

5 Effective Green Marketing Strategies

In recent decades, sustainability has become a priority for consumers, who are increasingly on the lookout for products that are high-quality, affordable AND environmentally-friendly. This has led companies to devise green product and marketing strategies. According to a June 2014 Nielsen [study](#), 55% of global online consumers “are willing to pay more for products and services from companies that are committed to positive social and environmental impact.” In fact, as early as 1992, the European Commission established the [EU Ecolabel](#), a Europe-wide voluntary environmental labeling scheme that aims to help consumers identify sustainable products and services.

In an attempt to leverage increased demand for more sustainable goods and services, companies have employed marketing tactics to assure consumers that their products are green. However, this development has the potential to trigger the [“greenwashing” phenomenon](#). Green issues are often complex and highly technical, so consumers are sometimes unknowingly persuaded into buying products that are misleadingly advertised as sustainable or ecologically friendly. Greenwashing can damage a company’s reputation, so it is an ill-advised and risky course of action. Once exposed, deceptive advertising can lead to lawsuits and a loss of consumer confidence.

It is extremely important for companies to develop legitimate and effective green product and marketing strategies, which can eliminate the need for greenwashing and lead to greater profits and consumer patronage. A company that is honest and genuinely committed to sustainability can earn the respect and loyalty of consumers.

1. Green Design

Oftentimes, companies resort to greenwashing because their products and services are not green to begin with. A take-out bag with a big recycle symbol on the front may actually be made from virgin, and not recycled, paper. A fuel-efficient car that experts are raving about on social media may contain conflict materials. The most important green marketing strategy is to design products and services that are green to begin with. If a product or service is environmentally-friendly from the ground up, there is no need for greenwashing.

Fuji Xerox’s [Green Wrap](#) is an example of a product with a green design. Every aspect of Green Wrap—from conceptualization to the product itself—is environmentally-friendly. According to Fuji Xerox Australia’s [website](#), Green Wrap is “part of [the company’s] overall commitment to the environment and [its] long-term strategy of developing high performance waste-free products within waste-free offices.” True to form, Green Wrap is manufactured using sustainable materials and production processes. About [60%](#) of its pulp comes from recycled waste (e.g., milk cartons and used office computer paper). In addition, Green Wrap’s pulp is bleached using thiourea dioxide—a chemical that breaks down to urea (a substance used in wastewater treatment).

2. Green Positioning

A company should explicitly promote its sustainability performance—and those of its products and services—as a key component of its business activities. Everything a company does should reflect its sustainability values. They cannot claim to be sustainable while engaging in unsustainable

business practices such as making employees work under sweatshop conditions. Doing so will ruin the company's credibility with consumers.

The Body Shop exemplifies effective green positioning. On its [official website](#) the company identifies its values. They are against animal testing; support community fair trade; activate self-esteem; defend human rights; and protect the planet; and The Body Shop lives up to these values.

- It has never tested any of its products on animals. In fact, The Body Shop is a [Leaping Bunny-approved brand](#). The [Leaping Bunny Certification](#) is Cruelty Free International's worldwide gold standard for non-animal tested consumer products.
- The Body Shop products are responsibly sourced. Its [Tea Tree Oil](#) is supplied by the [Kenya Organic Oil Farmers' Association \(KOOFA\)](#). KOOFA is a cooperative composed of 380 small-scale farmers, half of which are women. High rates of AIDS-related mortality in Kenya forces many of the country's women to support their families by themselves. Tea tree farming enables KOOFA's farmers to earn a steady income, which they can use for necessities such as food and potable water.
- The Body Shop's advertisements do not use images that are demeaning to women. In addition, the company's [Learning is of Value to Everyone \(LOVE\) initiative](#) funds training courses, events and health treatments for employees.
- The Body Shop [actively raises funds to promote global awareness of issues such as domestic violence and HIV/AIDS](#). In September 2009, the company launched the [Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People campaign](#), a drive that aims to raise funds and educate consumers regarding sex trafficking of minors. On September 29, 2011, The Body Shop presented [7,044,278 petition signatures](#) to the United Nations Human Rights Council — [one of the largest petitions in the UN's history](#). Its goal was to urge governments to do everything in their power to protect minors from sex trafficking.

3. Green Pricing

A company should highlight how a green product or service can help consumers save key resources. A car company, for instance, can promote its latest vehicle by emphasizing how it is more fuel-efficient compared with other leading car brands. This allows consumers to actively participate in sustainability. They become aware that their choice is about investing in something that will allow them to save money and resources in the future, rather than making a short-term purchase.

[Tide Coldwater Clean](#) was advertised as an effective stain remover, as well as a way for consumers to save on their energy bills. On its official website, Tide presented the detergent as a [concentrated formula that can help save up to 50% on energy bills by eliminating the need to wash clothes in warm water](#). Tide added that the amount of energy saved can be used to [charge a smartphone for life](#). Through green pricing, consumers understand that if they buy Tide Coldwater Clean, they will be able to reduce their energy consumption and contribute to sustainability.

4. Green Logistics

In addition to a product or service being green, [its packaging must also be green](#). Packaging is the first thing that consumers see. Unsustainable packaging has the potential to dissuade consumers from purchasing sustainable products.

In 2013, Amazon announced its [Frustration-Free Packaging initiative](#), a five-year effort that aims to do away with wasteful and hard-to-open packaging materials such as plastic clamshell casings, wire ties and air-bubble wrap. The online retail giant worked with companies like Mattel, Microsoft, Unilever, Fisher-Price and Logitech to develop smaller, easy-to-open, recyclable packaging boxes. Amazon also offers its engineers to its partner companies so that they can make their packaging designs more compliant with the firm's standards. For a partner company to earn Amazon's Frustration-Free Packaging certification, its packaging must be easily opened without having to use a knife or a box cutter, and should be free of wasteful materials.

5. Green Disposal

An effective green marketing strategy takes into consideration every aspect of a product's life cycle. From production to disposal, everything must be sustainable. Unsustainable disposal practices can be hazardous to both the environment and human health.

In January 2016, Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) [launched](#) a two-year food waste recycling program at two hawker (cooked food) centers, Ang Mo Kio Blk 628 Market and Tiong Bahru Market. Food waste is a major environmental issue in Singapore; in 2014, the country produced [788,600 tons](#) of food waste, of which only [13% \(101,400 tons\)](#) was recycled. The rest was either deposited in landfills or incinerated, increasing Singapore's carbon emissions.

The food recycling machine installed at Ang Mo Kio Blk 628 Market can convert one ton of food waste into water within 24 hours. Customized microbes break the food waste down into water, which will then be used to clean the bin center. The food recycling machine installed at Tiong Bahru Market grinds up food waste, combines it with microorganisms and stores the resulting mixture in onsite tanks. Once the tanks are full, they are taken to an offsite facility, where the mixture is converted into a bio-fertilizer to be used for agricultural purposes. NEA expects the program to reduce the two hawker centers' total food waste by up to [80%](#).

Legitimate green marketing is the way to go. Greenwashing may appear inexpensive, convenient and fast, but can cost a company its hard-earned reputation and potentially its profits. In September 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [discovered](#) that car manufacturing giant Volkswagen installed a "defeat device" in its diesel vehicles to cheat on emissions tests. This unethical practice cost Volkswagen [USD18.28 billion](#), as well as the [trust of consumers](#).

Businesses should take the high road by employing effective and truthful green marketing strategies. In the long term, green companies enjoy more profits and continued patronage when they are able to establish a reputation for being trustworthy and truly dedicated to sustainability.

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