



# health Shades of Green

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“Green” is talked about at personal as well as at business level. The market for green goods and services is large and growing. No one knows the exact number because the market is based on a psychographic rather than a demographic. That is, it is behavior based instead of socio-economically which is a measurable demographic like sex, age, education, income and politics.

The green market is also elusive in that it encompasses many different behaviors: product buying habits, child care and the way we live in our homes. This makes it difficult to have a metric system that could encompass all the different ways in which a person could go green. It becomes a little more complicated when different micro movements, such as the slow food movement which is about enriching your life by buying food directly from a local community farm and savoring the experience of buying, making and sharing it family and friends; and the simplicity movement which is about simplifying the life voluntarily by not being attached to or having so many possessions which also has the effect of reducing resource use.

Those who define themselves or others as part of the metro- spiritual movement see their purchases of environment friendly goods and practicing yoga and meditation as a way to a better world. Parents want to raise their children without contaminated food and in a pollution free environment. New movements tangentially related to and pushing the green movement are springing up all the time. Studies are woefully inadequate when trying to get a handle on this burgeoning market.

The American Association of retired Persons (AARP) and others have identified green behavior on a color chart of brown to deep brown, where dark brown represents the people that are not concerned about the environment and the dark green, those that are deeply concerned about the environment. The reality is that no person is perfectly green- people behave in shades of green. The definitions and the color choices are subjective for each type of consumer on the spectrum. Some analysts believe the deep green and light green consumers make

up one quarter to one third of the adult population of the U.S.

There is evidence that light green are moving towards becoming darker green , light browns are moving toward becoming khaki, and so on. The brown end of the spectrum is shifting greener as people are inundated with information about green and green technologies becoming more accessible and affordable. Life triggers also have an effect on the movement along this behavior spectrum. Someone who has got a young baby and may have been light brown suddenly jumps a couple of shades greener to light green as he or she tries to protect the new baby from toxins in food and plastic bottles.

Realizing that people must learn or relearn green behaviors gives us an insight into how to go about greening our organizations, products and services. Most people are moving along the spectrum to lead greener lives at homes and at work. Some will resist it today, but they may not do that tomorrow. The same is true in business.

Organic and natural food was a niche market a decade ago when USDA launched their Organic Grown Seal. Since then, the organic food market has grown at an approximate rate of 20 percent each year, many times faster than the market for conventional food. Organic food has expanded from the corner in the neighborhood natural food stores to a common place feature in every major and minor grocery shop. In addition to the food stores, most of the mainstream retailers, including big-box and department stores, have added green to their product offerings.

In 2007, Home Depot began offering Eco options in their stores, specially labeled section of 2,500 products meeting a predetermined list of green criteria that reduced negative environmental impacts. Wal-Mart began to earnestly and vigorously green many different aspects of its business in 2005. Moreover the American culture bellwether, Hollywood has also turned on the green as many celebrities have become eco-conscious actors making a difference in their lifestyle.

**Leonardo DiCaprio** is a strong defender of the environment. He has his own site to inform others of environmental issues since 2000 and has been a Board Member of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Global Green USA since 2004. **Cameron Diaz**, model turned actress, **Robert Redford** and **George Clooney** are well known for their green lifestyle. Hollywood actor **Robert Redford** was named the EPA Climate Protection Award winner in 2007. He has served as a leading voice for the environmental movement to promote the preservation, restoration and improvement of the natural environment.

Even the travel sector is not immune to green influence. Ecotourism, defined as responsible travel to natural areas without degrading the environment, is on the rise. It includes outdoor camping in remote areas as well as luxurious eco-lodge and small ships that sail to hard to reach locales like Antarctica. Ecotourism also ensures that the money that travelers bring into the areas stays local.

All this shows that some of largest business in the country and the world are turning their time, attention and capital to green. Initially it occurred sporadically in a few business sectors, but now green is everywhere and is impossible to ignore.

Here is a brief summary of the various shades of green consumers with their corresponding behavior:

**Deep green-** The consumers are the greenest on the planet earth. They understand the need of green, and their purchases matched their values.

**Light green-** They have started down the green path and are on their way to living a green life. Some of their purchases and behavior are already earth friendly. Their hue of green will deepen as they get more knowledge about all things earth friendly.

**Khaki green-** They think green some of the time and are just beginning to connect their shopping habits and daily living habits to become earth friendly. Saving energy and money drives their greenest purchase and behavior.

**Light brown-** They are not yet conscious about living or buying green but are starting to be influenced, even though subconsciously, by the culture at large about making earth friendly choices.

**Brown-** These consumers are skeptical of the environmental movement and its values. Based on their principles and personality, they will not make any earth friendly choices even if they save money or the choices are good for their family.