

Green

How important are “green” or “organic” claims to your purchasing decisions? How satisfied are you that such claims are accurate? Which “green” or “organic” brands do you trust the most?

It seems that nearly every brand is now trying to burnish its identity by hitching its wagon to either the “green” or “organic” star—or both. Not surprisingly, it also seems that these efforts are being met with a healthy dose of consumer skepticism.

Can cars really be “green”? Can junk food really be “organic”? Can we continue to trust brands that made their names as “green” or “organic” but have since sold out to multinational corporations?

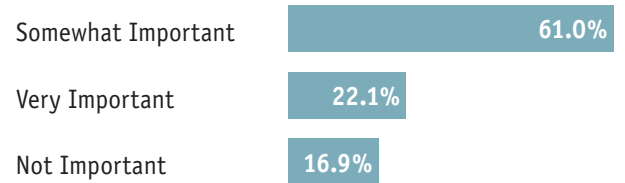
There may be notable differences between marketing a product as “green” as opposed to “organic,” but to most of the 255 senior-level marketers we surveyed, the effectiveness of such claims is about the same—and not very good.

A solid majority of respondents (61 percent) said “green” claims were only “somewhat important” to their purchasing decisions and a roughly equal number (59 percent) said the same about “organic” claims.

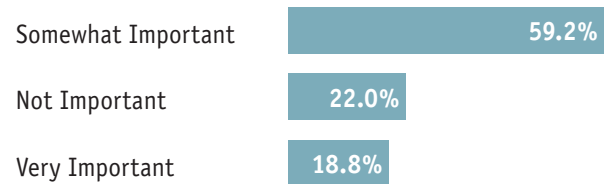
A bare majority (51 percent) also said that, in general, they were “not satisfied” that “green” or “organic” claims were accurate. However, respondents indicated that, in most cases, “green” claims carried relatively more credibility than “organic” claims. The emphasis here is on the word *relatively*, as 74 percent said “green” claims were “somewhat credible” to most consumers, while just 66 percent said the same thing about “organic” claims.

Turning the tables on the respondents, we asked whether they had ever marketed a brand with a “green” or “organic” claim and if they were satisfied that those claims were accurate. An overwhelming majority (64 percent) said they had never gotten involved in “green” or “organic” claims, but of those that had, a plurality (46 percent) were “very satisfied.” The flipside was that a small majority (54 percent) were either only “somewhat satisfied” (40 percent) or “not satisfied” (14 percent) that the

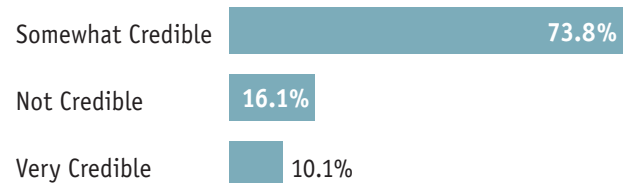
How important are “green” claims to your purchasing decisions?



How important are “organic” claims to your purchasing decisions?

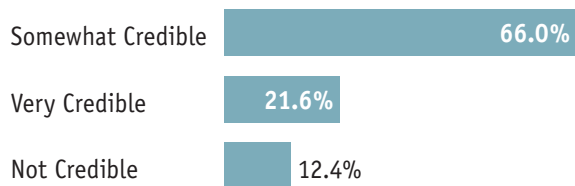


In general, how credible do you think “green” claims are to most consumers today?

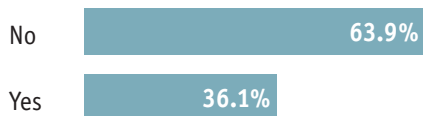


Fatigue

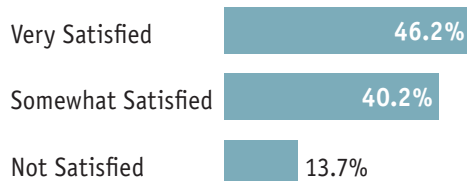
In general, how credible do you think “organic” claims are to most consumers today?



Have you, yourself, ever marketed a brand with a “green” or “organic” claim?



If so, how satisfied were you, in general, that the “green” or “organic” claims were accurate?



claims their own brands made were accurate.

Respondents were also asked, on an open-ended basis, which “green” or “organic” brands they trusted most, trusted least, and which brands had done the most to advance “green” or “organic” causes.

Whole Foods, the supermarket chain, dominated in both “most trusted” and having “done the most.” Seventh Generation received an equal number of mentions as Whole Foods for “most trusted” but lagged on the “done most” score. The other brands most frequently mentioned as trusted were Method, Trader Joe’s, Horizon, Toyota, Newman’s Own and Patagonia.

Wal-Mart was a strong second to Whole Foods on the question of which brand had done the most to advance “green” or “organic” causes, followed by Toyota, Patagonia, Seventh Generation, Stonyfield, Trader Joe’s, General Electric, Method and Clorox. Interestingly, both Wal-Mart and Clorox also led the list of brands identified as being the “least trusted,” along with Procter & Gamble and BP.

However, “big corporations” — both brands and retail chains — topped the list of the “least trusted” (Whole Foods excepted). This distrust also spilled over to smaller, formerly independent brands, such as Bert’s Bees, Ben & Jerry’s and Tom’s of Maine, which were cited as no longer as trusted because of their new corporate ownership.

Clorox and BP also took some heat for their unlikely attempts to re-position their products as “green,” although Wal-Mart garnered considerable, albeit grudging, praise for both its “green” and “organic” initiatives. As one respondent commented: “This may sound nuts, but Wal-Mart has done a good job in educating consumers and requiring suppliers and manufacturers to provide green packaging.”

RESPONDENT PROFILE

A total of 255 survey respondents included brand marketers (31%), consulting firms (21%) and agencies (18%). Thirty-two percent worked in packaged-goods firms, 6% in retail and 5% in financial services. A majority were senior-level executives with 74% reporting more than ten years of experience in marketing. ■