

INCREASING OPTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHOICES

Ingredients | Consumers are primed to buy more sustainable products if given the option. Genomatica's new study shows consumer and sustainability disconnect. What does this imply for brand owners? ▶





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“INSIGHTS BACKED UP BY LIFE CYCLE ANALYSIS HELPS TO BUILD CONSUMER TRUST IN PERSONAL CARE BRANDS”

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Though consumers are changing both their lifestyle and purchasing habits to reduce their carbon footprint, many feel that they are not doing enough. A new survey by our biotech company put a spotlight on the consumer mindset and their changing preference for products and habits that support a more sustainable lifestyle.

As a company that creates commercial bio-based processes to make widely-used chemicals that enable better, more sustainable everyday products, our company wanted to learn more about consumers’ attitudes towards sustainability. Our survey was conducted in July 2019 and included 1,000 consumers¹; the following highlights are what we discovered.

41% of consumers feel worried, guilty or ashamed about their personal level of sustainability, though a majority, 58%, engage in eco-friendly habits such as recycling and 34% buy local products and produce.

95% of Americans say sustainability is a worthy goal, but many are finding it difficult to put into practice. Why is this so? Convenience, lack of awareness and availability are top obstacles to sustainability according to nearly half of consumers.

Sustainability, a global issue

Americans agree that sustainability is imperative. Sustainability seems to be one of the few things both conservatives and liberals can agree on; 70% of Republicans

CONSUMERS

are changing their product preferences and habits to support a more **sustainable lifestyle**

41% of consumers feel worried, guilty or ashamed about their personal level of sustainability

In spite of **95% of Americans approving** of sustainability as a worthy goal, many are finding it difficult to put into practice

Most consumers are making **lifestyle changes** and creating eco-friendly habits

and 80% of Democrats in the survey say that sustainability is important and that they’re trying to make sustainable choices. However, 36% of Democrats in contrast to 26% of Republicans are more likely to think of themselves as more sustainable than most.

When it comes to age groups, 78% of Millennials are most likely to believe sustainability is important and to make sustainable choices, followed closely by 76% of the Boomers and 71% of Gen X, with 69% of Gen Z coming in last. As far as accountability, 28% of Gen Z and 20% of Millennials say sustainability is a good goal but that’s for someone else to make happen.

On trend: Sustainable living

Most consumers, though, are making lifestyle changes and creating eco-friendly habits. Almost 75% of those surveyed currently turn off lights when not in the room to save electricity. Another 38% are taking shorter showers to reduce water consumption. And one-third of the surveyed consumers are trying to cut meat from their diets to support less carbon-intensive agricultural practices.

58% say they regularly recycle; 34% claim they drive less and 36% avoid air travel in order to be eco-friendlier.

Altering methods of transportation, energy consumption and diet as an attempt to reduce an individual’s use of the Earth’s natural



One of the biggest obstacles that keeps people from purchasing eco-friendly products is not knowing which ones are sustainable



Consumers are surprised by fossil origins

resources have become tenets of a sustainable lifestyle which, because of its universal adoption, is not a mainstream trend but a cultural shift.

Rise of conscious consumerism

Part of living a sustainable lifestyle, aside from the usual calls for less energy waste and more public transportation, is being a conscious consumer. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the effects of their purchasing preferences and are focusing on a product’s environmental impact, paying attention to its ingredients and source origin.

Consumers are primed to buy more sustainable products if given

While 56% of consumers look at the ingredients label when shopping, **3 out of 4** of those label-lookers **don’t know** what half of the ingredients are

Sustainability is the one thing the **young and old**, conservative and liberal can agree on

the option, with 74% of consumers agreeing they would adopt sustainable plastic bags, face moisturisers (68%), stretchy athletic wear (67%) and lipsticks (61%) if price and quality stayed the same.

Knowing what makes a product sustainable

Nearly half (48%) report that convenience, lack of awareness and availability are top obstacles to buying more sustainable products. For almost one fourth, not knowing what products are sustainable is the biggest obstacle that keeps them from purchasing eco-friendly.

Even though consumers are motivated to do better, understanding the sustainability of products can be challenging. That starts with the basics: 55% are surprised to learn that some of the ingredients in everyday products such as water bottles, stretchy workout clothes and certain baby sunscreen lotions are derived from fossil fuels, like crude oil, rather than being naturally-sourced from plants; and 71% feel “bothered” or “disgusted” when they learn of these origins. While 56% of consumers say they look at the ingredients label when shopping, 3 out of 4 of those label-lookers don’t know what half of the ingredients are.

Back up the claims

Sustainability is the one thing the young and old, conservative and liberal can agree on; consumers across the board are becoming more environmentally aware. Companies should take heed by taking action across their value chain by engaging with suppliers and innovating their product line to reflect the eco-values of the consumer. In addition, brands need to communicate their sustainability claims clearly.

To help beauty brands communicate more transparently, it is useful to engage with partners along the supply chain to substantiate their products and services with verified valuations provided by reputable third-parties. Products such as **Brontide** natural butylene glycol have undergone a **Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)**. This is a systematic, third-party analysis that produces comparative data allowing brands to make verifiable and transparent sustainability claims. These systematic evaluations of the production process span from cradle to gate. Verifiable insights provided by LCAs, quantifiable and rooted in science, help build consumer trust in personal care brands.

Climate change and resource depletion

We know that climate change and resource depletion are real and their impact on our ecosystem can be devastating. People are adopting actions for sustainable living and desire to do more to reduce their environmental impact by altering their lifestyle. These changing perceptions of consumers towards sustainability coupled with the growing popularity of eco-friendly products is fuelling the innovation of products and services that will support sustainable lifestyles for generations to come. □



25% of consumers don’t know what products are sustainable

photos: Genomatica, Olesia Bilkei (lead photo), Monticello (products), Shutterstock.com

¹Source: Consumers Agree: It’s Too Hard to be Sustainable, <https://www.genomatica.com/consumers-surprised-everyday-products-made-from-crude-oil>

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