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82 Percent of Consumers Buying Green Despite Battered Economy

Green Seal and EnviroMedia Social Marketing release 2009 National Green Buying research

(PORTLAND, Ore.)—Four out of five people say they are still buying green products and services today—which sometimes cost more—even in the midst of a U.S. recession.

A new study commissioned by Green Seal and EnviroMedia Social Marketing and conducted by Opinion Research Corporation reveals peoples' opinions and behaviors about products that claim to be environmentally friendly.

Half of the 1,000 people surveyed say they are buying just as many green products now as before the economic downturn, while 19 percent say they are buying more green products. Fourteen percent say they are buying fewer environmentally green products.

2009 National Green Buying Research

Other key findings in the new research conducted by telephone in a random-digit-dial sample:

Brand Reputation Matters More Than Ads

- Twenty-one percent (21%) of consumers say a product's reputation is the biggest factor they weigh when making purchasing decisions followed by word of mouth (19%) and brand loyalty (15%). Just 9 percent say green advertising is their primary influencer.

More "Green Claims" Education Needed

- About one in three consumers say they don't know how to tell if green product claims are true.
- One in 10 consumers blindly trusts green product claims.
- Consumers are verifying green claims by reading the packaging (24%) and turning to research (going online, reading studies; 17%).

What Consumers Say Versus Do

- While 87 percent of people surveyed say they recycle, the Environmental Protection Agency reports just 33 percent of our waste is diverted from landfills.
- The other things people do are look for minimally packaged goods (60%), buy green cleaning products, (58%) and buy green personal-care products (31%).

"This research suggests that consumers are buying green products second only to participating in recycling," said Arthur Weissman, Ph.D., Green Seal's President and CEO. "This increased consumer demand sends a signal to manufacturers to produce products that are truly green."

(more)

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Green Seal, an independent nonprofit product certification organization, and EnviroMedia Social Marketing are releasing the research today from the first-ever Greenwashing Forum in Portland, Oregon. The forum, hosted by the University of Oregon, was inspired by the Greenwashing Indexsm (www.Greenwashingindex.com), which was launched in January 2008 by EnviroMedia and the UO School of Journalism and Communication. Since the popular watchdog Web site was founded, consumers in 138 countries have been posting and rating ads to “out” greenwashers and showcase companies that employ sound environmental marketing efforts.

“There’s a real opportunity for authentic green marketing, despite the tough economy,” said Valerie Davis, EnviroMedia Principal and CEO. “This research proves people want to do what’s best for the environment, but it needs to be easy and accessible. Companies should be clear about the environmental benefits of their products and services and make sure what they claim in the TV ad is backed up consistently on product packaging and on the Web site.”

The margin of error on the 2009 National Green Buying Survey is +/- 3.2 percent. Additional survey results are available by contacting Kelli Johnson at EnviroMedia or Barbara Hodgson with Green Seal.

About Green Seal

Founded in 1989, Green Seal provides science-based environmental certification standards that are credible, transparent, and essential in an increasingly educated and competitive marketplace. A 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization, Green Seal certified its first products in 1992 and has certified 3,200 products and services from major companies such as 3M, Benjamin Moore, and Andersen Windows, and the number of major product categories covered by standards has increased to more than 40. For more information, visit www.GreenSeal.org.

About EnviroMedia

Headquartered in Austin, Texas, and with an office in Portland, Oregon, EnviroMedia Social Marketing has been delivering award-winning behavior-changing campaigns that get measurable results since 1997. The agency focuses exclusively on environmental and public health issues, and includes a subsidiary company, Green Canary Sustainability Consulting. For more information, visit EnviroMedia.com or GreenCanary.net.

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