

GREENWASHING DETECTIVE

part of **GreenGate Methodological Toolkit₂**

Created within the project GreenGate₂.

GreenGate₂ project (reg. n. 2023-2-CZ01-KA220-YOU-000174554) was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Partners:



Co-funded by
the European Union

Greenwashing detective

INTRO

Not all "eco-friendly" products are as green as they seem! In this activity, you'll look at product images and their flashy, persuasive commercials - just like real consumers do. Based on what you see, you'll decide which product seems better for people and the planet.

But here's the catch: some claims might be tricking you with greenwashing! We'll uncover the truth behind the nature filled images.

Aim: Participants experience and will understand different greenwashing strategies.

Time: 30 minutes

Space: Indoors

Tools:

- 4 flipchart papers
- markers
- printed worksheets 1-4 (appendix)

MOTIVATION

Facilitate a discussion on certifications and labels found on cosmetic products. Ask participants which certifications they are familiar with. They should already understand the basic differences between natural and conventional cosmetics. Use the conversation to see how much they know about industry labels and standards.

In this activity, 'natural cosmetics' means products made from ingredients that are of natural origins and are gently processed - no petroleum derivatives or harsh chemicals. But be careful: in the beauty world, the word 'natural' isn't legally defined, so brands can use it just to sound eco-friendly.



CORE

Divide participants into four groups.

Provide each group with one worksheet corresponding to a specific product, along with a flipchart and markers.

- Groups with Worksheets 1 and 2 will focus on Eco-Lux Shampoo.
- Groups with Worksheets 3 and 4 will focus on Pure Harmony Shampoo.

Within 5 minutes, each group will gather as much information as possible about their assigned product using comics or product descriptions, documenting key points on their flipcharts.

Merge groups working on the same product to exchange findings and prepare a presentation for the other product group. Given time is 8 minutes.

Each merged group will present their insights to the opposing product group within 2 minutes.

Participants will vote on which product is more sustainable and engage in a discussion on the reasoning behind their choices.

CONCLUSION

Brainstorm or brainwrite what is Greenwashing and where do you see it on these products.

While Eco-Luxe shampoo may appear to be a sustainable and ethical choice, it is important to be aware of the potential for greenwashing. By understanding the signs of greenwashing, consumers can make more informed decisions about the products they purchase.

Greenwashing Indicators in Eco-Luxe shampoo:

- **Vague and Misleading Claims:** The commercial uses phrases like "lush, vibrant rainforest" and "pristine mountain springs" to evoke an image of purity and sustainability but fails to provide specific information about the source of the ingredients.
- **Focus on Image Over Substance:** The commercial highlights the beauty of the rainforest and the woman's shiny hair without offering concrete evidence of the shampoo's effectiveness or environmental benefits.
- **Use of Buzzwords:** Terms like "climate conscious," "zero waste," and "cruelty-free" are used to create an impression of ethical and sustainable practices, yet no details are provided to substantiate these claims.
- **Inclusion of Harmful Ingredients:** While the commercial promotes the product as "paraben-free," it does not disclose the presence of other potentially harmful ingredients, such as BHT, SLS which may have negative effects on human health.

Indicators why Pure Harmony might be considered more health and environmentally friendly:

- **Real independent certification:** NATRUE (natural and organic ingredients) FairTrade (decent working conditions and a fairer deal for farmers and workers), Vegan (free of ingredients made of or by animals)
- **Source:** Only plant-based ingredients and the source of ingredients is listed.

Infobox

Key takeaway:

- Be a critical consumer: Don't blindly trust marketing claims.
 - **Look for buzzwords:** "Eco-friendly," "natural," "green," "sustainable" are often used without clear definitions.
 - **Be skeptical of vague claims:** "Reduces your carbon footprint" – how much? "Made with natural ingredients" – what percentage?
 - **Hidden trade-offs:** A product might be recyclable but made with harmful chemicals.
 - **"Green" features that are irrelevant:** Claiming a product is "CFC-free" when CFCs were banned decades ago.
 - **Lack of Transparency and Evidence:**
 - ◇ No third-party certifications: Independent certifications (like Fair Trade) provide more credibility on extraction or production, but doesn't mean that the product has zero impact on environment or health.
 - ◇ No clear explanation of their environmental impact: How are they reducing their carbon footprint? Where do their materials come from?
 - ◇ Creating fake certifications: Be wary of labels that look official but are made up by the company, as for example these:



<https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/cruelty-free-dont-believe-all-the-cute-bunny-labels/>

- Do your research: Look beyond the advertising and investigate the company's actual practices.
 - **Focus on one small "green" aspect:** A company might highlight recyclable packaging while ignoring its manufacturing processes that heavily pollute.
 - **"Greening" one product while the rest of the company isn't:** A single "eco-friendly" product line doesn't make an entire company sustainable.
- **Support truly sustainable companies:** Choose companies that are transparent about their environmental impact and have verifiable certifications.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20240111STO16722/stopping-greenwashing-how-the-eu-regulates-green-claims>

<https://earth.org/all-you-need-to-know-about-the-eus-new-greenwashing-directive/>

Green claim directive

[https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2023/0085\(COD\)&l=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2023/0085(COD)&l=en)

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240112IPR16772/meps-adopt-new-law-banning-greenwashing-and-misleading-product-information>



Are you still up for another task?
Ok, then it is time to keep it real! 🌱👉 We're switching up the Eco-Luxe Shampoo commercial to be 100% transparent- no fluff, no fake eco-hype, add real facts, and make it something Gen Z can actually trust. 🗑️🌱 Who's in? 🙋🏻

Let participants revise the commercial of Eco-Luxe shampoo. Here's how to make it better:

- ✅ Real Talk on Ingredients – provide more information about the source of the ingredients and the manufacturing process to increase transparency.
- ✅ Actual Benefits – Instead of just saying “pure & nourishing” (whatever that even means), focus on the shampoo's actual benefits, rather than relying on vague and misleading claims.



Appendix Worksheet 1.



PURE. SUSTAINABLE. ECO-LUXE ISN'T JUST SHAMPOO, IT'S A REVOLUTION IN ECO-BEAUTY.

INFUSED WITH SUSTAINABLY WILD-HARVESTED BOTANICALS AND 100% ETHICALLY SOURCED INGREDIENTS, ECO-LUXE GIVES YOU THE GLOW-UP YOU DESERVE, WITHOUT HARMING THE PLANET.



NO TOXINS. JUST PURE GOODNESS IN A 100% BIODEGRADABLE BOTTLE. BECAUSE YOUR HAIR DESERVES LUXURY WITHOUT THE GUILT.



EVERY WASH = A WIN FOR YOU AND THE PLANET. ECO-LUXE IS CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS, WATER-POSITIVE, AND DESIGNED FOR A ZERO-WASTE FUTURE.



ECO-LUXE

ECO-LUXE:
BECAUSE SAVING THE PLANET
SHOULD LOOK THIS GOOD



Appendix Worksheet 2.



Indulge your senses with Eco-Luxe Shampoo, a harmonious blend of nature's finest ingredients mixed with mountain fresh water. Crafted with care and sustainability in mind, this luxurious formula nourishes and revitalizes your hair, leaving it soft, shiny, and healthy.

Ingredients:

Water, Coconut Oil, Argan Oil, Aloe Vera, Essential Oils of Lavender and Rosemary, citric acid, glycerin, hydrolyzed wheat protein, Panthenol, SLS, xantan gum, urtica dioica leaf extract, BHT, Parfum.

How to use:

Apply a generous amount of Eco-Luxe shampoo to wet hair. Massage gently. Rinse thoroughly.

Repeat as needed.

For best results: Use Eco-Luxe conditioner to follow up your shampoo.

Storage:

Store in a cool, dry place. Avoid direct sunlight.

Disclaimer:

This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. If you experience any adverse reactions, discontinue use and consult a healthcare professional.



Appendix Worksheet 3.



NO GIMMICKS. NO FAKE PROMISES. JUST SHAMPOO THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

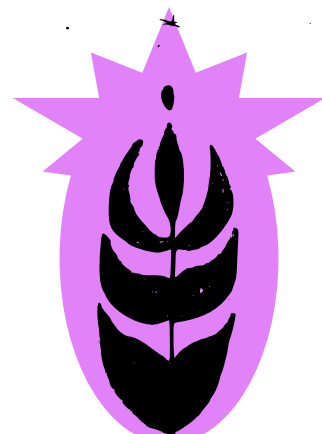


MADE WITH INGREDIENTS THAT DO THEIR JOB - HYDRATING, STRENGTHENING, AND KEEPING YOUR HAIR FRESH WITHOUT THE HARSH STUFF.

COCONUT OIL FOR MOISTURE. ARGAN OIL FOR STRENGTH. ALOE TO SOOTHE. LAVENDER AND ROSEMARY BECAUSE THEY JUST SMELL THAT GOOD.



SOFT, HEALTHY HAIR WITHOUT THE B.S. THAT'S THE VIBE.



~ PURE ~
• HARMONY •

PURE HARMONY SHAMPOO. SIMPLE. EFFECTIVE. FOR HAIR THAT JUST GETS IT.



Appendix Worksheet 4.



Experience the harmony of nature with Pure Harmony Shampoo. Crafted with a blend of the finest natural ingredients, this gentle yet effective formula cleanses and nourishes your hair, leaving it soft, shiny, and healthy.

Ingredients:

Water, Coconut oil, Argan Oil, Aloe Vera, Essential Oils of Lavender and Rosemary*

* Organic Coconut Oil: Cold-pressed coconut oil from sustainably farmed coconuts.

Fair Trade Argan Oil: Ethically sourced argan oil from cooperatives in Morocco.

Wildcrafted Aloe Vera: Hand-harvested aloe vera from the desert.

Essential Oils of Lavender and Rosemary: Organic essential oils distilled from lavender and rosemary plants.

How to Use:

Apply a small amount of Pure Harmony shampoo to wet hair. Massage gently.

Rinse thoroughly. Repeat as needed.

Storage:

Store in a cool, dry place. Avoid direct sunlight.

Disclaimer:

This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. If you experience any adverse reactions, discontinue use and consult a healthcare professional.

