

Print and Paper The Facts

Why challenge anti-paper environmental marketing claims?

Many service providers are urging their customers to go paperless with claims that it will “save trees”, it is “greener” or it will otherwise “protect the environment”. These “go paperless” marketing messages ignore the unique sustainable features of print on paper, for example, it comes from a renewable resource; it is recyclable; it is one of the most recycled commodities in Europe; and that a large portion of the energy used to produce paper comes from renewable biomass.

The claims also fail to meet the most basic tests for acceptable environmental marketing as outlined by Government and others. They are not specific, they are usually not backed by competent and reliable scientific evidence and are misleading because they imply that electronic communication always has less effect on the environment than printed materials. Therefore, such claims may be construed as “greenwashing” – falsely leading consumers to believe there are environmental savings when in fact there are not.

Since 2008, Two Sides has led a campaign to challenge unsubstantiated environmental marketing claims used to promote electronic services, and encourage companies to follow best practices for environmental marketing. The ongoing initiative has been resoundingly successful, with over 30 leading North American companies removing their anti-paper claims and over 80% of European companies we engaged with doing the same. Outlined below are some key facts used in our campaign.

Marketing claims like “go green, go paperless” and “go paperless, save trees” do not meet guidelines for environmental marketing established by the UK Government and the International Organization for Standardization.

UK Government Green Claims Guidance: “Legally, any claim or information in advertising and marketing (whether it is environmental or not) must be fair and not misleading... And further, that you have robust and/or scientifically accepted evidence to substantiate your claim if ever challenged... Ensure the evidence and assessments forming the basis of the claim is objective and of a kind that can be fully traced and referenced. You should consider the way a reasonable consumer would interpret your claim to ensure you can justify those interpretations with good evidence.”¹

International Organization for Standardization: All self-declared environmental claims shall be: “accurate and not misleading; substantiated and verified; unlikely to result in misinterpretation... Vague or non-specific claims, which broadly imply some environmental benefit, shall not be used. Examples of such claims include ‘environmentally friendly’, ‘green’, ‘nature’s friend’.”²

Claims like “save trees” create a false impression that forests are a finite resource, being destroyed. In truth, forests are a renewable resource that is continuously replenished using sustainable forest management practices.

Since the 1990s, the forest area in Europe, North America, Caucasus and Central Asia has been increasing steadily. Forest area in the region has grown by 25 million hectares over the last 20 years (a size equivalent to the surface of the United Kingdom). In addition to forest area, the volume of wood in pan-European forests is growing - by over 430 million cubic meters every year (which corresponds to a 1 cubic meter ring around the globe) due to the expansion of the forest area and increases in stock levels.³



Avoiding the use of wood is not the way to protect forests for the long term.

While saving trees and protecting forests is a widely shared goal, avoiding the use of wood is not necessarily the way to get there. It is precisely the areas of the world that consume the least wood that continue to experience the greatest forest loss. Continued use of paper and other wood products may be a key factor in maintaining a forested landscape for future generations. This realization is reflected in today’s third-party forest certification systems that aim to offer a market-based system for supporting the sustainable growth, harvesting, and consumption of forest products.⁴

The income landowners receive for trees grown on their land is an important incentive to maintain their land in forests.

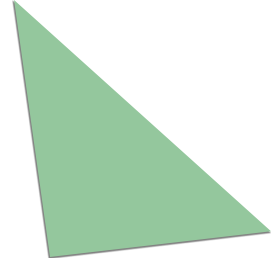
This is especially important in locales facing economic pressure to convert forestland to non-forest uses.⁵ If the market for their wood products is lost, there is little

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incentive for owners to maintain their land in forest. 99.9% of company owned and company leased forests in Europe are certified by independent certification schemes.⁶ Far from causing deforestation, the demand for sustainably sourced paper promotes responsibly managed forests, which provide many environmental and social benefits.

In Europe, most of the virgin wood fibre used for paper-making comes from well-managed European forests.

Of the total raw materials consumed by the European paper industry, paper for recycling represented 45% and wood pulp 40%; non-fibrous materials made up most of the rest. More than 90% of the wood used comes from Europe. 64.6% of wood, chips and saw-milling by-products delivered to European mills are forest management certified by independent forest certification schemes.⁷

The full impacts of converting to e-media are often not properly considered and sometimes completely ignored.

The direct impact of information and communication technology (ICT) products and services replacing paper is far from negligible, and the trade-off between the two “technologies” depends on conditions such as use frequency, source of energy, end-of-life management of the products, etc.⁸ Over one billion internet-connected devices were sold worldwide in 2012.⁹ In Europe, the total collection rate [of all electronic and electrical items] achieved so far is around 37%.¹⁰ This compares to a European paper recycling rate of 71.7% in 2013.¹¹

Unsubstantiated environmental marketing claims like “go paperless, go Green” are damaging to the economy and threaten jobs.

In fact, the graphic industry in the 28 European Member States comprises some 121,000 companies and employs around 714,000 people for a turnover of about €88 billion. The industry throughout Europe consists mainly of small enterprises, as more than 90% of the graphic companies employ less than 20 persons.¹² In addition, the European paper industry provides jobs to about 185,000 people and contributes €75 billion to the European economy.¹³

The misleading nature of “go green, go paperless” environmental claims is not lost on the consumer.

Consumer surveys in the U.S.^{14, 15} and UK¹⁶ found that:

- 50% or more of respondents don't believe, feel misled or question “go green – go paperless” claims.
- 83% agreed that e-billing and e-statements are being promoted to save cost.
- 80% did not think it was appropriate for companies to cite environmentalism when it is not their real motive.
- Over 70% believe that print and paper is a sustainable way of communicating when produced and used responsibly.

1. [DEFRA, 2011](#)

2. [International Organization for Standardization \(ISO\), 2012](#)

3. [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2011](#)

4. [Dovetail Partners, 2014](#)

5. [WBCSD, 2011](#)

6. [CEPI, 2013](#)

7. [CEPI, 2013](#)

8. [Arnfolk, Peter, 2010](#)

9. [The Telegraph, 2013](#)

10. [European Environment Agency, 2013](#)

11. [European Recovered Paper Council, 2014](#)

12. [InterGraf, 2010](#)

13. [CEPI, 2013](#)

14. [Two Sides N.A., 2013](#)

15. [Envelope Manufacturers Assoc. Foundation, 2014](#)

16. [Two Sides UK, 2013](#)

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