



Conscious Consumers in a Nutshell

Part 1 in Earth Advertising's 4-Part Series on consumer behavior

Have you heard the one about the early adopter who married a true believer? Their children were 22% reluctant, 32% savvy, 17% enlightened, 29% adverse-- and X% prone to little green lies.

Green Consumer Research Reports: It's a jungle out there

It turns out that when you ask people how environmentally responsible they are, how much they care about polar bears, or what they would sacrifice for clean air, expect creative latitude in their answers. Studies show that studies need more studies to study. Earth Advertising thanks and supports all of our survey colleagues by offering an up-to-date directory of conscious consumer studies upon request. After all, we are all in this together. We are pioneers in the green marketing jungle. The truth is, green consumers are a moving target for media planners and the shelf life of research reports can be shorter than cheese. One poignant news story about risky spinach, an environmental mishap, or shipment of toxic toys, can turn a consumer behavior pattern on its heels.

Research reports on environmentally and socially responsible purchasing attitudes and behaviors are sprouting up everywhere. Marketing professionals have been intent on describing people most likely to shop with an environmental conscience for a decade now. In the early 90's around the time Earth Advertising's eFlicks Media published its initial marketing reports on "conscious consumers," Paul Ray coined the term "cultural creatives" to better define the market potential. Today's businesses, from Fortune 500's to start-ups, are hoping to turn research numbers into sales figures. Some are staffing up on sustainability experts to decipher it all. Meanwhile marketing directors struggle to apply consumer research results to brand identity and media spending.

Even more important to some businesses is the amount of adversity they can expect from environmental deficiencies. Companies can no longer rely upon public relations to fix negative press about unsafe products and practices. How much people want to know about a company or product



is the question many brands ask. Playing it safe, businesses are adopting responsible practices quickly on the chance that green is the new marketing tool.

"Cliff notes" on consumer behavior

Manhattan-based Earth Advertising inventories the landscape of research reports to help our clients get the real dirt on consumer data. Research is the foundation upon which we build strong marketing platforms. From these, we can promote media plans, product trial, brand awareness, loyalty incentive programs, pr, games, sales tools, and eco-tainment to effectively reach the audience with a compelling message. We believe that the most masterful market'eers are those willing to put both sides of the brain into overdrive. We call it research-based creative.

This report is intended to supplement the experience of industry professionals who attend branding conferences religiously, but might miss that one kernel of wisdom that can make the difference. Maybe you were schmoozing in the lounge about climbing gear, swordfish extinction, or why you got into this business in the first place.

Perhaps you dozed off in a lecture or they forgot to send you the power point. Earth Advertising's 4-part Series is for serious professionals who didn't know that saving the world would be so boring. This is not meant to discourage conference attendance, but give you the option to hold out for ones in nice places like Hawaii or Aspen. We hope you enjoy our 4-part Series of reports on Green Consumer Research.

Who is conscious about what, when and how much

Exactly how many are really out there? Many studies have competing new terms for customers who are likely to choose responsible products over toxic, polluting ones. Most agree that there are millions of consumers out there willing to pay extra for toxic-free products, and still others willing to make earth-friendly choices purely because they care about the future, other inhabitants, or the planet. The growth in eco-happy products and services is exciting for nearly everybody. There are trillions of dollars (ok, maybe billions) to be made selling good things to informed people.

Environmental policy reform is partly a result of the fact that dirty secrets don't stay hush, hush as long, and information travels fast. A manufacturer



half way around the world can be seen on webcam, and from space!
More people know more about what they buy.

How many conscious consumers does it take to change a lightbulb?

Last year alone hundreds of millions of incandescent bulbs were replaced with compact fluorescents. But was that for environmental reasons? Nobody really knows, even if they say they do.

Environmentally conscious consumption is not progressing as fast as some might hope, but it is growing. The burgeoning of triple to quintuple bottom line businesses is a promising sign. The concept of “bottom line” has become multi-dimensional and there are great social entrepreneurs to thank for this. People-planet-profits (but not always in that order) was the rallying marketing cry in 2007. Yet, still the retail economy is dominated by publicly traded companies pressured by quarterly earnings. In the upfront these environmental measures cut into profits. In the end, hopefully they translate into savings and less liability.

It feels like new business standards might be here to stay. Quality of life indicators, socially responsible indices, environmental risk assessment, shareholder activism, corporate transparency and new definitions for ‘standard of living’ can be found on the internet. They are at the fingertips of anyone interested in looking them up. There is a fresh sense of urgency among a strong, yet relatively undersized, group of consumers. Is the model citizen committed to protecting natural resources? Are their values reflected in how they spend their money? We do not believe there is a perfect formula for finding perfect people. Many people trying to do the right thing still can’t decide if it’s ok to go to Starbucks, or not. Are Christmas trees all right? They don’t know.

The most conscious consumers are motivated by health

Earth Advertising distinguishes between a) products that are personally harmful; and b) those that are harmful to the environment and animals at large but do not pose immediate and obvious personal risk. The most heavily populated environmentally conscious consumer group consists of, a) people gravely concerned about their own health and that of their family.

If they have friends or relatives recently touched by cancer, asthma, infertility, or other problems that they suspect are linked to their

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environment, they are more likely to choose toxic-free products. It starts with what they eat, drink, wear, touch, breathe, or feed the young. Many pregnant moms feel like they are staring right into the headlights, when they brush with chemicals that haven't even been tested on rats. Not to support animal testing. But, moms are finally questioning the logic of "Keep out of reach of children and small pets" on the cleaners they use in the playroom.

Is level of wealth a good indicator?

One consumer data presentation showed a correlation between lack of education and obesity. According to some experts, this group is the "least" environmentally conscious. When you have only enough money to buy unsafe products, that's despair not irresponsibility.

It's more expensive to buy organic food, but if there is a CSA or farmer's market nearby, you can go out of your way to buy local. By taking extra steps, environmental products can be more affordable—like buying in bulk or in concentration. Generally, green costs more, from non-toxic detergents and recycled paper to driving green cars and living in green buildings. Certain activities that engage in conserving energy, save money, too. If a penny saved is a penny earned, then an unused megawatt, known as a negawatt, is money in the bank.

Consciousness is a mixed bag that is hard to quantify. Motivation is a piece of the puzzle, as are informed or misinformed decisions. How can we classify someone who buys organic but doesn't recycle? Also, the very workings of the planet are not always well-known. According the National Science Research, for instance, many Americans think the sun revolves the Earth.

For the most part, conscious consumers are not defined by a certain income bracket, ethnicity, geography or demography, but by "psychography." People most fearful of the harmful effects of dangerous chemicals in food, drink, cleansers, clothes, cosmetics, paint, etc. are most likely to buy non-toxic things if they can afford to.

Please don't kill the messenger

As it turns out, the household member most likely to make purchasing

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decisions is predominately female. This woman is even making the choices when it comes to cars and gadgets. Women are nurturers and gatherers, which in this day and age translates to mothers, matriarchs and "shoppers." Men are more likely to engage in goal-driven activities such as chasing and catching flying objects like hockey pucks, footballs, and big, powerful paychecks. (Again, we read the surveys, we don't conduct them.)

Men do make many decisions and are concerned about the state of the planet. Just look at the ratios at conferences. According to most survey they just don't make everyday-run-of-the-mill-family purchasing decisions like groceries. Power plants and fishing vessels? Yes.

These days it's not just endangered species capturing the attention of researchers. There is most likely a huge database on each of us somewhere. There is no shortage of research out there on our purchasing patterns either. You could probably search golfers with a 50 handicap who only play on environmentally conscious golf courses, just in the North East, using a Yonex club and surmise quickly what kind of car he (or she) drives. Data is an export product. The Freedom Act probably didn't hurt. For all we know our stats are sold to Japan. But do they know why you took the bus today? Maybe your car broke down.

Who is conscious about what, and why

One study suggests at least 90% of all people consider themselves conscious consumers. Let's say it's true. We must take a serious look at what conscious means. One can be conscious enough not to buy an outdated TV so she won't have to replace it in two years. This person might, or might not, be worrying about the environmental life cycle of the electronic components. Frugality may be a survival instinct. Conscious shopping can be confusing in a world where media is supported by advertisers telling us to buy, buy, buy. Even the President encouraged everyone to keep shopping after 9-11 in the best interest of our country's economy.

Yet, overproduction of senseless goods is evident wherever you look. Recently we heard a factoid about plastic ware. Americans alone dispose of enough paper, plastic cups, forks, and spoons every year to circle the equator three times. Does a *conscious* consumer use disposable utensils just on specials occasions, or whenever it's more convenient?

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Signs do indicate that a kinder, gentler, safer world is what most people want way deep down inside, even if it's buried under discount mattress sales and factory closeouts. When presented creatively, any and all people of any gender can rise to the occasion of a healthier planet. If we asked dogs, they'd probably give it a "paws up" too.

Media is great when the story is real

People are exposed to media about wars, fossil fuel, over-manufacturing, excess packaging and toxic industrial processes that have wreaked havoc on our natural resources. Until recently, most people didn't like to talk about it, or hear about it. Now it's vogue. The digital airwaves are becoming environmental messengers as never before. Leaders both young and old want to engineer a better world moving forward. Environmental heroes have gained status as our society's celebrities. There is much debate about how these consumers get their information. Most agree that they make decisions from sources in the way of networking and reading, and from "gurus" and medical professionals.

As information technologies converge, you can expect these people to be more and more influenced by non-commercial media in all forms. Above all, be honest and passionate about your product and your company. It is interesting to your target audience, so be sure it is told by master craftspeople in communication.

A finely told tale can weave in and among all forms of media with a memorable message. This message must be easily understood to be spread by others. Have a clear, redundant mantra that is easy to remember and share. It can even be a factoid. Pass it to hairdressers, teachers, grocers, family, ministers, cab drivers, employees and everyone throughout the supply chain. A rock hits the water with one simple thunk! The hole fills instantly, but the ripples reverberate almost endlessly. Thanks to media coverage and the internet, consumers can get a sneak peak behind the company logo to see what it really stands for. Green washing does not always fail immediately, but it never wins out.

Who do conscious consumers believe?

People in this psychographic tend to believe expert sources. The nickname "guru" here simply refers to people who are focused enough

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on your product category to have read about related topics or heard things in the news or discovered it at an event or chance encounter.

Words used to describe the “most” conscious consumer can easily be confused with those who talk about products the most. We like to believe the most responsible consumers are the ones who listen the most. They actively look for advice from gurus in all mediums.

In various reports, gurus are otherwise described as “brandvangelists”, “brand stewards”, “product ambassadors”, “diehards”, “conscious consumers”, “cultural creatives”, “enlightened”, “converted”, “true believers”, “environmentalists”, “activists”, “thought leaders” and “the choir” among others. They are people who may or may not have chosen to live healthy lives, but they at least read about it and talk about it. They keep pace with news and statistics on the risks of scary things in our environment.

These gurus are most likely to create the link between a healthy planet and human health in general. If you took the time to read this, you may be a bit of a guru yourself.

There is a gap between how we perceive ourselves and what we really do. A surgeon is still a surgeon even though he rarely wields the knife, and the same may be true for self-proclaimed conscious consumers in varying degrees. This is no excuse to be judgmental toward people. The green movement should focus on helping people help the planet, thus help themselves. The same is true at high levels of government and industry. By all means, it's more effective when people believe it's their idea, not somebody guilt-tripping them.

Though media planners are often inclined not to spend media dollars preaching to the choir, this is the very root system from which your brand will grow and gain momentum. Treat your choir with respect or the choir may sing someone else's tune, and you want them to sing yours. Clearly, loudly, memorably, and often. They are the journalists, the media voices, the industry leaders, the gurus and they are often very vocal and passionate about their opinions.

People are human

There are several sources that would make a healthy addition to any choir, and they are health professionals, scientists, and religious leaders

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because conscious consumers tend to listen to these 'experts' more carefully. The 'experts' are not necessarily your consumers, however. An example is the sight of nurses huddled in the cold, smoking outside hospitals after spending the evening caring for a patient dying of lung cancer. It is not always human nature to practice what you preach.

You might find that a family buys organic milk but they eat processed cheese. Parents might see a TV special and link hormones in cows to premature development in their teens. Others are convinced that mercury in fish can cause learning disabilities. They might have solar panels and drive an SUV. One person might respond to Anderson Cooper's televised blood work showing industrial chemicals in his body by detoxing with lemons for a week. Another might respond to the same thing by reaching for another beer.

It's easy to pick and choose your customers carefully with new media techniques. In a way, marketing agencies like Earth Advertising are matchmakers bringing customers together with products that align with their belief systems, or will be aligned by the time we're done.

Bribing for shelf space

If you feel uncomfortable coercing a retailer to put your product at eye level in the store, go outside your comfort zone. Location at point of purchase gives you stature with customers. It is an implied endorsement. If a customer must ask where your organic tomato sauce is, you could lose them to all-natural along the way. Create a campaign directed at store managers and tell your customers what section you're in. Once a conscious consumer has your product in hand and reads the ingredients, you have made a connection.

Conscious consumers do read packaging. Use positive reinforcement. If McDonald's posts how many burgers they sold, post how much pesticide you helped to save from groundwater by supporting organic agriculture.

If you want to get your customer's attention, you must be available. Create an aura around yourself and your company quickly through all mediums. Hand out an award, start a club, give things away, make friends with your consumers.

Media is the message only if the message is done well

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In short, the media techniques most effective are news stories, public relations and events, newspapers and magazines, and social networking. You cannot fool your consumer so be respectful and authentic. It's your only option or your first sale to that customer will be your last. You must penetrate the media with interesting points.

Someone will want to argue about positive vs. negative messaging. The negative effects of dangerous chemicals are not positive. When your colleagues ask why you are being negative, tell them because negative sells when you're in the non-toxic business. You are asking people to switch over to healthy alternatives from toxic products. Very few people are deliberately trying to poison the environment, although that sector does exist and there's a name for them not included in this report.

Who does the planet belong to anyway?

How can we instill the thought that the planet belongs to all of us, when we have grown up in a world where companies are to buying water rights, and mining whole countries and mountain ranges for minerals and building materials? This is what Earth Advertising and agencies like us think about most of the time. How to sell the idea of purchasing eco-friendly products not just for one's own health, but for every one and every things.

There is positive research to support that people do care and given the tools and information, will vote at the cash register for the better good. Some scientists believe that the evolution of man included natural selection for those who care about man as a group.

The dichotomy here is that we have an economic system that prevents people from being able to afford to do the right thing. In schools we teach children about an environment that can be saved by making purchasing decisions that their parents can't afford. Yes, we can all recycle, but can we afford organic cotton sheets? And yet the pesticides used in cotton industry are some the world's biggest polluters of soil and groundwater.

Connecting healthy planet to healthy people

In the product categories of environmentally sustainable food, cosmetics, beverage, clothing (particularly baby and maternity) the best media channels and message platforms will be about health to the people who



are most concerned about it, and you can expect women to be making the decisions.

The mental process of connecting the health of the environment to human health may have been easier in days gone by when man interacted with the land more intimately in order to survive. Today, a surprising amount of evidence suggests that many people don't know where drinking water comes from. Many do not drink from water taps, but plastic bottles. Perhaps the intention of the industrial revolution was to make us all more comfortable after surviving the first ten thousand years. Maybe we believed that companies would take care of all our needs no questions asked. Now more people are beginning to notice that many products don't make any sense to our environment and our survival.

People behave of their own free will

How do people evolve from health conscious to environmentally conscious? On their own free will. They make the mental connection either in a lightning strike moment, or over time. They begin to adopt, enjoy, and take pride in protecting resources as a more fulfilling way of life. You can define them by habits sometimes. Many research reports will tell you the ideal customer is politically active. Or an educated, informed woman with a family, and above average household income, If there is a member of her family with allergies, she's even a better bet. We wish we could define green conscious consumers by the age, race, color, wealth, political party or astrological sign, but we can't.

However, we do have clever, innovative ways to reach them. People adopt environmental practices to save face, save themselves or save the world and feel good. We believe people need to come to their own conclusions. Our job is to help them do that.

Upon request, Earth Advertising will provide you with recommendations on how much media to spend where, and how to optimize brand attributes. We offer corporate identity, messaging, and summary reports on market research, and ways to green your business while building team spirit among employees, vendors, suppliers, investors, management team, customers, shareholders and, yes, even the media.

We hope you've enjoyed *Conscious Consumers in a Nutshell*. This is Part 1 in a 4-Part Series on consumer behavior (see list). Ask us for our



comprehensive directory of green consumer research. To find out more about how Earth Advertising can help strengthen your brand to resonate in the right places with the right message, contact: Earth Advertising, 44 E 32nd Street, New York, NY 10016 (212) 933-1391.

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Earth Advertising's Consumer Research Reports

Part 1. The conscious consumer in a nutshell

Part 2. Behavioral habits: public transportation, composting, recycling, reducing, water conservation, non-toxic home and lawn care, packaging, activism, green building, and energy efficiency

Part 3. Purchase decisions in clean technology: automobiles, transportation, renewable energy resources, and energy efficient products

Part 4. Tricks for popularizing your brand

What do you think about conscious consumers? Visit our blog at <http://earthadvertising.wordpress.com/>

Earth Advertising in Manhattan, is a creative shop specializing in brand management, sales tools, media exposure, and studio production. The first publication about consumer behavior, "Conscious Consumption. Helping People Help the Planet" was published in 1998. Earth Advertising and studio eFlicks Media produce award-winning media campaigns and effective and innovative marketing programs in all mediums for earth-friendly clients.

To find out more about how Earth Advertising can help strengthen your brand to resonate in the right places with the right message, contact: Earth Advertising, 44 E 32nd Street, New York, NY 10016 (212) 933-1391, info@earthadvertising.com

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Consumer research references:

Title	Author	Company
<i>A look back at green marketing in 2007</i>	David Wigder	Marketing Green
<i>Accounting for Brands as Intangible Assets</i>	James R. Gregory	CoreBrand
<i>Awake & Aware</i>	Hugh Hough	Green Team
<i>Carbon Down, Profits Up</i>	The Climate Group	The Climate Group
<i>Conscious Consumption Helping People Help the Planet: marketing to conscious consumers</i>	Martha Shaw	Earth Advertising eFlicks Media
<i>Conscious Consumers Are Changing the Rules of Marketing. Are you Ready?</i>	Raphael Bemporad & Mitch Baranowski	BBMG
<i>Four Green Marketing Tips for 2008</i>	Jacki Ottman	J. Ottman Consulting
<i>'Going Green'</i>	Green Media Enterprises	GME
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<i>Hartman Report on Sustainability</i>	The Hartman Group	Hartman Group
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<i>Lohas Market Research Review</i>	Steve French and Gwenn Rogers	Natural Marketing Institute
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<i>Now Looking Green is Looking Good</i>	Claudia H Deutsch	New York Times
<i>Ten Reasons Why There's No Green Business Bubble</i>	Joel Makower	Trend Watching
<i>The Changing Face of Organic Consumers</i>	Maryellen Molyneaux	Food Technology
<i>The Conscious Consumer: Marketing Strategies for a Greener World</i>	Hilary Bromberg	Egg
<i>The Power of Green</i>	Thomas Friedman	New York Times TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc.
<i>The Six Sins of Greenwashing</i>	A 'Green Paper'	
<i>Toyota: Monitoring, Measuring & Managing Consumer-Generated Media (Presentation)</i>	Bruce C. Ertmann DYG SCANTrend	Toyota
<i>Understanding the "Green" Consumer (Presentation)</i>	Identification Program	DYG Agence Conseil en Communication SurL'Environnement et les Questions de Societe
<i>Who Are the 'Sustainable Consumers'?</i> <i>(Presentation)</i>	Eco & Co	