



*Under the Lens*

# CLAIMING *GREEN*

The influence of green product  
claims on purchase intent and  
brand perception



## ABOUT UL ENVIRONMENT

UL Environment works to advance global sustainability, environmental health, and safety by supporting the growth and development of healthier, more sustainable products, services, and organizations. A business division of UL (Underwriters Laboratories), the trusted name in product safety for more than 120 years, UL Environment brings science, trust, and clarity to green products with services like environmental claim validations, ECOLOGO® Certification, Environmental Product Declarations, GREENGUARD Certification, product emissions testing, organizational sustainability certification, and advisory services – and connects purchasers to healthier, more sustainable products through the free online UL Sustainable Product Guide. [ul.com/environment](https://ul.com/environment)







## ABOUT SHELTON GROUP

This study was conducted by Shelton Group, a marketing communications firm focused exclusively on energy and the environment. Shelton develops marketing strategies and campaigns for many of America's leading utility, building product, and consumer goods companies, and also publishes its own proprietary research three times a year measuring Americans' attitudes toward energy efficiency and sustainability. [sheltongrp.com](https://sheltongrp.com)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	04
<i>Anatomy of a Green Product Claim</i>	06
Defining the Effective Green Product Claim	07
Terms Used in This Study: Types of Claims	10
Legitimate Claims	10
Certified Claims	11
Problematic Claims	12
Examples of Claims Tested	12
<i>Consumer Survey Results</i>	13
Study Background	14
Head-to-Head Results	14
Digging Deeper	18
What Drives Consumers	18
Importance of Certifications	18
Green Claims and Perceived Value	19
Confusing Claims	19
Confusion and Brand Perception	20
<i>B2B Insights</i>	21
<i>Findings by Product Category</i>	24
Home Improvement	25
Background	25
 Brand Impact of Green Claims	25
Manufacturer-Created Green Labels	26
Perceived Value of Green Claims	27
Electronics	29
 Background	29
Brand Impact of Green Claims	29
Perceived Value of Green Claims	30
Personal Care	32
 Background	32
Brand Impact of Green Claims	32
Perceived Value of Green Claims	33
Cleaning Products	35
 Background	35
Brand Impact of Green Claims	35
Perceived Value of Green Claims	36
<i>Conclusions, Insights, and Opportunities</i>	38
<i>Methodology</i>	48
<i>Study Preview</i>	49

# INTRODUCTION

## The marketplace is hungry for sustainable products.

Demand is growing every year from consumers and business purchasers alike for products that minimize impact on the environment, reduce energy costs, and promote better health.

And the potential benefits for companies that tap into that demand are enormous and far-reaching. Companies that promote their sustainable products well don't just increase sales – they connect meaningfully with their customers and increase brand loyalty over the long term.

**Your sustainable product is your point of connection with a hungry marketplace.** If you're making sustainable products and you aren't communicating that effort effectively to the public, you're potentially leaving substantial money on the table – and missing out on a golden opportunity for strengthening your brand.

That's why it's critical to make green product claims that are clear and credible, claims that really resonate with your target audience.

**70% of Americans** say they're searching for greener products.<sup>1</sup>

**67% of business decision makers** say sustainability is an important factor when they make operating, construction, and purchasing decisions for their organizations.<sup>2</sup>

## But there's another important reason to make your claims clear and credible.

Namely, there's risk attached to making a green product claim the wrong way. And that risk is increased by recent changes in the marketplace.

In 2012, the Federal Trade Commission revised its Green Guides, the agency's core set of guidelines to help marketers avoid making misleading environmental claims. The Guides, which were first launched in 1992, are now more specific and prescriptive, making it easier for the FTC to prosecute greenwashers. **If you make green claims that are deceptive in the eyes of the FTC, you now face a very real financial and legal risk.**

Buyers, meanwhile, armed with their smartphones and increasingly vocal via social media, have become more aware of greenwashing and more nimble in spreading the word about products and companies they trust – or don't. Forget fines and lawsuits for a moment: **simply making your green product claim in a way that's confusing or misleading can damage your brand.**

That's big news.

How do we know it's true?

<sup>1</sup>Shelton Group. (2014). *Eco Pulse 2014*.

<sup>2</sup>Shelton Group. (2013). *B2B Pulse 2013*.



# INTRODUCTION

## We went straight to the source.

To get a clear picture of the rapidly evolving green claims landscape, we broke new ground.

We asked 1,017 consumers about their perceptions of green claims, testing certain types of claims head-to-head and gauging how they affect purchase behavior and brand perception. We also found out which claims added the most perceived value and which boosted consumers' perception of the brand – and which were the most risky and spelled potential trouble for a company's reputation.

Finally, we asked key business decision makers about their opinions of sustainable product claims.

**In other words, we tested what truly matters when it comes to making effective green claims in today's marketplace.**

Here's what we found.

*What can **40,000+** head-to-head comparisons tell you about your sustainable product opportunity?*

# *ANATOMY OF A* **GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM**

Defining the Effective Green Product Claim	07
Terms Used in This Study: Types of Claims	10
Legitimate Claims	10
Certified Claims	11
Problematic Claims	12
Examples of Claims Tested	12

# ANATOMY OF A GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM DEFINING THE EFFECTIVE GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM

## What does a green product claim look like?

There are as many ways to make a green claim as there are products on the market. Quite frankly, it's a jungle out there.



## But what does an **effective** green product claim look like?

That's a more complicated question.

# ANATOMY OF A GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM DEFINING THE EFFECTIVE GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM

08

## Let's define what we mean by "effective."

There are dozens of compelling reasons to make sustainable products: strongly held environmental principles, competitive differentiation in a crowded marketplace, and reduced material costs, to name just a few.

But when you tell the public about the environmental and health benefits of those products, there's only one goal: to increase sales and brand loyalty without exposing your company to undue risk. **Effective green product claims, in other words, strengthen your brand.**

## So how do you make an effective green product claim?

It's not easy. Telling your product story the right way poses a number of challenges:

- You must be truthful, clear, and comprehensive while differentiating your product from your competitor's.
- You have to engage green buyers without turning off skeptics.
- You must choose language that your customer will understand – no small feat when it comes to, say, a product's chemical content.
- Often, you have to communicate a potentially complex message on a very small amount of real estate (a product package) in a way that still commands your customer's attention.

Then there's the elephant in the room ...

## Greenwashing is everywhere.

There's a lot of storytelling going on in the marketplace, some of it more fable than fact. If you aren't making dubious green claims, you're likely competing with someone who is.

UL's *Seven Sins of Greenwashing* analysis in 2010 showed that 95% of products made what we'd call "problematic" green claims. Few of these problematic

claims were actually outright lies; the vast majority involved a lack of appropriate substantiation. **But in the eyes of the FTC, both mislead consumers, putting the companies that make those claims at risk of legal action and fines at both the federal and state levels.**

Rampant greenwashing was the reason the FTC overhauled its approach in 2012, revising its Green Guides to include very specific language about the types of claims it considers misleading. The agency is committed to enforcing the new guides; multiple lawsuits related to deceptive green claims have already been initiated since the revision. And other countries are following suit: the Canadian Competition Bureau, the UK Department for Environment, Food, & Rural Affairs, and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission are among the global government agencies that have also issued their own versions of a green marketing guide. Although compliance is still voluntary in some of those countries, momentum is growing around the world to limit deceptive green marketing practices. A 2013 survey by the Global Advertising Lawyers Alliance found that 54% of the 43 countries polled had undertaken legal challenges to green claims in the marketplace.<sup>3</sup>

It's important to keep that momentum in mind as you make your green product claim. **To mitigate your risk, it's best to comply with FTC recommendations at a minimum.**

*"The FTC's changes to the Green Guides will level the playing field for honest business people and it is one reason why we had such broad support."*

—Jon Leibowitz, Chair, Federal Trade Commission  
October 1, 2012<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Global Advertising Lawyers Alliance. (2013). *Green marketing: A global legal perspective*. Retrieved from <http://www.gala-marketlaw.com/2013/greenmarketingreport.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>Federal Trade Commission. (2012, Oct. 1). *FTC issues revised Green Guides*. [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2012/10/ftc-issues-revised-green-guides>





## ANATOMY OF A GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM DEFINING THE EFFECTIVE GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM

### How do third-party certifications fit into the mix?

Assurance from a reputable third party that a product is green makes a strong case with many consumers and business customers alike. And certifications with wide market recognition offer instant credibility in a very visual and succinct way, which can be especially important on product packaging.

#### **But not all certification marks are created equal.**

Some are actually difficult to decipher, either because the name doesn't explicitly convey the meaning or because they don't include qualifying language that specifies the exact environmental benefit they measure. While business customers are likely familiar with the certifications important to their respective fields, consumers are easily baffled by unfamiliar or unclear marks – and can be fooled by seals that look like real third-party certifications but aren't.

Are certifications necessary for your product or simply nice to have? And how effective are they in the marketplace against outright greenwashing?

#### **Do they change the game?**

### That's what we aimed to find out.

Our investigation into green product claims centered on what makes them **effective**:

- Which claims have the strongest influence on purchase decisions?
- Which claims contribute to positive brand perception?
- Which claims support a price premium?
- Do legitimate claims stand up against greenwashing claims?
- How effective are certifications in combating greenwashing?
- Which claims are most confusing/misleading and why?
- Which claims actually backfire by creating negative brand perception?

We tested claims in four product categories: home improvement, electronics, personal care, and cleaning products.



## ANATOMY OF A GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

### Types of Claims

For the purposes of testing, we looked through the lens of the FTC Green Guides and their definitions of deceptive claims, evaluating language used and the presence of third-party certifications. This helped us divide green claims into three categories:

- **Legitimate claims.** These first-party claims use clear, specific language that is able to be substantiated – in other words, these claims meet the FTC eye test for credibility – but the information is not certified by an independent third party. (NOTE: Of course, we did not evaluate the actual validity of each claim. We evaluated only whether the claim appeared to meet FTC standards for language used.)
- **Certified claims.** These claims have been substantiated by an independent third party. Third-party substantiation includes validation, verification, and certification (the terminology used depends on the established standards of the certifying body). In our study, we tested claims associated with both validations and certifications, but for ease of reference, we'll refer to all third-party-substantiated claims simply as “certifications” or “certified claims.”
- **Problematic claims.** These first-party claims do not appear to meet the standards set by the FTC in the revised Green Guides. They're the “greenwashers” in our study.

Let's take a closer look at each.

### *Legitimate Claims*

The FTC Green Guides are now very specific in their recommendations about language to use when making green claims. Claims that comply with FTC guidelines avoid generic language such as “green” and “eco-friendly” and instead identify the specific environmental benefits the product offers.

**We'll call these claims “legitimate” claims.** They appear to be consistent with the requirements in the FTC Green Guides, but they don't take the next step of independent verification by a reliable third party. Legitimate claims are relevant; that is, the environmental or health benefit they call out is actually meaningful in that product category and doesn't disguise a larger trade-off.

[Please see page 12 for examples.](#)

## ANATOMY OF A GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

### *Certified Claims*

**Claims that have been verified by an independent third party are called “certified claims” in this study.** Certification means products have been scientifically evaluated for their environmental impact by a reputable third party with no bias or connection to the manufacturer.

The FTC’s revised Green Guides require that all certification marks clearly communicate what specific environmental benefit is being addressed. This can be accomplished by using a certification name that explicitly conveys the basis for certification, or through the inclusion of clear qualifying language on or adjacent to the mark. Otherwise, there’s potential for misleading consumers, because an unclear certification mark can imply that a product is wholly beneficial to the environment, which is something that few if any products can actually claim.

We tested certification marks according to how they currently appear on packaging in the market and in alignment with the certifiers’ publicly posted usage guidelines. Therefore, some included qualifying language on or adjacent to the mark and others did not.

[Please see page 12 for examples.](#)

### UL Environment’s Position on Qualifying Language

*In order to protect our customers, UL Environment takes a conservative approach in interpreting the language in the FTC Green Guides. We require that all our certification and validation marks include qualifying language on or directly adjacent to the mark that makes clear what attribute was evaluated. Accordingly, all UL Environment marks tested in this study included qualifying language.*



Please note that the above labels are shown as seen on actual products certified by UL Environment (and as seen by survey respondents); full qualifying language, including a link to supporting information, is included. For ease of reading, we’ve abbreviated this qualifying language when referring to individual UL Environment certifications in the body of this report.



# ANATOMY OF A GREEN PRODUCT CLAIM TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

## Problematic Claims

The world of green claims goes far beyond the legitimate and the certified, a phenomenon well-documented in the *Seven Sins of Greenwashing* series.





Many claims fall short of the mark when it comes to transparency and specificity, and the revised Green Guides are now the dividing line for claims that pass muster and those that are, in the eyes of the FTC, deceptive. **For our purposes, we've labeled the latter claims "problematic."**

Problematic claims are not necessarily outright lies. In fact, many problematic claims are likely well-intentioned.

But claims can mislead in a number of ways, even if there's no deliberate deception involved:

- **Vagueness.** The FTC explicitly cautions against using broad, ill-defined words such as "green" and "eco-friendly" without qualifying language that specifies what environmental benefit a product confers.
- **Irrelevance.** A product may tout that it's "CFC-free," for example, but all products are CFC-free under federal law.
- **Lack of proof.** A product's claim should be substantiated with supporting information even if it isn't certified by a third party.
- **False labeling.** Labels created by the manufacturer (often with generic green slogans or vague environmental promises) can imply third-party certification or environmental benefit where none exists.

## Examples of Claims Tested

PRODUCT CATEGORY	LEGITIMATE CLAIM	CERTIFIED CLAIM	PROBLEMATIC CLAIM
Home Improvement	No formaldehyde or ethylene glycol		Low VOCs
Electronics	Uses 50% less energy than printers in its class		Low carbon footprint
Personal Care	Formula is 94% plant derived		All natural
Cleaning Products	Contains no parabens, phthalates, petrochemicals, sulfates, or synthetic fragrances		No harsh chemicals



# CONSUMER *SURVEY RESULTS*

Study Background	14
Head-to-Head Results	14
Digging Deeper	18
What Drives Consumers	18
Importance of Certifications	18
Green Claims and Perceived Value	19
Confusing Claims	19
Confusion and Brand Perception	20

# CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

## Study Background

For the first part of our study, we polled 1,017 consumers in the United States and Canada to gauge their reactions to different types of green product claims. The idea was to see which kinds of claims had the most market traction – and to see if consumers were misled by greenwashing (problematic claims).

The poll included multiple head-to-head comparisons and a series of closed-ended multiple-choice questions. In some questions, respondents were asked to select their top three choices, and in others, they were allowed to select all the options that applied.

## Head-to-Head Results

Each survey respondent saw a series of visual comparisons in which a problematic claim was paired with either a legitimate claim or a certified claim. Comparisons were generated for 17 types of products across four product categories: home improvement, electronics, personal care, and cleaning products. Respondents saw the head-to-head comparisons for a given product type (carpet, for example) if they indicated they had shopped for that product recently or would soon.

Each respondent was asked which he or she would be more likely to choose if all other product attributes were equal. Respondents could also choose “neither.”



*This process generated **41,796** head-to-head comparisons.*

# CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

## *Certified claims performed best.*

Although both certified claims and legitimate claims beat problematic claims in head-to-head comparisons, certified claims performed significantly better than merely legitimate claims.

- When certified claims went up against problematic claims, they were chosen 54% of the time. Problematic claims were chosen 24% of the time, and “neither” was chosen 22% of the time.
- When legitimate claims went up against problematic claims, the gap was much narrower: they won 39% of the time, compared with problematic claims at 35% and “neither” at 26%.

## Who likes certifications the most?

We analyzed the group of respondents who, when presented with a certified claim in head-to-head testing,



**chose the certified claim at least 75% of the time.** Those respondents were more likely than average to ...

- Be Millennials or Gen Xers  
**66% of this group**

**vs. 56% of the overall sample**

- Be 18 to 44 years old  
**57% of this group**

**vs. 47% of the overall sample**

- Have at least some college education  
**81% of this group**

**vs. 76% of the overall sample**

- Have household incomes of at least \$75,000  
**36% of this group**

**vs. 32% of the overall sample**

**This suggests that third-party certified claims appeal to an upscale audience moving toward their peak earning years** – representing an enormous potential opportunity for product manufacturers.

## CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

### *Certified claims won in all product categories.*

Certified claims turned in a strong performance across all product categories in head-to-head comparisons, beating problematic claims by a wide margin. Compare that to legitimate (uncertified) claims: while legitimate claims generally beat problematic claims across the board, they actually lost in two product categories, home improvement and personal care.

[We'll go into greater detail in the product category section of the report starting on page 24.](#)

	CERTIFIED CLAIMS VS. PROBLEMATIC CLAIMS			LEGITIMATE CLAIMS VS. PROBLEMATIC CLAIMS		
	Certified Claims Chosen	Problematic Claims Chosen	Neither Chosen	Legitimate Claims Chosen	Problematic Claims Chosen	Neither Chosen
Home Improvement	63%	19%	18%	39%	40%	21%
Cleaning	54%	23%	23%	39%	34%	27%
Electronics	54%	23%	23%	43%	27%	30%
Personal Care	50%	27%	23%	37%	38%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>26%</b>



## CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

### *Qualifying language made certifications even more effective.*

In head-to-head comparisons, certified claims featuring qualifying language on the label performed better on average than those without it (in other words, they beat problematic claims more often). An exception was the cleaning products category, where we suspect the presence of several highly recognizable marks without qualifying language affected results.

However, even when a mark is highly recognizable, that doesn't mean consumers understand what it actually measures. Manufacturers should be aware that certifications without qualifying language can still be considered confusing or misleading by consumers and may still present FTC Green Guides compliance risks.

	WITH QUALIFYING LANGUAGE			WITHOUT QUALIFYING LANGUAGE		
	Certified Claims With Qualifying Language Chosen	Problematic Claims Chosen	Neither Chosen	Certified Claims Without Qualifying Language Chosen	Problematic Claims Chosen	Neither Chosen
Home Improvement	64%	20%	16%	51%	24%	25%
Cleaning	52%	25%	23%	59%	19%	22%
Electronics	57%	21%	22%	45%	30%	25%
Personal Care	53%	25%	22%	44%	31%	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24%</b>

# CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

## Digging Deeper

In addition to our head-to-head claims comparisons, we asked questions designed to explore purchase drivers and behaviors, the importance of certifications, the ability of certain claims to support price premiums, confusion around green claims, and how confusion affects brand perception. Here's what we found.

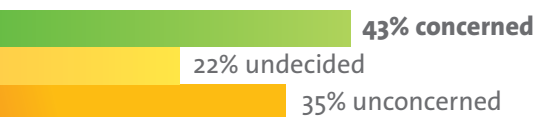
### What Drives Consumers

**70% of respondents claimed to be consciously searching for greener products.** And 83% said they had consciously purchased sustainable products in at least one product category.

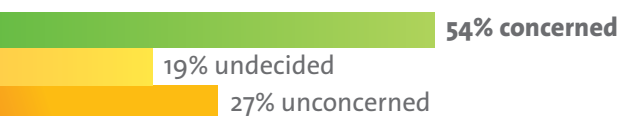
Their top three reasons for choosing those products (number one answers):

- Conservation of natural resources
- Health and safety
- Waste reduction

How concerned were respondents about **indoor air quality?**



What about **chemicals found in products** that come in contact with their skin (such as lotions, carpeting or electronics)?



These findings reinforce those of other studies indicating the public's growing concern about chemical exposure. **Clear, believable claims on product packaging are a chance to reassure your customers about the content of your product – and about their health and safety.**

### Importance of Certifications

We asked respondents, "How do products that are certified by an independent third party compare to those with no certification?"



The effect of certifications, however, is highly dependent on the particular certification and the product category. ([Findings by category begin on page 24.](#))

# CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

## Green Claims and Perceived Value

When we asked respondents directly whether they'd pay up to 10% more for a product with third-party certifications, here's how they responded:

58% said yes | 42% said no

But when respondents actually viewed a list of potential product claims in different product categories and chose the ones they'd be willing to pay 10% more for, 70% chose at least one certified claim, while 59% chose at least one problematic claim and only 44% chose at least one merely legitimate claim.

We know these numbers are self-reported, and that manufacturers don't always see these sentiments play out at the cash register. But charging more for a certified product isn't necessarily the goal. **The fact that consumers assign real value to third-party certifications means that when your product label carries those marks, you're likely increasing the perceived value of your offering.** And if consumers feel they're getting a good deal, they may be more apt to stay loyal to your brand – and to tell their social network about it.

Another important note: the numbers suggest certified claims have the most potential to influence perceived value, but they also show that consumers are still susceptible to greenwashing, since the majority offered to pay 10% more for at least one unsubstantiated claim. **The findings also sound an alarm for manufacturers putting legitimate but uncertified claims on their packaging: those claims were outperformed by a considerable margin.** If your product is already sustainable but you haven't had it certified by a third party, consumers may not be getting the message that it offers real benefits.

We'll break out detailed findings on perceived value in "Findings by Product Category."

## Confusing Claims

Here's the bad news: **if you're making a green claim on your packaging, the odds are good you've already confused a consumer.** When presented with a list of green product claims and asked to choose which they found confusing or misleading, at least a few respondents cast votes for every single claim tested in our study.

But looking at the claims that fared worst across categories, we found that 17 of the most frequently cited confusing claims were problematic claims, seven were legitimate claims, and only four were certified claims. Certain patterns were clear:

- **Consumers were confused by technical language.** This negatively affected their perceptions of both legitimate and problematic claims that used scientific lingo.
- **But they were also confused by simple phrases that were overly generic.** The problematic claims "air purifying," "eco-friendly," and "cruelty free" did not test well, and when we asked respondents follow-up questions about their choices, they knocked generic claims for vagueness.
- **The certifications that were most confusing consisted of only a logo bearing the certifying body's name.** There was no adjacent qualifying language to provide context or tell the consumer what the certification meant.

These findings show that consumers need context, they need specifics, and they need clear language to understand the environmental benefits being promised on a product label.

## CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

### *Confusion and Brand Perception*

No one likes being left in the dark. **When consumers get confused by a product claim, it carries over to how they feel about your brand.**

We asked respondents which claims made them “feel worse” about the manufacturer making them and negatively affected their feelings about the brand. In all four product categories tested – home improvement, electronics, personal care, and cleaning products – the top six negative claims corresponded closely with the top six claims rated “most confusing/misleading” for each category.

*“Low VOCs” was a top-three answer for confusion and negative brand perception in all categories tested.*

[Detailed consumer findings by product category begin on page 24.](#)



# **B2B** *INSIGHTS*



## B2B INSIGHTS

In addition to the quantitative consumer work we did for this study, we recruited 27 business decision makers working in a variety of sectors for a three-day study including a brief survey, a group bulletin-board discussion, and one-on-one interviews to determine their perceptions of green claims. The group included architects/designers, buyers/purchasing managers, and facility managers.

Keep in mind that the sample size is small, and results should be used as directional indication/general guidance only. However, the findings are generally consistent with results from *B2B Pulse™*, Shelton Group's comprehensive 2013 survey of business decision makers. (*B2B Pulse* included 387 owners, CEOs, procurement/purchasing managers, facility managers, COOs, CFOs, CIOs, general contractors (residential and commercial construction), retail buyers, sustainability officers, and office managers from medium to large firms.)

Here's what we found.

### Business decision makers are much savvier than consumers.

You must stake your B2B green claim thoughtfully, because business customers are on a whole different level when it comes to understanding green claims – and they know when you aren't telling them the whole story.

- In head-to-head comparisons, they consistently chose certified and legitimate claims over problematic claims, and at much higher rates than consumers.
- The claims they identified as confusing/misleading were almost exclusively problematic claims.

- They had a sophisticated understanding of the nature of problematic claims, specifically calling out the issue of manufacturer labels created to imply third-party certifications.
- They consistently identified certified claims as the claims worth a premium; the top five claims that would persuade them to pay more for a building product were all reputable certifications.

## B2B Green Claims That Resonate

*According to Shelton Group's B2B Pulse 2013, these are the three sustainability-related decision influencers that business leaders think are most important:*



*Product contains no chemicals of concern* **63% said important/very important**



*Product carries third-party certification(s)* **55% said important/very important**



*Product is locally sourced* **54% said important/very important**

## B2B INSIGHTS

### Certifications matter even more to a business audience.

Although the sample size is small, it may be useful to look at how B2B responses compared to consumers' in our study.

- 37% ranked third-party certifiers as the best way to identify green products, compared to 11% of consumers.
- 77% said products with third-party certifications are more reputable, compared to 56% of consumers.
- 89% are willing to pay more for a product certified by a third party, compared to 58% of consumers.

B2B Pulse decision makers ranked **ENERGY STAR® as the most recognized third-party certifier**, followed by LEED®, WaterSense®, USDA Organic, and UL Environment.<sup>5</sup>

### Their reasons for valuing certifications go deeper.

Our business respondents were able to clearly articulate reasons for preferring third-party certifications.

- Many are skeptical about green claims in general, and certifications provide assurance of quality.
- Certifications save them time so that they don't have to research product claims on their own.
- Certifications help make a tangible case for a product's long-term cost-effectiveness when the initial cost is higher or when a previous negative experience has to be overcome.
- Certifications reduce the decision maker's risk and insulate him or her from backlash if products don't perform as advertised.

*"Time constraints encourage me to rely on third-party certifications when available."*

—Purchasing Manager, Alabama, United States





*"I personally don't have the opportunity or time to go and research the background of a product's green claims. I rely on my knowledge of certifications that are widely published, such as GREENGUARD, FSC, or ENERGY STAR®."*

—Architect, Virginia, United States

*"Our clients expect us to be experts in the selection of environmentally superior products. However, we are only as good as the information we receive from manufacturers. If that information is false or misleading, our reputations can be put at risk. Research and/or third-party testing are important factors in verifying a manufacturer's claims."*

—Designer, Ontario, Canada

# FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

Home Improvement	25
 Background	25
Brand Impact of Green Claims	25
Manufacturer-Created Green Labels	26
Perceived Value of Green Claims	27
Electronics	29
 Background	29
Brand Impact of Green Claims	29
Perceived Value of Green Claims	30
Personal Care	32
 Background	32
Brand Impact of Green Claims	32
Perceived Value of Green Claims	33
Cleaning Products	35
 Background	35
Brand Impact of Green Claims	35
Perceived Value of Green Claims	36



# T FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

### Background

Respondents were asked if they had purchased carpet, flooring, insulation, or paint in the last 12 months or planned to do so in the next 12 months. Those responding “yes” for any of the four product choices were asked a series of questions related to that type of product and to home improvement green product claims in general.

After viewing a series of head-to-head product comparisons, respondents answered a set of multiple choice questions that gauged three positive indicators (claims most likely to influence purchase decision, claims most likely to support a price premium, and claims most likely to positively affect brand perception) and two negative indicators (claims that were most confusing/misleading and claims most likely to negatively affect brand perception).<sup>6</sup>

### Brand Impact of Green Claims

#### What Consumers Liked ...

- **They valued certifications, but they also liked a few problematic claims.** The top seven claims ranked as most important for influencing purchase of a home improvement product included five third-party certifications and two problematic claims (one manufacturer-created green label promoting its “clean air formula” and one vague claim, “contains no toxic chemicals”). This shows that while consumers are getting more adept at recognizing and rejecting problematic claims, some of those claims still resonate and are actively misleading the market.
- **Certifications made them feel better about the brand.** Certified claims represented five of consumers’ top six choices for positive brand impact. These top certifications for brand impact included *UL CERTIFIED Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact*, *UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions, Carpet & Rug Institute Green Label Plus Standard for Low VOCs*, *SCS CERTIFIED Formaldehyde-Free*, and *UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations – 100% Diversion Rate*.
- **The legitimate but uncertified claims they liked best listed specific VOCs – but didn’t actually use the term “VOC.”** Regarding influence on purchase decisions, the highest-ranked legitimate (uncertified) claim was “no benzene, toluene, styrene, acetone, or formaldehyde,” coming in ninth overall. “Formaldehyde-free” was consumers’ favorite legitimate claim that positively influenced brand perception, ranking 11th. (Overall, legitimate claims didn’t turn in a strong performance compared to problematic and certified claims in this product category.)
- **Certifications with qualifying language spoke clearly.** None of them landed on the list of top confusing/misleading claims.
- **Consumers put their health first.** Claims that addressed health concerns (e.g., toxic content and indoor air quality) were consistently rated more important for purchase influence, perceived value, and positive brand impact than were claims about manufacturing practices (e.g., zero waste) and recycled content.

<sup>6</sup>Percentages shown throughout this section reflect percentages of respondents answering for the overall home improvement category, not percentages of total survey population.



# T FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

### ... And What They Didn't

- **Confusion about claims = negative brand perception.** Six of the seven claims consumers thought were most confusing/misleading also appeared in the top seven claims they rated as most likely to negatively affect their perception of the brand.
- **The same claim topped both negative lists – “maximum VOC: 50g/L (0.42 lbs/gal).”** It's a legitimate claim for a paint manufacturer because it uses very specific language – but most likely, it's too technical for consumers to grasp.
- **Coming in second place on both lists was “low VOCs.”** This phrase has two strikes against it: it contains a technical acronym that consumers don't understand, and it's an overused marketing phrase that isn't specific enough to be meaningful. Consumers don't really understand what VOCs are: 77% of those who labeled the phrase confusing said they didn't understand what it meant.
- **Most of the confusing claims were problematic claims – primarily manufacturer-created green labels,** which we'll examine next.

## Manufacturer-Created Green Labels

Manufacturer-created green claims labels can look like independent third-party certifications, but are often simply advertising gimmicks that can mislead consumers by suggesting that the products are broadly beneficial for the environment or personal health, or by suggesting that the label was awarded by a third party. The FTC's revised Green Guides say that if manufacturers create their own green labels, they must clearly and prominently disclose their relationship to the label and explain why a particular product has been awarded that label.

We tested four manufacturer-created green labels in the home improvement category as they currently appear in the market. None of them used clear

qualifying language when displayed on product packaging, so all were considered problematic for purposes of this study.

- One performed impressively, ranking as one of the most important claims influencing product choice, perceived value, and positive brand perception.
- **But take note of what happened to the other three manufacturer-created labels: they landed on the “most confusing/misleading” list – and two also ranked in the top six for negative brand impact.**

If you create your own green labels, be warned: while some manufacturers have been able to get results this way, the FTC is taking a much harder look at that practice under the revised Green Guides. **And according to our findings, consumers are more likely to find your label confusing or off-putting than beneficial.**

*In our study, **three of four manufacturer-created green labels actually tested as confusing** and therefore potentially damaging to the brand.*

## T FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY HOME IMPROVEMENT

### Perceived Value of Green Claims

What do consumers really value when it comes to home improvement products? We asked them to select any green claim or certification that would persuade them to pay 10% more.

- **Certifications rose to the top of the list.** Eight of the top 10 claims that consumers thought were worth a price premium were certified claims.
- **Legitimate but uncertified claims didn't have much traction.** The top legitimate claim for influencing a price premium ("made of 100% rapidly renewable bamboo") landed 14th on the list and was chosen by only 11% of respondents.
- **Willingness to pay 10% more was most influenced by claims about air quality/VOCs/chemical exposure** (72% of home improvement respondents selected a claim related to one or more of these concerns). In other words, health was their top priority. Other claims in order of influence on paying a 10% price premium: general environmental benefit (43%), recycled content (34%), renewable/natural resources (26%), and waste reduction (21%).
- Recycled content made a more positive impression on consumers in home improvement than in any other category, even though it was not chosen by a majority of respondents.
- 24% said they would not pay 10% more for any of the claims listed for home improvement products.

*Consumers put a premium on their health:  
air quality was the top reason to pay 10% more.*

# T FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

**Bold indicates certified claim.** Plain indicates legitimate claim. **Orange bold indicates problematic claim.**

### Top Claims for Influencing Purchase Decisions

- **Valspar Clean Air Formula (26%)**
- **UL CERTIFIED Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (24%)**
- **UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (20%)**
- **CRI Green Label Plus Standard for Low VOCs (17%)**
- **SCS CERTIFIED Formaldehyde-Free (17%)**
- **Contains no toxic chemicals (15%)**
- **UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations - 100% Diversion Rate (15%)**

### Top Claims for Supporting a Price Premium

- **Valspar Clean Air Formula (21%)**
- **UL CERTIFIED Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (21%)**
- **CRI Green Label Plus Standard for Low VOCs (17%)**
- **UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (17%)**
- **SCS CERTIFIED Formaldehyde-Free (16%)**
- **Green Seal (16%)**
- **UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations - 100% Diversion Rate (16%)**

### Top Claims for Positive Brand Impact

- **Valspar Clean Air Formula (33%)**
- **UL CERTIFIED Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (32%)**
- **UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (28%)**
- **CRI Green Label Plus Standard for Low VOCs (26%)**
- **SCS CERTIFIED Formaldehyde-Free (26%)**
- **UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations - 100% Diversion Rate (25%)**

### Most Confusing/ Misleading Claims

- Maximum VOC: 50g/L (0.42 lbs/gal) (24%)
- **Low VOCs (22%)**
- **Shaw Green Edge (16%)**
- **Air purifying (15%)**
- **Mohawk everStrand Premium PET Fiber with an Environmental Edge (14%)**
- **Benjamin Moore Green Promise (14%)**
- **Green Seal (14%)**

### Top Claims for Negative Brand Impact

- Maximum VOC: 50g/L (0.42 lbs/gal) (12%)
- **Low VOCs (10%)**
- **Benjamin Moore Green Promise (9%)**
- **Green Seal (9%)**
- **Shaw Green Edge (8%)**
- **UL CERTIFIED Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (8%)**
- Contains a minimum of 61.9% post-consumer recycled content (7%)
- **Air purifying (7%)**
- **Made with renewable materials (7%)**



## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# ELECTRONICS

### Background

Respondents were asked if they had purchased a cell phone, laptop, printer or tablet in the last 12 months or planned to do so in the next 12 months. Those responding “yes” for any of the four product choices were asked a series of questions related to that type of product and to green product claims for electronics in general.

After viewing a series of head-to-head product comparisons, respondents answered a set of multiple choice questions that gauged three positive indicators (claims most likely to influence purchase decision, claims most likely to support a price premium, and claims most likely to positively affect brand perception) and two negative indicators (claims that were most confusing/misleading and claims most likely to negatively affect brand perception).<sup>7</sup>

### Brand Impact of Green Claims

#### What Consumers Liked ...

- **They valued energy savings above all else.** The ENERGY STAR® label is becoming a baseline expectation for products in this category, ranking number one in terms of influence on purchase decision, positive impact on brand perception, and willingness to pay a 10% premium.
- **They actually put significant weight on health-related claims.** Surprisingly, consumers showed a strong preference for claims about emissions and toxins in this category, which is not a traditional focus for electronics manufacturers. After ENERGY STAR, the claim that had the strongest overall impact on purchase influence, perceived value, and positive brand perception was *UL VALIDATED Product Is Free of Arsenic, Mercury, PVC, and BFR*.

- **Consumers valued recycling, ranking it third in overall importance for influencing purchase decisions.** The problem is, they preferred a problematic recycling claim over legitimate and certified ones. The recycling claim they liked most was the familiar recycling symbol shown alone, without information indicating whether it referred to recyclability, recycled product content, or recycled packaging content. Studies show that consumers value recycling and view it as a baseline requirement for corporate environmental credibility;<sup>8</sup> they just don’t always recognize which recycling claims are the most meaningful.

- **Certifications with qualifying language were preferred over most other claims.** After ENERGY STAR, the top performers when it came to purchase influence were ...

- Carbon Trust Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> Label
- UL ECOLOGO® Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact
- UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions
- UL VALIDATED Product Is Free of Arsenic, Mercury, PVC, and BFR
- UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations – 100% Diversion Rate
- UL VALIDATED Reclamation Program/Facility

These certifications outperformed all problematic and legitimate claims except for the previously mentioned recycling symbol.

<sup>7</sup>Percentages shown throughout this section reflect percentages of respondents answering for the overall electronics category, not percentages of total survey population.

<sup>8</sup>Shelton Group. (2014). *Eco Pulse 2014*.





## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# ELECTRONICS

### ... And What They Didn't

- **Consumers didn't like claims they couldn't understand.** One certification, EPEAT® Silver Registered, and a legitimate claim, “product is compliant with RoHS Directive 2011/65/EU,” landed at the top of both the “most confusing/misleading” list and the “negative brand perception” list. Consumers didn't understand what they meant, particularly criticizing the RoHS claim as “too complicated.” This isn't necessarily surprising, since these claims don't specify clearly what they address (both claims are related to product content/emissions and are important for government and business purchasers), and it's uncommon for consumers to see them on products. But manufacturers should note that the underlying issues addressed by these labels were important to consumers, so using a certification mark with clear qualifying language related to those issues could be very effective.
- **Consumers called out generic and meaningless claims** such as “low VOCs,” “eco-friendly,” and “non-toxic” as confusing/misleading in this category. They also responded negatively to the generic phrase “low carbon footprint,” even though they very much liked certifications related to this idea.
- **We tested just one manufacturer-created green label in this category, and consumers weren't fooled:** it made the top four for both confusing/misleading claims and claims that negatively affect brand perception.

### Perceived Value of Green Claims

What do consumers really value when it comes to electronics products? We asked them to select any green claim or certification that would persuade them to pay 10% more.

- The ENERGY STAR® label was the number-one performer by far. When it comes to energy use, consumers clearly understand that paying a higher price up front can be offset by cost savings over the life of the product.
- **Five of the top seven claims that supported a price premium were certifications with qualifying language.**
- Energy savings (chosen by 43% of respondents) and waste reduction (38%) had the most influence on willingness to pay a premium, ahead of chemicals and toxins (28%), air quality/VOCs (20%), and recycled content (14%).
- 30% said they would not pay 10% more for any of the claims listed for electronics products.



## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# ELECTRONICS

**Bold indicates certified claim.** Plain indicates legitimate claim. **Orange bold indicates problematic claim.**

### Top Claims for Influencing Purchase Decisions

- ENERGY STAR® (53%)
- Carbon Trust Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> Label (21%)
- **Recycle symbol (21%)**
- UL ECOLOGO® Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (18%)
- UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (18%)
- UL VALIDATED Product Is Free of Arsenic, Mercury, PVC and BFR (18%)

### Top Claims for Supporting a Price Premium

- ENERGY STAR (38%)
- UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (16%)
- UL VALIDATED Product Is Free of Arsenic, Mercury, PVC and BFR (15%)
- UL ECOLOGO Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (15%)
- Carbon Trust Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> Label (15%)
- UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations - 100% Diversion Rate (14%)
- UL VALIDATED Reclamation Program/ Facility (14%)
- **Recycle symbol (14%)**

### Top Claims for Positive Brand Impact

- ENERGY STAR (55%)
- UL VALIDATED Product Is Free of Arsenic, Mercury, PVC and BFR (28%)
- UL VALIDATED XYZ Facility Has Achieved Zero Waste to Landfill Operations - 100% Diversion Rate (26%)
- Carbon Trust Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> Label (26%)
- **Recycle symbol (26%)**
- UL ECOLOGO Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (25%)

### Most Confusing/ Misleading Claims

- EPEAT® Silver Registered (32%)
- Product is compliant with RoHS Directive 2011/65/EU (31%)
- **Low VOCs (28%)**
- **Canon Generation Green (17%)**
- **Eco-friendly (13%)**
- **Low carbon footprint (11%)**
- **Low chemical and particle emissions (11%)**
- **Non-toxic (11%)**

### Top Claims for Negative Brand Impact

- **Low VOCs (13%)**
- EPEAT Silver Registered (13%)
- Product is compliant with RoHS Directive 2011/65/EU (13%)
- **Canon Generation Green (9%)**
- **Low chemical and particle emissions (7%)**
- **Product contains recycled content (7%)**
- Carbon Trust Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> Label (7%)
- Case made with 12% post-consumer recycled plastic resin (7%)
- **Low carbon footprint (7%)**



## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# PERSONAL CARE

### Background

Respondents were asked if they had purchased deodorant, lotion, shampoo, or body wash in the last six months or planned to do so in the next six months. Those responding “yes” for any of the four product choices were asked a series of questions related to that type of product and to green product claims for personal care in general.

After viewing a series of head-to-head product comparisons, respondents answered a set of multiple choice questions that gauged three positive indicators (claims most likely to influence purchase decision, claims most likely to support a price premium, and claims most likely to positively affect brand perception) and two negative indicators (claims that were most confusing/misleading and claims most likely to negatively affect brand perception).<sup>9</sup>

### Brand Impact of Green Claims

#### What Consumers Liked ...

- **They saw value in certifications.** Six of their top ten choices for claims that would influence them to choose a product were certified claims:
  - CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested
  - USDA Organic
  - Natural Products Association Certified
  - USDA Certified Biobased Product
  - UL VALIDATED Product Contains No Parabens, Phthalates, Sulfates, or Petrochemicals
  - UL ECOLOGO® Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact

- **Unfortunately, they also liked meaningless claims.** Here, more than in any other category, consumers assigned value to vague promises. The terms “all natural” and “non-toxic” were among consumers’ top eight choices, despite the fact that there is no scientific consensus on the meaning of those terms, nor are there federal standards for their use on packaging. We suspect that consumers chose them because they speak to very real concerns and because of the lack of meaningful alternatives in the marketplace. With that in mind, there’s considerable potential for third-party certifications to make a difference in this space.
- **Surprisingly, animal rights trumped their own health.** This may be because the controversy over animal testing has made headlines for years, while the health risks associated with personal care products have been far less widely publicized. Leaping Bunny, a certification from the Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics (CCIC) assuring that “no new animal testing is used in any phase of product development by the company, its laboratories, or suppliers,”<sup>10</sup> topped all three lists: purchase influence, positive brand perception, and propensity to pay an extra 10%. The legitimate claim “not tested on animals” also performed well in our study.

<sup>9</sup>Percentages shown throughout this section reflect percentages of respondents answering for the overall personal care category, not percentages of total survey population.

<sup>10</sup>Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics. *Leapingbunny.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.leapingbunny.org/indexcus.php>







### ... And What They Didn't

- **Consumers didn't like "all natural."** Wait – didn't we just say the opposite? The phrase "all natural," it turns out, means different things to different people. Despite the fact that it performed well for purchase influence and positive brand perception, it also landed on our lists for confusing/misleading claims and negative brand perception. Why? Personal care appears to be a space in transition. Some consumers are more educated than others about which terms are really meaningful, but we suspect many consumers are looking for answers about product ingredients and their impact on personal health. Products with unclear or meaningless claims will eventually be left behind.
- **Their top "confusing/misleading" choice was also their top "negative brand perception" choice.** Unfortunately, it was a legitimate certification (Cradle to Cradle<sup>SM</sup>). In a follow-up question, 83% of those who labeled the certification confusing/misleading said they didn't understand what it meant.
- **Despite their prioritization of animal rights, they weren't impressed by "cruelty free."** It was a top choice for a confusing/misleading claim and one that negatively affected brand perception. More than half of respondents who thought it was confusing said it was "too vague."
- **They didn't know what "HDPE" was.** That gave them a negative perception of perfectly legitimate recycled packaging claims.
- **They didn't like claims about complicated-sounding chemicals – unless there was a certifying mark attached.** They thought the legitimate (uncertified) claim "contains no parabens, phthalates, petrochemicals, or synthetic fragrances" was confusing, and it contributed to negative brand perception. But they rated the certification

*UL VALIDATED Product Contains No Parabens, Phthalates, Sulfates, or Petrochemicals* (note the nearly identical wording) as one of the top six positive claims for both purchase influence and price premiums. Consumers are likely confused by scientific-sounding chemical names and need guidance from a third party to know they should be concerned.

### Perceived Value of Green Claims

What do consumers really value when it comes to personal care products? We asked them to select any green claim or certification that would persuade them to pay 10% more.

- **Certifications ruled the day.** The top six claims that supported a price premium were certified claims. The number-one claim was CCIC Leaping Bunny, which included the qualifying language "not animal tested" with the logo.
- **Certifications with qualifying language generally performed well.** In addition to Leaping Bunny, other certifications with qualifying language (such as *UL VALIDATED Product Contains No Parabens, Phthalates, Sulfates, or Petrochemicals* and *UL ECOLOGO® Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact*) bubbled up to the top of the list when consumers were asked to decide what was worth 10% more.
- **Claims explicitly related to natural/organic/biobased content had the most influence,** chosen by 44% of respondents, with claims relating to chemicals and toxins coming in second at 42%. These product claims far outpaced those touting general environmental benefit (24%), recycled packaging content (15%), and waste reduction (8%).
- 31% said they would not pay 10% more for any of the claims listed for personal care products.



## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# PERSONAL CARE

**Bold indicates certified claim.** Plain indicates legitimate claim. **Orange bold indicates problematic claim.**

### Top Claims for Influencing Purchase Decisions

- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (27%)**
- **USDA Organic (22%)**
- **Natural Products Association Certified (20%)**
- **USDA Certified Biobased Product (18%)**
- **All natural (17%)**
- **Hypoallergenic (17%)**

### Top Claims for Supporting a Price Premium

- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (22%)**
- **USDA Organic (19%)**
- **Natural Products Association Certified (17%)**
- **USDA Certified Biobased Product (16%)**
- **UL VALIDATED Product Contains No Parabens, Phthalates, Sulfates, or Petrochemicals (14%)**
- **UL ECOLOGO® Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact (13%)**

### Top Claims for Positive Brand Impact

- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (27%)**
- **USDA Organic (21%)**
- **Natural Products Association Certified (18%)**
- **UL VALIDATED Product Contains No Parabens, Phthalates, Sulfates, or Petrochemicals (14%)**
- **USDA Certified Biobased Product (13%)**
- **All natural (13%)**
- Not tested on animals (13%)
- **Recycle symbol (13%)**

### Most Confusing/ Misleading Claims

- **Cradle to Cradle<sup>SM</sup> (27%)**
- Container made with 80% post-consumer HDPE (18%)
- Contains no parabens, phthalates, petrochemicals, or synthetic fragrances (14%)
- **Cruelty free (14%)**
- **All natural (13%)**
- **No harsh chemicals (12%)**

### Top Claims for Negative Brand Impact

- **Cradle to Cradle (11%)**
- Container made with 80% post-consumer HDPE (9%)
- **Cruelty free (8%)**
- Contains no parabens, phthalates, petrochemicals, or synthetic fragrances (7%)
- **No harsh chemicals (7%)**
- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (7%)**
- **All natural (7%)**



## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# CLEANING PRODUCTS

### Background

Respondents were asked if they had purchased dish detergent, floor/carpet cleaner, hand soap, laundry detergent, or multipurpose cleaner in the last six months or planned to do so in the next six months. Those responding “yes” for any of the five product choices were asked a series of questions related to that type of product and to green product claims for cleaning products in general.

After viewing a series of head-to-head product comparisons, respondents answered a set of multiple choice questions that gauged three positive indicators (claims most likely to influence purchase decision, claims most likely to support a price premium, and claims most likely to positively affect brand perception) and two negative indicators (claims that were most confusing/misleading and claims most likely to negatively affect brand perception).<sup>11</sup>

### Brand Impact of Green Claims

#### What Consumers Liked ...

- **They valued animal rights.** The Leaping Bunny label from the Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics (CCIC), which assures that “no new animal testing is used in any phase of product development by the company, its laboratories, or suppliers,”<sup>12</sup> took the top spot for purchase influence and positive brand impact.
- **They appreciated certifications.** Eight of their top ten choices for claims that would most influence their purchase decisions were certified claims:
  - CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested
  - U.S. EPA Design for the Environment: Meets U.S. EPA’s DfE Standard for Safer Chemical Ingredients
  - Green Good Housekeeping Seal
  - USDA Organic

- USDA Certified Biobased Product (97%)
- Green Seal®
- UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions
- UL ECOLOGO® Product Certified for Reduced Environmental Impact
- **When it came to positive brand perception, they favored claims about avoiding chemicals and toxins.** 54% chose these types of claims when asked which ones would make them feel better about the manufacturer. Next came claims about natural/organic/biobased content (52%) and those promising a general environmental benefit (51%).
- **Unfortunately, consumers liked a plain recycling symbol without context – a problematic claim.** Consumers value recycling, which is probably why they picked the ubiquitous symbol as the fifth most important reason to purchase a cleaning product, but in this survey they didn’t recognize that the symbol alone doesn’t provide enough information to be meaningful. The related legitimate claim we tested, “bottle made from 25% post-consumer recycled plastic,” performed dismally: only 3% selected it, and it tumbled to 31st on the list of 33 claims. Bridging the gap was a UL certification (*UL VALIDATED Recyclable in 80% of Curbside Recycling Programs*), which came in 12th and was cited as a top choice by 10% of respondents.

<sup>11</sup>Percentages shown throughout this section reflect percentages of respondents answering for the overall cleaning products category, not percentages of total survey population.

<sup>12</sup>Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics. *Leapingbunny.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.leapingbunny.org/indexus.php>





## FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

# CLEANING PRODUCTS

### ... And What They Didn't

- **“Low VOCs” took top honors for the most confusing/misleading claim and the claim most likely to make a negative impact on brand perception.** As we've seen in other categories, manufacturers who make this claim are missing the mark with their audience. 78% of those who found it confusing said they didn't understand what it meant, and 25% said it was “too vague.” Although many cleaning-product manufacturers don't currently put VOC-related claims on their packaging, increasing media coverage of chemicals in cleaning products is likely to change that.
- **A legitimate claim came in second on both negative lists.** “Biodegradable according to OECD Method 301E,” while legitimate, was too difficult for respondents to decipher.
- **“Cruelty free” didn't persuade them.** Although respondents gave top priority to a certification related to animal welfare, they found the generic alternative unappealing. They labeled it a top choice for a confusing/misleading claim and one that negatively affected brand perception. Of those who found it confusing, a whopping 74% said it was “too vague.”
- **“All natural” was a turnoff.** When we tested this term in the personal care product category, it got mixed reviews, but in cleaning products, it performed poorly. It's likely that “natural” translates as “ineffective” for some buyers of cleaning products, fairly or not.

### Perceived Value of Green Claims

What do consumers really value when it comes to cleaning products? We asked them to select any green claim or certification that would persuade them to pay 10% more.

- **Certifications in general dominated the category.** Certification marks from the EPA, CCIC, USDA, Good Housekeeping, UL Environment, Green Seal, and SCS rounded out the top 11 choices.
- **“Low VOCs” ranked dead last of 33 total choices.** Only 2% of consumers would pay more for a product with this problematic claim on the label. However, a related certified claim performed very well: *UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions*, which ranked sixth.
- **Legitimate but uncertified recycled content claims performed poorly.** “Bottle made from 25% post-consumer recycled plastic” wound up near the bottom of the list at number 32. Compare that with recycling-related certified claims: *UL VALIDATED Recyclable in 80% of Curbside Recycling Programs* and *SCS CERTIFIED Package Contains a Minimum of 25% Post-Consumer Recycled Content* were both top-10 choices for influencing a customer to pay more.
- 32% said they would not pay 10% more for any of the claims listed for cleaning products.



# FINDINGS BY PRODUCT CATEGORY CLEANING PRODUCTS

**Bold indicates certified claim.** Plain indicates legitimate claim. **Orange bold indicates problematic claim.**

## Top Claims for Influencing Purchase Decisions

- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (24%)**
- **U.S. EPA Design for the Environment: Meets U.S. EPA's DfE Standard for Safer Chemical Ingredients (23%)**
- **Green Good Housekeeping Seal (20%)**
- **USDA Organic (19%)**
- **Recycle symbol (16%)**
- **USDA Certified Biobased Product (15%)**

## Top Claims for Supporting a Price Premium

- **U.S. EPA Design for the Environment: Meets U.S. EPA's DfE Standard for Safer Chemical Ingredients (21%)**
- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (20%)**
- **USDA Organic (17%)**
- **USDA Certified Biobased Product (17%)**
- **Green Good Housekeeping Seal (15%)**
- **UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (14%)**
- **Green Seal (14%)**

## Top Claims for Positive Brand Impact

- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (33%)**
- **Green Good Housekeeping Seal (30%)**
- **U.S. EPA Design for the Environment: Meets U.S. EPA's DfE Standard for Safer Chemical Ingredients (29%)**
- **USDA Organic (27%)**
- **USDA Certified Biobased Product (24%)**
- **UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions (23%)**

## Most Confusing/ Misleading Claims

- **Low VOCs (25%)**
- Biodegradable according to OECD Method 301E (19%)
- **Green Seal (13%)**
- No parabens, phthalates, petrochemicals, sulfates, or synthetic fragrances (12%)
- **All natural (11%)**
- **Cruelty free (11%)**
- Contains no CFCs: Federal regulations prohibit CFC propellants in aerosols (11%)

## Top Claims for Negative Brand Impact

- **Low VOCs (11%)**
- Biodegradable according to OECD Method 301E (8%)
- **Cruelty free (7%)**
- **CCIC Leaping Bunny Not Animal Tested (6%)**
- **All natural (6%)**
- **USDA Organic (6%)**
- **Green Seal (6%)**

# CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, *AND* OPPORTUNITIES

## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

In this study, UL Environment set out to test what makes a green product claim effective in today's marketplace – what makes it a credit to the brand and what ultimately makes it profitable. What did we learn?

### Consumers are getting smarter about green product claims.

In broad terms, consumers were able to separate fiction from fact when it came to interpreting green product claims. The evidence?

- **On average, they gave credit where credit was due.** Across categories, both certified and legitimate (uncertified) claims beat problematic (greenwashing) claims.
- **Third-party-certified claims far outperformed greenwashing claims** as the most important reasons to purchase a product, the most important contributors to positive brand perception, and the best reasons to pay a 10% price premium.

- **Generic, unsubstantiated claims such as “eco-friendly,” “low VOCs,” and “cruelty free” usually landed in the doghouse with consumers** – just as they have with the Federal Trade Commission in their most recently revised Green Guides.
- **Consumers didn't like manufacturer-created green labels**, placing all but one on the “most confusing/misleading” and “most likely to create negative brand perception” lists. Their main reasons? They didn't understand what the labels meant or felt they were too vague, although some also found the labels misleading or not believable. (Note that because these labels can imply third-party certification where none exists, they tread in dangerous waters where the FTC is concerned.)

But consumers also got tripped up in a few noticeable places ...



## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Consumers don't understand VOCs.

Home improvement manufacturers, take note: **consumers care about air quality and chemical emissions, but they just don't speak your language when it comes to the term "VOCs."**

Uncertified VOC-related claims (both legitimate and problematic) failed to make a mark. Some tested quite poorly, in fact, and when we asked follow-up questions of those who labeled the claims confusing, respondents overwhelmingly said they didn't know what the language meant.

- **The generic phrase "low VOCs" was a top-three answer for confusing/misleading claims and negative brand perception claims** in all three categories we tested (our fourth category, personal care products, doesn't typically use VOC-related claims).
- **"Low VOCs" also failed to make the top six for any of the positive effects** we tested (purchase influence, positive brand perception, or ability to support a 10% price premium).
- **No legitimate (uncertified) claims about VOCs cracked the top-six answer list for purchase influence, positive brand perception, or ability to support a 10% price premium.**

- **Certified claims about VOCs, however, did make an impression.** Three of the top four claims that supported a 10% price premium in home improvement were VOC-related certifications with clear qualifying language. Two of those didn't use the term "VOC," but instead used language about chemical emissions (*UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions*) or formaldehyde (*SCS CERTIFIED Formaldehyde-Free*).

Although consumers are concerned about indoor air quality, they don't know industry terminology. **Certifications are often the only way they can evaluate whether a product is worthy.**

And a final note: while VOC-related claims are less common in the cleaning products category, heavy media coverage about chemical emissions in household cleaners is a signal of coming change. Smart manufacturers will get ahead of this change by staking a clear third-party-certified claim now.

*If your product's green claim relates to VOCs, **certifications are a must.***



## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Consumers value recycling, but they need help connecting the dots.

Studies show that consumers consider recycling important, and in our survey, they showed a strong preference for the universal recycling symbol even when it included no context. Manufacturers and certifications alike have work to do to engage consumers effectively on this topic and communicate the benefits of meeting stringent standards for recycled product and packaging content, as well as the importance of choosing products that are themselves recyclable.

- **A plain recycle symbol tested well, particularly in electronics.** Consumers don't understand that the symbol without context is problematic because it's vague. (Is the product recycled or recyclable? Is the claim about the packaging or the product? What percentage of post-consumer recycled content does it contain? And so on.)
- **Consumers didn't make the leap, though, to understanding and valuing claims about recycled content.** Legitimate and certified claims about recycled content in packaging made minimal impact on their purchase decisions, possibly because consumers don't fully understand recycling terminology.

- **The term "HDPE" confused them.** In the personal care category, the legitimate claim "made with 80% post-consumer HDPE" came in dead last for purchase influence and ability to support a price premium; it also ranked second on the "most confusing/misleading" list. When we asked why, 73% told us they didn't know what it meant. (Some respondents were also mystified by "post-consumer.")

We see real opportunity here for manufacturers to capitalize on consumers' interest in recycling with clear messaging that helps them bridge the knowledge gap.

*Recycling-related claims must give consumers context for terms they don't understand, such as "HDPE" and "post-consumer."*

## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Consumers fell for vague claims in the personal care category.

It's clear that consumers place a premium on their health, and they're concerned about chemical content in products that come into contact with their skin. But they struggle with deciphering the labels on personal care products, likely because the marketplace is predominated by meaningless claims.

- The terms “all natural” and “non-toxic” were among consumers' top eight choices for factors that would influence them to buy a product, despite the fact that there is no scientific consensus on the meaning of those terms.
- However, other consumers objected, placing “all natural” on the list of top confusing/misleading claims, along with the similarly vague “cruelty free” and “no harsh chemicals.”
- It's also worth noting that although several certifications performed well in this category, legitimate (uncertified) claims, such as “product contains no aluminum or triclosan,” did not. **In other words, consumers were unable to spot worthy claims that didn't have a certification mark attached.**

### **The personal care space is a marketplace in transition.**

Consumers are being bombarded with health-related messaging from the media, including warnings that they should be concerned about the chemicals they put on their skin. As they search for products that are effective *and* give them peace of mind, they're becoming more educated and asking more questions about the truth of claims on packaging. We see enormous potential opportunity for manufacturers who get ahead of the curve by making clear, relevant third-party-substantiated claims that resonate with consumers' health concerns.

*Health-conscious consumers are searching for answers – and you could be the first to provide them.*

## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Consumers don't like technical language.

Technical terminology sank a few perfectly respectable product claims.

- **Claims about VOCs and air quality may suffer from too much science.** For example, consumers hated the legitimate home improvement product claim “maximum VOC: 50g/L (0.42 lbs/gal)”: it landed at the top of the “most confusing/misleading” list and the “negative impact on brand perception” list. Of those who said it was confusing, 81% didn't know what it meant, and 20% said it was too complicated.
- **Three of the top four claims for influencing a price premium in the home improvement category, however, were certified claims related to the same premise.** Consumers specifically liked the *Carpet & Rug Institute's Green Label Plus Standard for Low VOCs*, *UL GREENGUARD Product Certified for Low Chemical Emissions*, and *SCS CERTIFIED Formaldehyde-Free*. It isn't that they don't value air quality – it's that they need help deciphering industry lingo.
- **Complicated-sounding claims don't sell cleaning products.** “Biodegradable according to OECD Method 301E” and “no parabens, phthalates, petrochemicals, sulfates, or synthetic fragrances” fared poorly in that category, despite the fact that both are legitimate. The latter was one of the claims in the cleaning products category most frequently identified as “too complicated.”

*Certifications can serve as a translator for consumers when your claim is scientific or technical.*

## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Confusing claims can damage your brand.

**When consumers can't understand your claim, the consequences may be bigger than just losing the sale.** Across product categories, the product claims considered most confusing or misleading correlated closely with the claims most likely to give consumers a negative impression of the brand.

Also consider that consumers communicate faster now than ever before, and they use digital channels to spread the word about products they love and products they don't.

- 53% of U.S. social media users report using their social platforms to compliment brands they like; 50% use them to express concerns or complaints about brands and services.<sup>13</sup>
- More than 25% of adults in the United Kingdom participate in online sharing about the products they buy, and 20% discuss brands online.<sup>14</sup>
- Globally, 46% of online consumers report using social media to help them make purchase decisions.<sup>15</sup>

- According to an architect we interviewed for this study, "If I found out that a claim is not accurate, then I would have a negative opinion of that manufacturer or brand. Furthermore, I would make a conscious effort to inform others that the claim made by the manufacturer or brand is inaccurate. I would not start a huge campaign against the company. However, I would certainly share my negative experience with others when the opportunity presents itself (i.e., customer reviews)."

**It's a gamble to assume that if you make confusing claims, customers will leave their frustration behind at the shelf.** They may very well remember the next time they see your logo, and they may feel compelled to tell a friend ... or their 10,000 Twitter followers.

*Consider the value of your reputation before you make your green product claim.*

<sup>13</sup>Nielsen. (2012). *State of the media: The social media report 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/reports-downloads/2012-Reports/The-Social-Media-Report-2012.pdf>

<sup>14</sup>Brandwatch. (2012). *Brandwatch report: Customer service index 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.brandwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/brandwatch/BW-Report-Customer-Service-Index-2012.pdf>

<sup>15</sup>Nielsen. (August 2012). *How digital influences how we shop around the world*. Retrieved from <http://www.nielsen.com/content/dam/corporate/us/en/reports-downloads/2012-Reports/How-Digital-Influences-How-We-Shop-Around-the-World.pdf>



# CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Confusing and misleading claims put you at risk of litigation and fines.

Momentum is growing around the globe to limit deceptive green marketing practices. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission has stepped up efforts to combat greenwashing by revising its Green Guides to be much more specific about what claims it considers misleading. The agency is committed to enforcing the new guidelines with legal action wherever necessary.

Where there once was green chaos in the marketplace, the revised Green Guides call for clarity, transparency, and due diligence. Although green marketing guidelines and their enforcement may vary around the world, **following the very specific language recommendations in the Green Guides can mitigate your risk no matter where your products are sold.**

An effective green product claim uses clear language, provides context that specifies exactly what environmental or health benefit is being measured, and is substantiated by solid evidence.

*Protect yourself legally and financially by making only clear, fully substantiated claims.*

## Certifications reduce confusion and increase perceived product value.

In our head-to-head comparisons, certifications (especially those with qualifying language) performed much better against greenwashing claims than merely legitimate claims did, and this was true across product categories.

The head-to-head results were supported by respondents' answers to multiple-choice questions, where they were allowed to select the claims that were most important when it came to purchase influence, positive brand perception, and willingness to pay a premium.

- **Certifications had the most positive influence on product purchase across categories.** 93% of consumers chose a certification as one of their top three factors for choosing a product. Compare that to merely legitimate claims, which were chosen by only 59%. (Greenwashing still holds sway here, however, because problematic claims were chosen by 85% of consumers as top-three claims.)
- **Certifications were also best at persuading consumers to pay a 10% price premium.** Overall, 70% of respondents chose certified claims when selecting the claims that would most influence them to pay more, compared with 59% who chose a problematic claim and 44% who chose a legitimate claim.
- **Finally, very few certifications landed on consumers' "naughty lists" – that is, their lists of most confusing/misleading claims and claims most likely to negatively affect brand perception.** The certifications that did confuse consumers tended to be either 1) technical-sounding or 2) generically named with no qualifying language to set the context.

*If your product is already sustainable, certifications can help you realize the full benefits of your efforts.*

## CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Certifications with qualifying language perform best.

Qualifying language makes it clear what attributes are being validated by the certifying party. The FTC explicitly asks in its Green Guides that manufacturers use certifications that “clearly convey the basis for certification,” because otherwise they imply a general environmental benefit that almost no product can deliver.

- **In head-to-head testing, certifications with qualifying language performed better than certifications without** when it came to beating greenwashing claims (an exception was in the cleaning products category, where household names without qualifying language performed well).
- **Certifications with qualifying language were far more likely than those without to support a 10% price premium** when results were adjusted to exclude ENERGY STAR® and USDA Organic because of their high recognition level.
- **Some environmental certifications without qualifying language wound up on consumers’ “most confusing/misleading” list** – and the list of claims most likely to cause negative brand perception.

Bear in mind that even if a certification without clear qualifying language performs well in the marketplace, it could be construed as deceptive under new FTC guidelines, placing your company at risk.

*It’s risky to expect consumers to decipher your product’s certification based simply on a logo.*

### Certifications are even more important to your business customers.

Business decision makers are more sophisticated than consumers about green claims and value the role certifications play in purchase decisions.

- Certifications save them time so that they don’t have to research product claims on their own.
- Certifications help make the case for a product’s long-term cost-effectiveness when the initial cost is higher.
- Certifications reduce risk and insulate the decision maker from backlash.

**Above all, remember that many business customers tend to be skeptical of green claims – and their reputations depend on selecting the right products.**

Certifications that are meaningful to them and give them peace of mind can remove the most significant barriers to purchase.

*For business purchasers, **certifications provide a science-based assurance from a third party** that a product’s claims are authentic.*



# CONCLUSIONS, INSIGHTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES



## Working with UL

If you're interested in working with a trusted certifier in order to capture the most value for your sustainability efforts, UL Environment can help.

We reinforce the credibility of green product claims worldwide through our certification, validation, and testing services – and transparency tools such as Environmental Product Declarations. We also offer advisory services and expertise to support your decision-making process, including market research and strategy development.



When you work with us, you can leverage our trusted global reputation for rigorous testing and scientific accuracy to make effective green product claims and communicate their benefits to your target audience. UL's GREENGUARD and ECOLOGO® Certification marks, for example, are now recognized and referenced in more than 900 sustainable product specifications and purchasing guidelines.



UL Environment is the exclusive provider of GREENGUARD Certification for products that meet stringent chemical emissions requirements, and ECOLOGO Certification for products that meet multi-attribute, life cycle-based sustainability standards. We also offer single-attribute environmental claims validations, waste to landfill validation, Environmental Product Declarations, and organizational sustainability certifications.

To view a Sustainable Product Guide that displays all products certified by UL Environment, visit [ul.com/spg](https://ul.com/spg).

For more information about how UL Environment can support you in your sustainability efforts, visit [ul.com/environment](https://ul.com/environment) or contact us at [environment@ul.com](mailto:environment@ul.com).

United States and Canada 1.888.485.4733

European Union +49.221.931.245.30

Greater China +86.20.3213.1044

Japan and Korea +81.3.5293.6200



**Shelton**<sup>Grp</sup>

# METHODOLOGY

Using the Sawtooth survey application, Shelton Group conducted the online consumer study with 1,017 U.S. and Canadian respondents sourced from SSI's online survey panel of over three million. Quotas were set for gender, age, ethnicity, and region to ensure the sample was representative of the overall population of North America. The survey, conducted in English, was fielded June 10–17, 2014; average survey length was 24 minutes. The sample size of 1,017 yielded a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval (margin of error) of +/- 3%.

We also recruited 27 business decision makers (architects/designers, buyers/purchasing managers, and facility managers) for a three-day immersive qualitative study including a brief survey, a group bulletin-board discussion, and one-on-one interviews.



# STUDY PREVIEW

Distributed at **Greenbuild International Conference and Expo** October 2014



*A brand-new study from the organization that brought you Seven Sins of Greenwashing*

## UNDER THE LENS: CLAIMING GREEN

THE INFLUENCE OF GREEN PRODUCT CLAIMS ON PURCHASE INTENT AND BRAND PERCEPTION

Great sustainable product stories, when they're told well, have the potential to reap enormous profits. That's why leading global brands have made sustainable products – and the effective communication of their benefits – a top priority.

But there's inherent risk in telling a product story the wrong way, because making dubious green product claims can damage your brand's reputation and strain customer loyalty. It can also land your company in hot water, especially since the Federal Trade Commission revised its Green Guides in 2012 in an effort to crack down on greenwashing.

**So how do you tell your product story effectively?** That's what UL Environment set out to uncover with a study, conducted by Shelton Group, that polled more than 1,000 consumers and collected additional insights from business purchasers.

Our **investigation into green product claims** centered on what makes them **effective in the marketplace:**

- Which claims have the strongest influence on purchase decisions?
- Which claims contribute to positive brand perception?
- Which claims increase perceived value of a product?
- Do legitimate claims stand up against greenwashing claims?
- How effective are certifications in combating greenwashing?
- What claims are most confusing and why?
- Which claims actually backfire by creating negative brand perception?

We tested product claims in four categories (**home improvement, electronics, personal care, and cleaning products**) and focused on three types of claims: third-party-certified claims, legitimate claims (claims that are genuine and relevant, but haven't been validated by a third party), and problematic claims (claims that don't appear to conform with the revised Green Guides; they're the greenwashers in our study).





Our study of green product claims generated

41,796

head-to-head comparisons.

#### HERE'S A SNEAK PEEK AT WHAT WE LEARNED:

**Certifications matter.** When evaluating green claims, 93% of consumers chose a certification as one of their top three factors for choosing a product. What's more, third-party-certified claims beat problematic claims in head-to-head testing by a much wider margin than merely legitimate claims did.

**Certified claims were the claims most likely to increase the perceived value of a product.** For example, eight of consumers' top 10 claims that would persuade them to pay more for a home improvement product were certified claims.

#### Consumers are getting savvier about greenwashing.

Overall, consumers gave credit to certified and legitimate claims over greenwashing claims and manufacturer-created green labels, especially in head-to-head testing. But they still found some problematic claims alluring, such as "all natural" for personal care products.

**They find certain green product claims confusing or misleading.** And it wasn't just highly technical language that threw them off – they didn't like generic descriptions such as "low VOCs" and "eco-friendly," deeming them difficult to understand or too vague.

**Confusing claims may damage your brand.** Across product categories, the claims identified by consumers as most confusing correlated closely with the ones they selected as likely to give them a negative perception of the brand. If you confuse consumers, don't expect them to leave their frustration behind at the shelf – they may remember the next time they see your logo.

For the full report, including detailed findings by product category, visit <http://environment.ul.com/ClaimingGreen>.

#### ABOUT UL ENVIRONMENT

UL Environment works to advance global sustainability, environmental health, and safety by supporting the growth and development of healthier, more sustainable products, services, and organizations. A business division of UL (Underwriters Laboratories), the trusted name in product safety for more than 120 years, UL Environment brings science, trust, and clarity to green products with services like environmental claim validations, ECOLOGO® Certification, environmental product declarations, GREENGUARD Certification, product emissions testing, organizational sustainability certification, and advisory services. <http://ul.com/environment>

Research and data analysis for this study were conducted by Shelton Group. [www.sheltongrp.com](http://www.sheltongrp.com)



