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# GO GREEN MARKET RESEARCH



## PERCEPTION, AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE OF GREEN KITCHEN CLEANERS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 5, 2009, qualitative research was conducted to learn more about consumer behavior and attitudes regarding green kitchen cleaners. This research focused on the natural kitchen cleaner “*Wild Orange & Cedar Spice*” from *Seventh Generation*. The research was conducted with students, mostly of Hispanic origin, from Florida State University (Tallahassee, Florida) ranging in age from 22 to 30 years.

The following were the objectives of the research:

1. Understand the meaning of a green lifestyle for young consumers.
2. Understand the meaning of green kitchen cleaners for these consumers.
3. Understand what attributes green kitchen cleaners should have.
4. Understand the general perception, awareness and acceptance of a green kitchen cleaner from *Seventh Generation*.

This young group of mostly Hispanic students seems to be very interested in a green lifestyle and wants to be “green” or lead a greener lifestyle but does not know how to effectively do that within their current means. They feel that they can do only a little at this time, due to their current financial status. This seems to be a generation that is willing to step up to the plate in order to make a difference for the next generation if targeted correctly.

When positioning a green product the focus should be on how a green lifestyle or the use of green products can lead to a healthy, natural environment. The group expressed that a green lifestyle makes them feel better about themselves because they know they will improve life for future generations. They seem to be eager to learn and would like to be shown how to live a happy, healthy, green lifestyle while on a low budget. To effectively target this group, commercials and advertisements should show that people do not have to spend a lot of money in order to lead a green, happy and healthier lifestyle. It should portray young people who made the switch to a greener lifestyle and show how it positively changed their life.

The group was confused about the environmental benefits of green cleaners compared to their non green counterparts. To reach out to this group of Hispanic consumers the environmental benefits of green cleaners needs to be more explicitly advertised. The parents of this mostly Hispanic group traditionally use *Clorox* or *Lysol*. From advertising



they learned that it kills 99.9% of the bacteria. That has become their standard. It is therefore very important to this group that a green cleaning product can do the same while being green. This message can be communicated through more specific labeling and advertisement. The message should justify why the attributes of a green cleaner balance the benefits of non-green counterparts.

Several attributes were listed as important for green cleaners: “affordability”, “fresh scent”, “effective” (kills germs), “truly green” and “safe to use”. Some of the respondents already use a green cleaner but none of the respondents used the green kitchen cleaner from *Seventh Generation*. This group of consumers is not very familiar with green cleaning products and does not want to spend a lot of time comparing products. For the decision to buy this cleaner, the majority said to rely on advice from friends or family. This finding could be used to help advertise this product. This can be accomplished by showing the green cleaning product used by a mother figure or somebody they can relate to. It should show how green cleaning can become part of a tradition while making the future for their children and grandchildren brighter.

As mentioned above, this group of young consumers is on a low budget. Therefore, the product should be advertised as being inexpensive or offered at the same price as their non green counterparts, or as yielding equivalent value. Incentives such as coupons or promotional sales will facilitate the switch to a green cleaner.

After showing the kitchen cleaner “*Wild Orange & Cedar Spice*” from *Seventh Generation*, it was found that scent preference differs and that the respondents like to have a choice. Some liked a more neutral scent while others liked a more fruity scent. Availability of multiple scents for the same green cleaning products is likely to attract more of these consumers. *Seventh Generation* will also increase its popularity with this group of consumers if they change the package from a white plastic to a clear (i.e. transparent) bottle. It was found to be important to see what is inside and how much is left. In addition, offering refills will give *Seventh Generation* a more competitive edge since it helps the consumer to reduce waste.



## INTRODUCTION

Green Market Research is a new and emerging field. It connects environmentally conscious consumers with companies, government, political institutions and environmental organizations. It helps retailers to tailor their merchandise for optimized public acceptance of green products.

Environmentally conscious consumers often have difficulties finding the green products they are looking for. Research shows that demand for greener products is still increasing even in a down economy. Once consumer confidence in the economy increases consumer spending on green products and services will likely increase even more.

The purpose of this qualitative research is to research behavior and attitudes of young Hispanic consumers regarding green kitchen cleaners. This research focused on the natural kitchen cleaner "*Wild Orange & Cedar Spice*" from *Seventh Generation*. Young Hispanic consumers are a fast growing consumer group in the U.S.A. and are important to *Seventh Generation*. This group represents a significant market and an opportunity for company growth if these consumers are targeted correctly.



## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research consisted of the following:

1. Understand the meaning of a green lifestyle for young consumers.
2. Understand the meaning of green kitchen cleaners for these consumers.
3. Understand what attributes green kitchen cleaners should have.
4. Understand the general perception, awareness and acceptance of a green kitchen cleaner from *Seventh Generation*.

## METHODS

In order to research the above listed objectives one focus group session was conducted with seven students from Florida State University (Tallahassee, Florida) ranging in age from 22 to 30 years (mean is 23 years). The group consisted of six women and one man. The group was mainly Hispanic with one American woman. Respondents were from Venezuela, Peru, Chile, U.S.A, Costa Rica/Nicaragua (born in Costa Rica), and U.S.A from either Peruvian/Colombian or Cuban-American ancestors. The session took place in Crawfordville, Florida on Saturday December 5 from 2:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.

## LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of qualitative research is that its generalizability is unknown. The respondents in this research were young mostly Hispanic students from Florida State University. They may be representative of the population they were drawn from, but because they were not randomly selected and because of the small sample size their representativeness is unknown. However the outcome of this research shows valuable insights in Hispanic consumer behavior and attitude towards green kitchen cleaners for the age group from 22-30 years which can be used to better position green kitchen cleaners.



## FINDINGS

### THE MEANING OF A GREEN LIFESTYLE

When asked what comes to mind when you think of a green lifestyle the respondents reported recycling, buying organic food, hybrid cars, solar energy and an energy efficient house. The respondents reported that they were not raised with a green lifestyle. They remarked that a lot of celebrities on TV try to increase awareness for green living. To them it was seen as a new thing, something of the future.

### REASONS TO BE GREEN

Important reasons to be green were: not to pollute, reduce waste and, to be seen as environmentally conscious. Recycling was on the top of the list because it was found to be an easy thing to do to help preserve the earth, to reduce the carbon footprint and help build a better world for future generations. It was mentioned several times that it is important to preserve the earth for their children and grandchildren.

It was expressed that hybrid cars are the most advertised green product and are seen as the most popular way to go green. The advantage of a green lifestyle is to know that you do something positive for the earth. They realized that their life will not change directly but knowing that you make something better for the next generation is seen as important. By living green, your life is not going to change; “you still eat and drive but know that you do something better”. Even doing a little bit still counts. It was felt to be important that everybody takes care of the earth and should do their part to make it a better world. “If we want to have kids it will definitely affect that generation.”

### EFFORT OF A GREEN LIFESTYLE

A green lifestyle is seen as something which takes effort but it was considered important to do the things that are within their means. They had experienced that other people might think why do it a little if you cannot do it all (driving a hybrid car, recycling, living in an energy efficient house), but they are trying to do just the little things such as recycling. Recycling is what most people do because it is relatively easy compared to other green life styles. Most apartment complexes for example have now recycle bins.



### *AFFORDABILITY*

The group expressed that you do have to have the money to live a green lifestyle. It is expensive to buy hybrid cars or even buy organic food. A green lifestyle was not felt as their number one priority because they are still students and can only do what is within their means at this moment. If they had more money they probably would invest more into a green lifestyle. The hope expressed is to find inexpensive ways for a green lifestyle in the future.

They said that once they would have a steady income and their living standards would improve they would be willing to invest more into a green lifestyle such as a hybrid car and eating organic food. Another reason for not being able to be as green as they would like to be, was the amount of control over it. Students typically rent a house or share an apartment. This was seen as an important reason not to invest in energy efficient products for the house.

### *NON-TANGIBLE REWARDS*

Other advantages of a green lifestyle that were mentioned are the non-tangible rewards such as the personal reward of buying organic products. Most green products are also “fair trade” products which make you feel good about yourself knowing that you are also being fair with people that produce them while the products are good for the environment.

It was agreed that something needs to change in order to improve the future. However the group expressed that it is difficult to change behavior (to a greener life style) if the rewards are not tangible; “you have to do it for yourself”. It was mentioned that monetary incentives such as tax breaks could help change people’s behavior.

★ For this mostly Hispanic group a green life style is something they would like to be part of at some part of their lives but they do not know how to effectively do that within their current means. For now just doing a little at a time was felt the best they can do. This seems to be a generation that is willing to step up to the plate in order to make a difference for the next generation if targeted right.

### **THE MEANING OF A PERSON WITH A GREEN LIFE STYLE**

When the respondents were asked what images come to mind when you think of person with a green lifestyle, several words or images came up:

- Happy
- Healthy
- Nature
- Responsible



### *HAPPY AND HEALTHY*

A person with a green lifestyle was thought to be happy, living with lots of trees around them or “someone who is surrounded by nature”. Other descriptions were “new age happy” or someone who does everything they can in a green way within their limits. The person is healthy because of the green lifestyle, eats organic food, creates a better environment, and lives in a solar powered house with lots of windows.

### *SURROUNDED BY NATURE*

Besides being surrounded by nature, the person with a green lifestyle would grow an indoor garden to grow organic food themselves.

### *RESPONSIBLE*

People with a green lifestyle are envisioned to have a high disposable income. They think about the future and the effects of their actions, and feel responsible for the decisions they are making. This person is seen as someone who recycles everything and who drives a hybrid or energy efficient car. The person is not selfish and his/ her actions benefit future generations which will make the person feel good.

★ When positioning a green product the focus should be on how a green lifestyle or using green products can lead to a healthy, natural environment which ultimately makes the person happy because you improve life for future generations. It should show that the consumer does not have to be rich in order to live a happy, healthy, green lifestyle and it should also show how to reach this goal.

### **THE MEANING OF GREEN KITCHEN CLEANERS**

Participants in the focus group indicated being familiar with a couple of green products. Almost half of the group reported using green cleaners on a regular basis. The products *Green Works* (bought at Wal-Mart) and *Method* (Target) are the best known green cleaners for this group. *Green Works* was used by two respondents and *Method* by one respondent. The green cleaners found in the *GreenWise* section at Publix were mentioned as another source.

### *TAKES MORE EFFORT*

When asked what comes to mind when you think of green cleaners the general response was that, when using green cleaners, it takes more effort to get the same result. The general consensus within this group was that green cleaners do not clean as well as their non-green counterparts and that more time is needed to clean the house. One respondent



gave an example of a *Green Works* floor cleaner she uses. With the regular non-green cleaner she only has to go over the floor once but with *Green Works* it is necessary to go over it three times to get the same feel of cleanliness.

#### NO TOXIC FUMES

The green cleaner *Method* was preferred by one respondent because of the variety of scents. The scents to choose from are fruity. It was felt that because of the fruity scent that it has fewer chemicals while the product still worked well.

The group generally indicated liking that the green products do not have harsh chemicals so that windows do not have to be opened in order not to inhale the toxic fumes. Green products should be associated with a green cause and should not have chemicals which harm your health. Organic products do not smell like bleach, and this was seen as more child and pet friendly which was found to be very important to the group. The green products are portrayed as being better for pets and children. Everybody was in agreement that they did not want to harm pets or children with harsh chemicals.

On the other hand the strong scent from *Clorox*/ bleach was associated with clean. They are used to their mothers or parents using bleach/ *Clorox*. This is the scent they grew up with and are used to and know through tradition. One respondent said "it [*Clorox*] smells clean". Green cleaners are thought to not clean well enough and not to kill all germs. The backup cleaner the respondents use is *Clorox* or *Lysol* which was referred to by several respondents as the "strong products" to do the deep cleaning. Several times it was mentioned that when you use *Clorox* you know that 99.9% of the germs are being killed. These last two brands are thought to be a little more expensive but on average they are willing to pay more for a product which gets rid of all the germs.

#### AVAILABILITY

It was seen as a disadvantage that you can buy green cleaners only at certain stores. The product *Method* for example can only be bought in Tallahassee at Target. Respondents all felt that green products should be available in their favorite (grocery) store and not in just one location or only on the internet.

#### INFORMATION

It was agreed upon that green cleaners have more pros than cons but on average the group was confused about how bad the regular cleaners are for the environmental and how much safer the green cleaners are. Some of the respondents have done some research online but most do not have a lot of time to research the issue and rely on advice from friends or family. The group reported that if they would hear from a friend who they trust that the green cleaners work and are good for the environment, they would be more willing to buy the product.



★ The respondents are not very familiar with green cleaners and rely on advice from family or friends to find out if a green cleaner is worth their investment. When advertising the green kitchen cleaner from *Seventh Generation*, the product should thus be shown as something being used by a familiar person the public can trust. This person can be a mother figure or a TV celebrity who functions as a role model. The setting should be green and the advertisement should focus on how healthy and positive this lifestyle is while showing that the green product cleans well, and gets rid of all germs. Another way to promote *Seventh Generation* is to do social network marketing. *Seventh Generation* might further increase its market share if the company makes its products available in the grocery store at which this audience regularly shops.

### ATTRIBUTES GREEN KITCHEN CLEANERS SHOULD HAVE

To the question what attributes green kitchen cleaners should have the following items were listed:

- Affordable
- Fresh/ fruity/ neutral scent
- Kill germs/ be effective
- Safe to use/ truly green

#### AFFORDABLE

The most important attribute on everybody's list was that the product needs to be affordable. The product should be offered at the same price or lower than their regular cleaning product. These respondents were all students and on a low budget. Most would try a green product if they could find a coupon for it or if it would be on sale.

#### FRESH/FRUITY/NEUTRAL SCENT

Another important attribute is scent. It was found that green products in general do not seem to offer a lot of choices. *Green Works* for example does not smell. This was associated with a product that does not clean as well. An advantage of *Method* was that it has all kinds of scents (such as cucumber, lavender). *Method* smells fruity which was associated with a green, fresh scent. Another respondent reported that the product should not smell too much, she wants a neutral scent not overpowering. *Lysol* on the other hand smells too harsh for most of the respondents to use on a regular basis but it is seen as a product that cleans well. On average, a fresh, strong scent was associated with good cleaning. At the same time they had the feeling that a strong scent is harmful to their health.



### *EFFECTIVE*

High on the list is also effectiveness. The quality of the green product should be equal or better than the standard product. The respondents want a green cleaner which is good for the environment and works well at the same time. It should kill 99.9% of the germs as *Clorox* and *Lysol* advertise. Other responses were that the product should remove or dissolve stains, not just dilute them. The stain should be gone after one wipe with a cleaning tissue and you should not have to beat or rub the stain. The majority of the group wants a green cleaner to clean as well or better than the product they normally use.

### *SAFE TO USE*

The green product should be truly green, not harmful to a person's health or pets, be effective and not contribute to global warming. This should be clearly labeled on the product itself.

One respondent reported that to her the most important attribute is that the product is biodegradable. She had learned that *Green Works* is biodegradable and that is why she chose to use the product. To her the fact that the product does not clean as well is less important and she just uses more of the product to clean the surface well enough.

The group mentioned again that they do not like to inhale the fumes from the traditional cleaners, it was seen as unhealthy. One respondent remarked that when she used *Clorox* or *Lysol* she would get headaches and feel bad after cleaning while she would not after using a green product. Another respondent mentioned that she does not have to use gloves when she uses a green product (*Green Works* or *Method*).

★ At several moments of the discussion respondents came back to the same topics: green cleaners should smell fresh which is associated with clean. While the green cleaner should be more natural or less toxic, at the same time it should look and smell like the products they are accustomed to using. The respondents want a product that shows them that it kills bacteria. This can be accomplished through correct labeling and advertisement. The product should furthermore be inexpensive or be offered at the same price as their non-green counterparts. Coupons or sales will help to market these green products.

## **PERCEPTION, AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE OF A GREEN KITCHEN CLEANER FROM SEVENTH GENERATION.**

Respondents were asked what they think of when they hear the following names:

### **Clorox**

Everybody in the group reported that they have known *Clorox* all their life. It cleans well, has a strong scent, has been around for a long time. In their eyes, *Clorox* is part of a tradition or their culture. This is expressed by the following statements:



- “My mother (or parents) use it all the time. I know it will disinfect. “
- “If I want to clean deep I go to *Clorox*. *Clorox* is a multipurpose cleaner, it cleans clothes, the kitchen, bathroom, I use it for everything. “
- “During a cholera epidemic in my home country (Peru) the government advised to put a drop of *Clorox* in the drinking water, so I know it is safe. “
- “At a daycare center where I used to work, we cleaned the toys with a drop of *Clorox* in the water to sanitize them.”

### **Ecover**

The group had not heard of the name or product *Ecover* before. They had a hard time with the name. One mentioned that it sounded like somebody’s name, another read it as an environmentally friendly blanket and a third person as something related to the internet similar to e-mail. After some more thought they could see how it could relate to eco-friendliness. It reminded them of ecology and trees but they did not really see how the product could be related to cleaning.

### **Seventh Generation**

*Seventh Generation* was also an unfamiliar name to the group. About half the respondents thought they had seen the product before, some thought they had read about it on the internet, others had seen it at *Fresh Market* or *Publix*. None of the respondents had used the product before.

When they heard of the name *Seventh Generation* they thought of the future or even space. Seventh was found to represent a good number because of the number seven is mentioned in the bible. The seventh referred in their opinion to the next generation or to the one of your grandchildren. It was mentioned that the name was too long for a product and it was felt that it does not give you an immediate idea of what the product is which was important in their opinion.

After showing the *Seventh Generation* green kitchen cleaner “*Wild Orange & Spice*”, a 32fl.oz (946 ml) plastic white bottle with spray nozzle, (see Figure below) the following was reported:





### SCENT

There were several opinions about the scent of this product. Some remarked that the scent of the product is not strong; it has a pleasant scent, smells clean, and smells fresh or fruity. Another person remarked that the fruity scent reminds her of food and she does not want a scent that is related to food because she thought it might attract insects. The next person added that she liked a more natural scent which is not artificial. The last person responded that the product does not smell so good and smells more than *Clorox* which was associated with harsh chemicals.

### PACKAGING

The packaging was considered to be a problem because you cannot see what is inside. They like to see clear packaging similar to *Green Works*. A clear plastic bottle was considered to look greener. One person added that the product looks more like something you would use for camping but not for cleaning. Also important for them was the availability of refills. Other research also shows that people who buy green cleaners like to reduce waste and therefore tend to look for products that offer refills. Furthermore the respondents mentioned that the white plastic bottle does not look truly green. However, the fact that package is recycled plastic was considered a plus.

### CONSISTENCY

On average the consistency of the product was considered to be good. It looked similar to the cleaning products they are already using.

### COLOR

The color is clear which was thought to be more eco-friendly. Other products which add colors/additives were considered bad for the environment and health. A clear liquid was thought to be more natural or "from nature".

### LABEL

The statement on the label from the great law of the Iroquois Confederacy: "in our every deliberation we must consider the impact of our decision on the next seven generations." was found fascinating as it explained why the name *Seventh Generation* was chosen.

The respondents remarked that the label had some conflicting information. It states that the product is safe and effective, non-toxic, does not create harsh fumes which was considered positive but also that it contains hydrogen peroxide. The group was unsure if hydrogen peroxide was good for the environment or not and would have liked this to be explained. Preservation of the environment is important and it should be stated on the label of a product. The respondents liked the information on the label about how the use of this product will prevent chlorine from entering the environment. But they did not exactly know what that means and why this was considered positive. This information



was considered incomplete and caused them to think that the product was not 100% green. It was then questioned why this product should be bought instead of the product they are already using.

### *WILLINGNESS TO TRY THE PRODUCT*

When asked if they would try the product in the next month the following was reported:

- The respondents liked the fact that the product claims to be better for the environment but would like to get more information on why and how this product is better for the environment. “Preventing chlorine from going into the environment entices me, makes me feel better”.

It was expressed that they would have to do more research and find out more about the company and product before they would buy the product. The general feeling was that they did not want to put a lot of effort in it so the information should be readily available.

- They would like to be able to buy different size bottles and refills to reduce the amount of plastic used. *Green Works* and *Method* do offer refills which is what they like about those products or as one respondent stated: “Offering refills makes more sense.”
- Clear packaging instead of white plastic would make the product more attractive to this group so they can see how much is left of the product.
- They would like to see written on the package that the product attacks grease and germs.
- If a friend or family tells them it is really good they would more easily try it. The product should be accessible at the store they regularly shop at.
- The scent of the product is very important to the group. Therefore the group would prefer a green kitchen cleaner with a variety of scents.
- The respondents stated that price was their main selection criterion, then scent, and then packing. Some respondents said they would be willing to pay a little more if less of the product is needed to attain the same cleaning power. On average they thought they might try the product if the product is offered for the same or lower price than the other green cleaners. Other incentives such as a coupon or sale would also help sell the product.

If the average price is around \$3.60 a bottle that was considered to be okay since the product was offered in a large bottle. If the product was less expensive than their regular kitchen cleaner they could try it out and make sure it works without



wasting too much money. It was stated that they all are on a set income and therefore “try to get the cheap way out, we also have other priorities”. With more income they would be more flexible and be more ecosystem friendly.

The respondents do think they will change their cleaning behavior once they earn a higher income. To choose a green cleaner was also found to be easier if you live alone. In a smaller place you would have to use less of the cleaners and would have to invest less. If you have roommates they also might force you to use other products.

★ The most important criterion to select a green kitchen cleaner for the respondents is price, then scent and then packaging. This group will therefore be more tempted to buy the green kitchen cleaner from *Seventh Generation* if the company offers coupons or promotional sales.

The respondents are not very familiar with green cleaning products and do not want to spend a lot of time on researching the green products. They instead rely heavily on friends and family for information. For this reason, in addition to advertising this product as explained above, the environmental advantages of the green kitchen cleaner from *Seventh Generation* should be clearly labeled on the product itself. The label shows a lot of information but is not always completely clear. The label should show how and why it contributes to a cleaner, healthier and happier environment. It should also be more explicit in why preventing chlorine from going into the environment is better. The ingredients on the label should be described and it should be explained why these are better for the environment compared to the ingredients used in standard kitchen cleaners. The product label should also list how effective it is in killing germs.

*Seventh Generation* will also gain popularity for this segment of the market if they changed the package to a clear bottle so consumers can see what is inside and how much is left. In addition, refills to make the product more environmentally friendly and offering the product with different scents will entice this group of mostly Hispanic consumers.



## APPENDIX A. DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Discussion guide is available upon request.