

Earth Day: Are Corporations Cashing in on 'Green'?

Contributed by Sean Smith -- Black College Wire
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Some companies may be exploiting eco-friendly consumers

While watching television the other day, I noticed the amount of commercials that make reference to the "going green" concept. From the heavily advertised eco-friendly car, to "energy star" appliances, the commercialization of the concept is more and more prevalent in the media.

As a student concentrating in marketing throughout my MBA studies, I began to ponder a startling thought. Perhaps this concept is being exploited by companies to bolster sales volume and increase shareholder wealth.

To the average consumer, companies may be viewed as socially responsible by offering products that will help reduce one's carbon footprint.

These companies have shown the impact that human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of green house gases produced, measuring them in units of carbon dioxide.

People may save money on energy bills, but I see it more as a way to tell consumers to buy, buy, buy!!!

Don't get me wrong, the use of eco-friendly products is important, but it seems as though it would be a marketer's dream to have the opportunity to capture consumers with something that most people care about and tell them you need to buy all new appliances or a new car to be "green."

Commercialization is defined as applying methods of business to a concept or product for profit or to do, exploit or make chiefly for financial gain according to dictionary.com. This is exactly what is happening with the "green" phenomenon.

In a recent ad campaign started by retail giant Wal-Mart, the advertisements urge consumers to buy products that will help the environment. These products range from water filters to organic food products.

One of the ads on Walmart.com features Procter & Gamble's Tide Coldwater, and states "If every Wal-Mart shopper switched to washing in cold water with Tide Coldwater for 50 loads, we would save 14 billion kilowatt-hours of energy."

This sounds good, but my first thought was how did they choose which products to feature?

It is difficult to determine if advertising the "green" concept is truly a part of a company's effort to be socially responsible or if it is only an exploitation of consumers.

No one will ever know, and since we know a company's main goal is to make money, the true question is, do they care about "green" at all? Or is it all about the mean green . . . the mighty dollar?

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Sean Smith wrote this article for The Famuan, the Florida A&M University student newspaper.

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