



## Greenwashing in Green Marketing: A Rising Trend

By *Amanda Thompson*

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It's no secret that Super Bowl ads are a big part of the Super Bowl experience. In fact, one survey found that a majority of viewers watched the big game just to see the commercials. This year's viewers were sure to have taken notice of the "green police" Audi commercial that showed the car company's commitment to environmentally friendly cars. Audi's fictional green dream team arrested non-composters in their homes and took down plastic bag users everywhere.

Underneath the commercial's humor lies an important trend in advertising. A recent Gallup poll found that 83 percent of Americans have made at least minor changes in their lives to become more environmentally friendly, and advertisers are taking that to heart. A study by news organizations Environmental Leader and MediaBuyerPlanner found that 80 percent of marketers plan to increase spending on green marketing in the future to target a more environmentally-conscious audience. For the most part, marketers are using green advertising because they think it's valuable; a third of companies surveyed reported that green marketing was more effective than traditional advertising.

While the rise in green advertising correlates strongly with a rise in green company practices, this doesn't necessarily mean that all the marketing is for purely green products and services. It can be easy for consumers to fall victim to some companies' greenwashing tactics. Greenwashing, or misleading consumers on the eco-friendliness of a product, is increasing right along with green marketing. According to the 2009 Greenwashing Report, more than 2,000 products in the U.S. and Canada advertised with green claims. Of these claims, 98 percent were found to have committed one of the organization's "Seven Sins of Greenwashing," including making vague, irrelevant or false claims.

On the plus side, the report noted that legitimate (or "sinless") eco-friendly labeling nearly doubled in two years, from 14 percent to 23 percent.

If current trends are any indication, green marketing is here to stay, but it's important to look at ads with a skeptical eye and do your own research.