

UNVEILING GREENWASHING: THE DECEPTIVE VEIL OVER ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS

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ABSTRACT

Greenwashing is a deceptive tactic that involves providing false information about the environmental benefits of products or businesses. The study begins with the advent of environmentalism in the second part of the twentieth century and tracks the growth of greenwashing techniques, from naive attempts to capitalize on environmental trends to present sophisticated strategies. It explains basic greenwashing corporate practices, such as confusing wording and exaggerated promises, using examples and case studies. The research also investigates the negative impacts of greenwashing on consumer behaviour, trust, and environmental policies, as well as the barriers and gaps in regulatory regimes designed to prevent it. Furthermore, it emphasizes the responsibilities of NGOs, the media, and consumer advocacy in exposing

Keywords: Greenwashing, Consumer Behaviour, Impact, Evolution.

I. INTRODUCTION



Greenwashing's Origins – An Introduction

An explanation and background of greenwashing: Environmentalist Jay Westerveld first used the phrase "greenwashing" in the 1980s to describe the dishonest practice of giving the wrong impression or giving incorrect information about the environmental benefits of a good, service, or business. Its origins can be seen in the emergence of environmentalism during the second part of the 20th century when businesses were under growing pressure to deal with environmental issues.

Evolution and Early Instances: Early cases of "greenwashing" were frequently clumsy attempts by businesses to profit from the burgeoning environmental movement without making significant changes to their operations. For instance, the 1960s saw the US oil giant Chevron run commercials with the slogan "People Do" and a green logo. But the business's environmental history remains tarnished by mishaps like the oil disaster in Santa Barbara. Greenwashing techniques have evolved over time, including ambiguous language, limited disclosure, and even phoney certifications to give the impression of environmental responsibility. However, incidents like the Santa Barbara oil spill continued to tarnish the company's environmental record. Greenwashing techniques have evolved over time, including ambiguous language, selective disclosure, and even fraudulent certifications to give the impression of environmental responsibility.



Recognizing Greenwashing Common Business Practices: Greenwashing can manifest itself in a number of ways, such as irrelevant statements, imprecise language, unstated costs, mislabeled products, and overstated claims. These strategies are intended to trick customers into thinking that a business or product is greener than it actually is.

Examples of Prominent Greenwashing Incidents: In recent years, a number of high-profile greenwashing controversies have drawn public attention. Volkswagen's "clean diesel" marketing campaign is a noteworthy instance of this, as it misrepresented that its diesel vehicles fulfilled emissions regulations while, in fact, they were fitted with illicit defeat devices to evade emissions testing. Another example is the way Nestlé promotes the environmental friendliness of its Pure Life water brand, even though its extraction and packaging methods harm the environment.

The Effects of Greenwashing on Consumer Behavior and Trust: Greenwashing damages customers' faith in specific businesses as well as the idea of sustainability in general. Customers who feel duped would start to doubt any environmental promises, which would make it more difficult for businesses that are genuinely concerned about the environment to stand out. Furthermore, customers may be influenced by greenwashing to make decisions that unintentionally worsen the environment.

Impacts on Environmental Policies and Real Sustainability Efforts: Greenwashing impedes the development of significant environmental solutions by taking focus and funding away from real sustainability initiatives. Rather than encouraging innovation and accountability, it maintains the status quo. Greenwashing also has the potential to erode public support for environmental measures by instilling mistrust and cynicism.

II. THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Current Laws and Rules Preventing Environmental Claims That Are Not Truthful: Deceptive advertising is prohibited by laws and regulations in several nations, some of which target greenwashing specifically. For instance, to prevent deceit, advertisers must adhere to the Green Guides, which are criteria for environmental marketing claims established by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States.

Evaluation of Efficiency and Gaps: Although there are legislative structures in place to prevent greenwashing, oversight and enforcement continue to be difficult. The efficacy of these restrictions may be compromised by gaps in the law, imprecise definitions, and insufficient funding. Furthermore, it is challenging to impose uniform standards throughout countries due to the multinational character of many organizations.

III. NGOS AND THE MEDIA'S ROLE

Exposure to the Media and NGO Activism: The identification and exposure of greenwashing incidents is greatly aided by media inquiries and NGO initiatives. These individuals can increase public awareness and hold businesses responsible for their deceptive environmental claims by engaging in social media activism, investigative journalism, and documentary filmmaking.

Instances of Effective Interventions: Numerous well-known exposés and campaigns have brought real repercussions for greenwashing firms. For example, Greenpeace's "Detox" campaign targeted fashion labels that were allegedly using dangerous chemicals to pollute rivers. As a result, companies like Nike and Adidas agreed to remove harmful materials from their supply chains.

Towards Accountability and Transparency Measures to Improve Corporate Disclosure: The implementation of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting systems, which mandate that businesses reveal details about their social and environmental effect, is one way that efforts are being made to increase corporate transparency. On the other hand, initiatives for voluntary disclosure could not have uniform metrics or verification systems.

Third-Party Certifications and Labels Are Important Third-party certifications and labelling, including USDA Organic, Energy Star, and Fair Trade, give consumers peace of mind that a product has met environmental criteria. These certificates can assist customers in making wise decisions and are frequently supported by thorough evaluation procedures.

IV. EMPOWERMENT OF CONSUMERS

Educating Customers: Providing consumers with information and critical thinking abilities is crucial in the fight against greenwashing. Consumer advocacy groups, eco-labelling manuals, and awareness campaigns are a few examples of educational programs that can assist people in identifying and rejecting greenwashed goods.

Influence of Consumer Lobbying: Advocacy by consumers and group efforts can put a lot of pressure on businesses to change their environmental policies and stop using greenwashing techniques. Customers can use a variety of tactics, such as boycotts, petitions, shareholder resolutions, and social media activism, to hold businesses responsible.

V. CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM'S FUTURE

Forecasts for the Development of Greenwashing: Businesses' environmental claims will come under more scrutiny as environmental consciousness rises. Although strategies for greenwashing may change in response to shifting customer demands and legislative environments, businesses that target In the long run, true sustainability is probably going to prevail.

Innovation's Place in Real Sustainability Forward-thinking businesses that prioritize true sustainability in their operations stand a good chance of prospering in the long run. These businesses can add value for society and shareholders by incorporating environmental factors into supply chain management, corporate governance, and product design.

VI. CONCLUSION

The joint efforts to establish a sustainable future are undermined by greenwashing. To cultivate an environment of openness and responsibility, companies, regulators, media, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders must collaborate. Then and only then will we be able to make sure that the corporate green gloss is a façade intended to deceive rather than an actual example of environmental management.

VII. REFERENCES

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