "and they'll stop choosing green products at all."

"Most companies are engaged in incremental tinkering – symbolic actions without any real substance," Kumi Naidoo, executive director of Greenpeace International, told the Times.

For example, the Times cited a plastic Barbie doll that comes with a handbag made of recycled materials.

In other cases, companies receive labels that resemble certification of ecological safety, even though the labels are given for a fee, the Times said.

"An Eco-label that promises advertisers a green image while telling them they don't need to do anything to earn that image is the very definition of greenwashing," said

Michael Green, executive director of the Center for Environmental Health.

The Federal Trade Commission, meanwhile, is rewriting their voluntary guidelines for advertising whether a product is environmentally friendly. The current guidelines are 20 years old, the Times said.