GREENWASHING PERCEPTION IN DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS AND ITS IMPACT ON BRAND TRUST

THE RISKS OF GREENWASHING FOR BRANDS

Greenwashing is a communication strategy deliberately used by companies to promote a positive view of the brand's socio-environmental actions without full transparency (Bowen, 2014; Nemes et al., 2022). In many cases, brands use this strategy to increase brand awareness (Leong et al., 2025). In the long run, however, greenwashing accusations harm a company's image and, consequently, the stakeholders' brand trust (Bowen, 2014; Hassan, 2024).

According to Keilmann & Koch, even minor greenwashing in digital campaigns undermines corporate reputation and credibility in the eyes of the audience (2026). This situation is further aggravated when sustainability claims do not reflect the company's reality in terms of environmental engagement (Keilmann & Koch, 2026).

Even so, worldwide, 52% of consumers have encountered misleading sustainability claims from brands (Kantar, 2023, Sustainability Sector Index).

BEUC & ICRT SURVEY, 2023

34%

Respondents in Europe and United States have noticed greenwashing in the past 12 months

## DISTRUST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS (OECD, 2024, P.9)

A survey from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2024 showed that around 50% of the respondents expressed distrust for environmental claims

Not distrust 50%   Distrust 50%

OECD SURVEY, 2023

- ● Can always detect greenwashing
- ● Can't always detect greenwashing

0   20   40   60   80   100
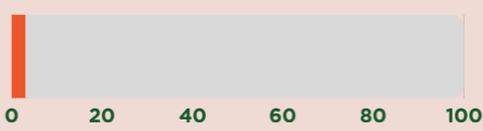
Only 3% respondents say they would be able to always distinguish false green claims in campaigns.
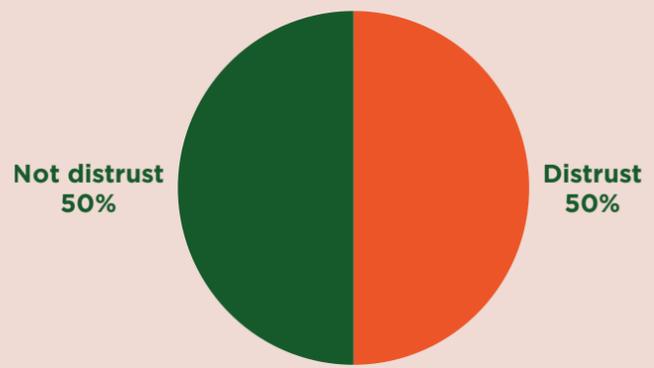
HOW TO AVOID GREENWASHING ACCUSATIONS WHEN PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS?

USE PRECISE WORDING | **ADD MEASURABLE PROOF** | **USE CREDIBLE SOURCES** | **ENSURE CONSISTENCY** | **MONITOR IN REAL TIME**

- Use precise wording and avoid vague claims, such as "eco-friendly" (OECD, 2025)
- Include measurable evidence with every sustainability claim (OECD, 2025)
- Add credible and relevant sources (BEUC & ICRT, 2023)
- Ensure consistency across all digital touchpoints to avoid "cherry-picking" (Delmas & Cuerel Burbano, 2011)
- Monitor results, respond to stakeholder questions, and engage with their comments in real time (OECD, 2025; BEUC & ICRT, 2023)

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Companies that understand the global frameworks surrounding sustainability and green innovation improve their corporate image (Ogbeibu et al., 2021).

"Proactively analysing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) opportunities, challenges, and risks empowers companies to distinguish themselves and effectively manage the journey to achieve sustainable transformation" - KPMG, The Challenge of Greenwashing: An International Regulatory Overview (2024, p. 24)

CASE STUDIES

"ESG issues are currently a hot topic in Brazil, and it is expected that greenwashing will become increasingly sensitive for different stakeholders" - KPMG (2024, p. 74)

"Growing awareness within the EU has led NGOs like ClientEarth and Greenpeace, along with consumer associations, to spearhead greenwashing litigation and disputes. This heightened awareness highlights the associated risks" - KPMG (2024, p. 34)