How are detergent manufacturers rising to this challenge?

Worldwide, manufacturers are striving to meet increasing consumer demands for new detergents that use less packaging, wash at lower temperatures and clean effectively on shorter cycles and rinse using less water. But, apart from reducing environmental impact, a 'green approach' makes sound business sense.

We know that, in the emerging markets of China, India and South America, consumers are much more likely to base purchasing decisions on the environmental, social or ethical characteristics of a brand, because a 'green positioning' is brand shorthand for quality and credibility*. And, specifically in India, the high prevalence of hand-washing makes natural ingredients more valued by consumers because they are considered harmless to the skin.

Sustainability is increasingly important for consumers. Over two thirds of consumers worldwide place significant importance on reducing unnecessary packaging, and a similar number say that other aspects of packaging such as recyclability and reusability are also important to them**.

But 'green behaviour' isn't the sole responsibility of the consumer. Manufacturers are increasingly compelled to take serious account of their own environmental performance, all the way through the product lifecycle - and it's no longer enough just to say that you care about the environment, you have to be able to stand close, detailed scrutiny from increasingly demanding consumers. The cleaning industry is rising to the challenge and progress is being made towards improving energy efficiency. Members of the American Cleaning Institute showed a 9% energy reduction in cleaning product production as well as a 7% decrease in Greenhouse Gas Emissions has been achieved, although with slight variation from year to year(2009-11).***

*Marketing; Why do developing markets care more about brands and ethical messages than us?
**Datamonitor - consumer and innovation trends in Laundry care
*** American Cleaning Institute – Sustainability Report 2013
1. Green for 'good'
Consumers frequently state personal rather than global benefits of making 'green
decisions'. 45% of US consumers believe that green goods are safer than conventional
alternatives - and 1 in 5 say they choose green products to protect the health & safety of
themselves and their families1. The picture is similar in China. Partly due to food safety
concerns, and partly due to high-profile foreign brands marketing their green credentials,
terms like “fair trade”, “environmentally friendly” and “organic” are now perceived as a
much broader proxy for a product's quality, safety and credibility2.

2. Women closing the 'green gap'
In Far East, the gap between consumers 'green-claims' and actual sustainable behaviour,
is closing - with women leading the way. In China 83% of people aged 30 and 59 said
that “green/environmentally friendly” is an important purchasing criteria - with women
found to be more environmentally aware than men3. And as three quarters of Chinese
women say that they're the ones who control the family purse strings4, it makes them a
very influential audience.

3. Expose yourself
It's become commonplace for brands to state their green ambitions. But in a world where
transparency is fast-becoming a hygiene factor in consumer purchasing decisions, brands
must now go beyond platitudes and be prepared to reveal unambiguous evidence of their
performance, products and positioning5. Increasingly consumers expect brands to prove
their ethical, environmental and ecological credentials. And in this new age of openness,
'total exposure' will be viewed as a badge of confidence and pride.  For example 69% of
US consumers are more likely to buy from a brand that talks publicly about its CSR
(Corporate Social Responsibility) results, versus the 31% who would purchase from a
brand that talks about its CSR mission and purpose6

4. Turn off the tap
Worldwide, water usage is becoming a hot, consumer-facing topic. Concerns for
minimising water consumption has seen growth in sales of water-conserving shower
heads, toilets and faucets, and spawned a new generation of energy & water-efficient
appliances7. In an age of growing eco-expectations, consumers will continue to demand
responsible behaviour from brands. So companies will be compelled to find ways to
conserve water and change their consumption habits8 so that they can align more closely
with consumer values..In the US Bosch, Kohler, Lowe’s and P&G are taking the lead in
educating consumers and have joined forces with the EPA to address the water
awareness issue in the “wasting water is weird” campaign. www.wastingwaterisweird.com
Together, we can inspire cleaner ideas.