

Greenwashing x Alo Yoga

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Master of Advertising and Brand Responsibility

Spring 2021

Executive Summary

As sustainability arises in popularity amongst both consumers and brands, many large and well-known brands are becoming guilty of greenwashing. Greenwashing is a powerful marketing tactic companies can benefit from. It's all about deceiving consumers into making a product and/or company seem more sustainable and eco friendly than they actually are. This is a profitable tactic brands can utilize to make consumers feel better about what they are purchasing.

The company I will be analyzing is a popular LA based yoga brand that preaches clean environments and clean practices. The company has a heavy social media presence and targets crowds ranging from Gen-Z to Millennials to Baby Boomers; it's a brand for anyone and everyone.

As the brand is heavily influenced on social media, they carry a large responsibility to be doing the 'right' thing. This paper will cover the suspicion around the company's credibility regarding how sustainable they actually are.

1. Problem Statement

During the analysis of my brand profile assignment, I was quickly impressed with how much effort Alo Yoga dedicates to their ethical standards and clean practices. From cultivating a 100% sweat shop free environment to powering offices and flagship stores via solar panels, their efforts were definitely noticed.

However, a thought that occurred to me was ‘why am I only finding information about their sustainable efforts on their direct site?’. I was unable to locate specific information that dives into *how* Alo Yoga is carrying out their sustainability from third party sites or threads-- even a few reddit discussions were questioning the credibility of how sustainable the brand actually claimed to be. This then raised the question of ‘is Alo Yoga participating in greenwashing?’.

A consistent statement the brand highlights is that “Alo Yoga is Humankind”. The general idea of being humankind was holding the brand to the highest eco-standards every step of the way. This included being WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production) certified and overlooking day-to-day practices in facilities to ensure ethical and human ways.

Although all of this is great, the problem I would like to investigate is the idea of greenwashing and analyzing if the Alo Yoga brand is participating in this. “Greenwashing is the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound. Greenwashing is considered an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly” (Kenton, 2020). Greenwashing attempts to capitalize on the growing demand for more eco and sustainable products. Because of the current trendiness in sustainability, I question how much of Alo’s “clean practices” are actually being held accountable.

2. **Background**

The topic of greenwashing is incredibly important especially in our society today. Because of the ‘trendiness’ sustainability currently holds, it is important to assess *what* exactly defines a brand as sustainable/ethical. What does it actually mean to be a sustainable/ethical brand?

Media is really amplifying the idea of more natural and sustainable alternatives, which in turn drives up the purchasing power. I am always wary of items that claim to be eco or made out of sustainable materials because of greenwashing. I believe that consumers should be able easily identify and prove if a brand is as sustainable as they claim to be through their own external research.

The fact that I could not find any supporting research or comments on Alo Yoga’s “clean practices” concerns me and makes me raise the question of how truthful or credible they are with their eco movement. It is important for brands and advertisers to know this information because there is so much more behind the marketing of a company that consumers do not know.

Companies market themselves as ‘green’ because “they do better when they make the consumer feel better about their purchase. The very fact that much of the “green” marketing is based on loose definitions allows for an interpretation of what the company actually means. Thus, consumers are left to determine on their own what company stands for their values. This is where it gets dirty” (Vogt, 2020).

Exemplifying loose definitions of what a sustainable brand is, is what is driving lots of suspicion in myself and many consumers. Every point Alo Yoga had made seemed very “loose” and not credible. Why is it so difficult for consumers to prove what it means for X brand to be so-called “sustainable”?

An example I read up on was regarding H&M's conscious line: "A men's green" long sleeve shirt from H&M is made of "100% organic cotton." How can something that, on average, takes about 20,000 liters of water to produce be sustainable? The simple answer is because companies are legally able to get away with blatant misrepresentation" (Vogt, 2020).

Commenting on the H&M example, Alo Yoga claims to use the best low-water dyes in hopes to eliminate wasted water consumption. For all consumers know, this could all be a blatant misrepresentation. What do low-water dyes mean? How can consumers quickly identify the difference and spot how much water is actually being saved?

Spotting if a brand is participating in greenwashing is not obvious, however, something I noticed about Alo Yoga's statements was that there were no numbers to support their claims. "If a brand releases 'conscious collections' but doesn't use facts or figures to support its claims" (Green Queen Team, 2020).

Because Alo Yoga is a whole brand and not a simple "collection" I would question why they would lie or greenwash consumers into thinking they are eco. If your whole brand and business model was primarily focused on the sustainability movement, why would you lie and take that trust/transparency away?

This topic has a lot of research to do because it is not easy to accuse a brand of greenwashing. However, for the sake of this research I do believe Alo Yoga is participating in greenwashing. This is very interesting to me as both a consumer and business/brand responsibility student because I truly love the brand and what they stand for however there is so much to question.

As a brand that was built to protect the earth's elements, I want to say that they are as authentic as they seem but you can never be too sure. Cultivating "clean practices" sounds a lot

easier than it seems and although I believe Alo Yoga is more sustainable than most athletic brands, I do believe there is a plethora of information that is not being shared because it would not support the claims the company has made.

3. Recommendations

As far as recommendations go, Alo Yoga should disclose figures behind their clean practices and show consumers how their efforts translate into bettering the environment. If a company is fully participating in efforts to decrease their carbon footprint I believe it's something worth disclosing and being transparent about. Whether the information is shared on social media platforms through curated posts, or shared through third party sites, news reports, or public threads, I truly believe it can help their brand seem more credible and sustainable.

Works Cited

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