

green•wash

/ˈgrēn,wäSH,-wôSH/

noun: greenwashing

DEFINITION:

disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image.¹

It tricks customers and communities into believing a product, practice or policy is safe, healthy or “green” when it is not. This is also sometimes referred to as presenting a “green screen” or “green sheen.” The practice of greenwashing is purposeful through public relations and marketing. It is deceptive and misleading and ultimately aims to influence public perception.



green whitewash] — greenwash

Why is greenwashing an issue?

Greenwashing is bad for the environment. It encourages consumers and communities to do the opposite of what’s actually good for the environment. People want to make sound decisions and support businesses that are doing right by the environment. That’s why it is damaging when a company falsely claims to be green just to push its agenda.

How can I recognize greenwashing?

Be wary of ads that make green claims that are vague or unproven. Be wary of ads that overstate or exaggerate how green a product/company/service actually are. Be wary of ads that mislead with words, visuals or graphics. Be wary of ads that leave out or hide important information.

Ask yourself questions: Why is that energy company rebranding? Is that hotel chain making other meaningful “green” changes in addition to asking guests to reuse towels and sheets? Is my local grocery store “green” simply because it collects used plastic grocery bags?

The challenges of climate change and sustainability are real. We cannot afford to be distracted with false claims. We demand, and deserve, to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Do your research and follow your gut instinct. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

For more information:

www.stopgreenwash.org
www.greenwashingindex.com
wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwashing

photo: Freemages.com/Alessandro Paiva
¹Google.com

RedLineTacoma.org