

GREEN, GREEN, GREENWASHING



As the whole planet is taking more notice of environmental issues, so are companies and so are organisations which assess and control whether they are keeping to the law or not in terms of maintaining a green policy in their business. It is now quite typical to see advertising logos involving efforts to convince the public that the company really does care about the environment whilst simultaneously suggesting that the public should too.

How many times have you seen an airline boasting about using extra green fuel or a sandwich-making company boasting about having sandwiches in recycled boxes? Surely many times. However, whereas a huge amount of companies, including companies in the tourism sector, use environmental issues in their advertising, cynics claim that they have underlying motives and do not really care about what is green and what is not.

There are certain success stories: Marks and Spencer has been labeled one of the greenest companies in the Footsie 100 list, perhaps its green label is not a coincidence. Furthermore, advertising laws naturally prevent companies from stating that their products are bio, recycled or green, when they are not.

Unfortunately, there are far more cases of negative use of such advertising than positive, somewhat confirming the cynical thoughts of a number of experts. From the Footsie 100 index list, BP, Tesco and British Airways were condemned as the worst companies in terms of maintaining the environmental standards we have come to expect in the market of today. This does not mean, of course, that their advertising slogans do not make them out to be greener than haricot beans. Shell came out with the ridiculous statement "we grow flowers" in an attempt to gain more green-orientated customers. Experts later revealed that this may well be true, yet has little to do with environmental issues.

Moreover, Universal Studios in Orlando recently claimed that they tend to reuse fuels. This may well have an element of truth to it too, yet the question remains as to why this should not be true. Surely the company would want to use these fuels again anyway for themselves? The basic fact is that companies will continue to do little about environmental issues unless the government steps in.

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