

UNIVERSITÀ PER STRANIERI DI PERUGIA

Facoltà di Lingua e Cultura Italiana



Dissertation on International Communication

Student: Luisa Toppan

Graduation Ceremony: February 8th, 2005

English Version Summary



TITLE:

**ADVERTISING & SUSTAINABILITY . PARADOX OR
NEW PARADIGM?**

(PERSPECTIVE . PURPOSE - TREND)

ABSTRACT

My dissertation aims to focus on the relationship between advertising and sustainability in the last decade and the emerging values for consumers therein.

The first section introduces the idea of sustainability and its historical origin and evolution, particularly from the environmental movements and reports of the Seventies, for instance the report released by the Club of Rome in 1972 with the title "The Limits to Growth" and its impressive scenario. However, such a concept was already purposed in the Old Testament with the theological institution of the Jubilee.

The interest for sustainability increased more and more during the last twenty years at international, national and local level, involving the United Nations Organization and its Agencies (UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, ILO), the European Union, OECD, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private and service sector, corporations and social groups, media and education all over the world. The first official step of this path or process was the famous Brundtland Report issued in 1987, which prepared the way to the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and to the second one in Johannesburg in 2002. Meantime, countless meetings, conferences, actions, norms and guidelines for a new approach to development took place everywhere.

The second section deals with the impact of sustainability and its values on the corporations' strategies and their marketing and advertising activities. Sustainability seems to meet customers' requirements and expectations and become a paradigm for a new lifestyle. There arise two crucial questions, closely connected to each other: Can sustainability sell? Can sustainability be sold? This section investigates whether there are any practical examples and reliable experiences based on which the above mentioned questions may be answered.

The third section attempts to outline any convincing and successful practices adopting and applying the new paradigm of sustainability to communication and advertising activities. I have thus managed to engage the cooperation of a number of experts who made available their work on the subject consisting of slides, posters, campaigns, publications, reports, copy strategies etc. In my dissertation I stress the creative contributions - both theoretical and practical - of Mike Longhurst, Senior Vice President of McCann-Erickson, and Solange Montillaud-Joyel, Officer of UNEP DTIE. Sustainability needs to be available to a wider audience in order to be effective in the new "vision" of the population at large; it needs to become a real new paradigm of people's rational and emotional attitudes, to shape behaviours and choices in most aspects of individual and social life, to preserve our planet and allow a better quality of life. Advertising perceives these new trends, stimulates corporations and their brands to include more and more in their philosophy the "vision" proposed by sustainability, and contributes to develop new, consistent patterns of sustainable consumption.

These examples stimulate my interest for a professional commitment in this field and for a better future of the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, my thanks go to my Professors Paolo Di Stefano (Marketing) and Roberto Giuffrida (International Law) for their help and support in designing and implementing this thesis.

I am most grateful to Mike Longhurst, Vice-President of McCann Erickson, who accepted to be my coach in this work and gave me a variety of material, documents and advertising tools that have been very useful, suitable and instrumental to the development and both to the theoretical and practical foundation of my thesis.

Solange Montillaud-Joyel, representative of the UNEP, helped me too with many appropriate documents relating to the thesis subject.

Many thanks also to several other experts from all over the world who mailed their work to me on this subject, making known to me the best practices on the relation between advertising and sustainability which were implemented in many countries up to the present date.

I dedicate my thesis to my parents who encouraged me to choose this subject as the starting point for a relevant life project and future ethic commitment.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
1. The Paradigm of Sustainability As a New Strategic Horizon	5
1.1. A Recent Paradigm with Origins Rooted in the Past	5
1.1.1. The Slow Pace of Advancement in the Past	6
1.1.2. The Acceleration of New Findings in Present Times and the Symptoms of an Impending Crisis	8
1.2. The Economy of Well Being	9
1.3. The Economy of Experiences	10
1.4. The Opposition to the New Paradigm	11
1.4.1. The Signifying Context and the Paradox	12
1.5. The Role of International Organisations	13
1.5.1. Sustainability-Related Rights	14
1.6. The Agenda 21 As the Polar Star of Sustainability	15
1.6.1. The European Campaign On Sustainable Cities	16
2. Sustainability as a Product	21
2.1. Challenges in Communicating the Paradigm	21
2.2 A Better World in Fifty Actions	23
2.3 Advertisement as a Vital Success Factor	24
2.4 Is Sustainability Applicable to Language?	26
2.5. Segmentation and Values in the Relationship Between Consumers and Sustainability	27
3. Best Practices in Communication	31
3.1. UNEP and the Institutional Campaigns for Sustainability	31
3.2. McCann Erickson's Campaigns for Sustainability	34
3.2.1. From Governments to Brands	35
3.2.2. Teaching Sustainability	36
3.3. Can Sustainability Sell?	37
3.3.1. Advertisement for Institutions and Political Entities	38
3.3.2. Advertisement for Private Companies	40
4. Conclusions	47
Bibliography	48
Web Sites	50

INTRODUCTION

The advertising industry is tightly linked to the world of production and the consumer society. Advertisement allowed industrial society and capitalistic economy to expand the consumption rates, to repeatedly devise new reasons to justify the general purchasing of goods and services and to suggest increasingly subtle ways to address the consumers' explicit and especially implicit expectations.

Having turned into a lifestyle, the drive to consumption is nowadays a pattern of behaviour for a whole consumer society; this behavioural scheme was first observed in late Nineteenth Century Paris with the creation of shopping centres and the launch of promotional selling campaigns, as described by Emile Zola in his ***Au bonheur des dames***, and turned into the oversaturation of television advertising in the end of the Twentieth Century.

In the last decades of the 1900's, however, this model begins to experience an increasing crisis. The first, unequivocal symptom was observed with the acute oil crisis of 1973, which irrevocably shatters the illusion of unlimited development. Initially limited to elite circles and intellectual minorities, a new concept emerges and evolves into the paradigm of development sustainability.

This paradigm is the area my thesis intends to investigate; this work also aims at evaluating whether and to what extent the advertising and communications industry contributed to promote the awareness of sustainability in today's consumer, and how much credibility such the promotion of this idea enjoys, especially in industrialised and rich countries. Further, we shall investigate the industry's effort towards the proposition of a new pattern of behaviour and consumption, particularly with respect to the areas in which sustainability is most applicable. The areas where this new behavioural pattern is to intervene are those of non-renewable resources, such as energy, water, forestry and biodiversity; further, the relationship between industrial production and environment, and the social responsibility of all productive and consuming entities, from corporations to individuals, the latter manifesting itself in such practices as differentiated waste disposal and the demand for organic food.

1. The Paradigm of Sustainability as a New Strategic Horizon

1.1. A Recent Paradigm with Origins Rooted in the Past

The idea of sustainability has not enjoyed an easy development, nor has its progress among the leading ideas of the Seventies been one without difficulties and drawbacks. The industrial society had put in place a productive model that remained unopposed for over two centuries, based on a scale of values that saw the earth and its resources as a commodity to take advantage of. In this scenario, the idea of sustainability was initially extremely unwelcome and opposed to.

The compulsive desire to explore, take control, make use of and turn into profit all available resources on the planet was universally accepted as a leading concept.

1.1.1. *The Slow Pace of Advancement in the Past*

This process allowed for an increasingly fast growth and economic development, especially during the last five centuries. Until the 1500s, in fact, it very seldom occurred that any individual left an imprint on the world he occupied in his lifetime. The growth and consumption rate proceeded at a slow path and technical innovation occurred at very large intervals, thus allowing but sparingly the adoption of more intensive production techniques. Sustainability was not, however, held in high regard nor consciously valued as a token of moral engagement;

The general policy in Western countries has . and still has . an anti-sustainable character. This reached its climax in the Twentieth Century with the impressive acceleration experienced by technological advancement, by the organization of industrial production, by the spread of the lifestyle that goes under the name of consumerism.

1.1.2. *The Acceleration of New Findings in Present Times and the Symptoms of an Impending Crisis*

The system described above, however, started showing symptoms of increasing difficulties, of criticism being uttered and of inadequacy being pointed out just during the highest level reached by progress and wealth in Western countries, that is to say in the Seventies. This showed in a variety of ways:

- ↓ from an ideological point of view, with . for instance . the protest movements of the youth;
- ↓ at economy level, with the oil crisis of 1973, caused at the time by the Kippur-war between Israelis and Arabs;
- ↓ under a cultural and scientific point of view, with the publication in 1972 of the famous study by the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth*¹;
- ↓ at institutional level and within the field of international relationships, with the call - again in 1972 - of the first conference of the UN's World

¹ Meadows D.L. (et al.) (1972), *The Limits to Growth*, Universe Books, New York.

Commission for Environment and Development in Stockholm, Sweden. This conference marks the first official step of a path which twenty years later shall lead to the first world Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Worth mentioning is also the publication in 1973 of Ernst Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful*², a work by one of the few economists who managed to contribute significantly and courageously to the awareness that procrastination is not an option in the choice for sustainable politics, morals and economy.

1.2. The Economy of Happiness/Well Being

The first country to bring forth a radical change in the evaluation criteria of its prosperity and wealth was the small kingdom of Bhutan. In 1972, Bhutan made a decision to quantify its domestic degree of development by no longer following the traditional indicator offered by the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) but by adopting new indicators grouped under the definition of GNH (Gross National Happiness), which included such concepts as that of equal and sustainable development indexes, and the degree to which the national cultural values, the environment and the (concept of) good governance are safeguarded.

This idea, which at the time looked bizarre and nearly folkloristic, conceived as it was in a small country with a definitely marginal role, has gained widespread support until it allowed the psychologist Daniel Kahneman, Professor at Princeton University, to win the 2002 Nobel Prize for Economics. Professor Kahneman announced³ the institution of the National Well-Being Account, i.e. a well-being index to be included among the parameters by which a country's degree of development is measured.

1.4. The Economy of Experiences

Another school of thought which prepared the way for this new approach in evaluating and analysing the relationship between economic and human development is the so-called Economy of Experiences and Emotions⁴. Similarly to the theorists of the economy of well-being, the economy of experiences stresses the importance of choosing for an alternative lifestyle, more clearly oriented towards an economy based on intangible and immaterial values. Such a new economy would allow humanity to lead a better life, to live an alternative life, while at the same time avoiding depleting non-renewable resources.

² Schumacher E.F. (1978), *Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, Blond & Briggs Ltd, London.

³ During the annual meeting of the American Economic Association (from paper *La Repubblica*, 11th January 2005)

⁴ Pine B.J.-Gilmore J.H. (1999), *The Experience Economy. Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.

1.5. The Opposition to the New Paradigm

Just like any new scientific, economic or social paradigm, sustainability undergoes at times fierce opposition.

The reason of such opposition is related to certain implications within the ideas of advancement, growth, awareness of the value of resources and of gross domestic product that still retain the most accepted meaning. Within the definition, perception and cultivation of these concepts as part of the collective imagination there exists a number of parasitical ideas that simply will not be discarded.

The paradigm of sustainability implies such a remarkable revolution and such a powerful individual as well as collective u-turn with respect to our daily actions, thoughts and choices that it may be compared to some equally massive and powerful transformations as were widespread literacy, vaccination, social awareness campaigns such as for instance the one related to the danger of AIDS transmission, and so forth.

1.5.1. The Signifying Context and the Paradox

Within this signifying context this thesis can become part of the signified along with the cases that have been individuated and examined, in the broader spectrum of 'communication' as the diffusion of conceptual stimulations and convincing emotions.

It certainly seems a paradox to plead nowadays for a new vocational role for advertisement since the latter has always been so tightly interwoven with and instrumental to the universal establishment of behavioural, productive and consumption models that are typical of the contemporary industrial, *par excellence* unsustainable society.

But the existence of such an apparently paradoxical phenomenon is nowadays . fortunately . widely accepted and flowering. Thus, the intellectual and moral battles on behalf of sustainability have become a substantial part of the goals and programmes developed by the planet's largest international organisations, such as UN, EU, the Council of Europe, OECD and even NATO, or by other, extremely influential non-governmental organisations.

1.6. The Triggering Role of International Organisations

The increase in environmental awareness that took place in the Seventies was instrumental to the formulation of the development theory and lead to the definition of sustainable development.

This concept established itself/became of common use towards the end of the Eighties, even though it had been created several years earlier, i.e. during the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment of 1972, which resulted in the institution of UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) with its competences on environmental matters.

The definition of sustainable development made its very first appearance within a document resented by IUNC, UNEP and WWF in 1980 called *world Conservation Strategy: a Strategy for Sustainable Living*.

The report *Our Common Future*, issued by the World Commission on Environment and Development - also known as the Brundtland Commission - which was constituted in 1987 on initiative of Sweden and Japan, states that *Sustainable development is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. As was often the case before and still is when it comes to the interpretation of such documents, one eventually lacks clear and analytical definitions.

1.6.1. Sustainability-Related Rights

The subject of rights more or less directly related to sustainability has been discussed for no less than two decades in an increasingly detailed and accurate way. It is a vast subject that includes topics such as the right to a healthy environment, with the consequent claims for pollution-related damage (as in asbestos-trials) and the precautionary principle introduced by the Environmental Impact Assessment, subsequently re-defined Strategic Environmental Assessment by the Directive 2001/41/CE issued on June 27th, 2001; also, introducing the concept of consumer's rights, with relevance to a wide range of goods and services, with particular attention to food and drugs, and the later 'extension' of such concept to cover the rights of the individual to preserve their own habitat and give expression to their own culture, as was the case for cultural, artistic, architectural, archaeological and landscape goods/inheritance/legacies.

The concept of sustainable development is not free from limitations. These are partially regulated by explicit norms the observance of which is mandatory, as these are normally issued by means of EU Directives and national or regional legislation. In most cases, however, such limitations are self-inflicted and based on agreements, conventions, recommendations and guidelines.

1.7. The Agenda 21 as the Polar Star of Sustainability

The Agenda 21 is a plan of action based on the conviction that humans have reached some turn point, having met the requirements that could enable them to resort to an environmentally responsible and socially equal development.

A substantial role in this sustainable development is bestowed on regional communities, according to the principle of (horizontal) subsidiarity.

The Agenda 21 introduces the application of a new concept, "*thinking globally and acting locally*" that resulted in some obvious improvements such as a better qualification of democratic processes as well as an increasing awareness and responsibility of entities at a local level.

Thanks to their closer relation with individuals, local governments are likely to obtain better results when it comes to promoting the concept of sustainability in consumption behaviour or environmental awareness.

1.7.1. The European Campaign Towards/For/Of Sustainable Cities

Following to the Conference in Rio, the Aalborg Conference of 1994 launches the European Campaign on Sustainable Cities and confirms the importance of entrusting local governments and urban entities with the task of implementing a sustainable life model in actual terms.

In their awareness that cooperation is the only available and efficient result-oriented policy, European cities resolve to spur and support each other in their efforts to implement long. term action plans at a local level.

The thesis proposed in Aalborg contains two main statements:

- ↓ The role of international organisations as the first entities to be at liberty to select among the resources available to them in order to abandon the general policies and practices, thus promoting and sustaining a model of economic development that could be compatible with the concept of sustainability and with its implications;
- ↓ The leading role of major communication agencies, Facilitated by the contribution of the most prominent and influential opinion makers, the most demanding clients and ingenious solutions. Such are the resources employed in order to open the way to a 'new' product, introduce it o the population at large and merge it into the established behavioural and social patterns. To this phenomenon belong new but consolidated behaviours such as the purchase of alternative products or differentiated waste collection.

During the last few years, thanks to specifically favourable circumstances . or in other words, thanks to the support allowed by investments . a number of major international organisations have been able to find an ally in the aforementioned new generation of communication and advertisement agencies. This alliance allowed for a remarkable as well as otherwise previously unknown acceleration of socially orientated projects and alternative consumption modes, such as fair trade, environmentally compatible tourism, regional or organic food products, and so forth. Furthermore, this synergy resulted also in specific interventions aimed at favouring local and territorial development, creating new employment perspectives and promoting a general change of strategy for small businesses as well as large corporations and even multinational companies.

2. Sustainability as a Product

As a concept, sustainability is an immaterial implication of a whole set of moral and political values. In terms of communications, however, sustainability displays the characteristics of a product in the same way as the communication of some religious faith and ethic code or the disclosure of some political programme can be presented as products.

Just like any other contents sustainability undergoes a process of communication and promotion of the principles and concepts upon which it rests. However, in its quality of *new* paradigm, it is even more dependent on

this process and deserves to be disclosed with particular attention and accuracy.

It is an individual as well as a collective project, with a medium as well as a long term development requiring clarity, constancy and continuity.

2.1. The Challenge of Communicating the Paradigm

A significant representative of the advertisement industry at a global level, Mr Mike Longhurst, vice-president of McCann Erickson, challenges our industry with a crucial question, a very substantial one and direct in its simplicity: 'Can sustainability sell?'⁵

To this question we would like to add another which slightly shifts the emphasis in a manner that we deem it more consistent with our concept of sustainability: 'Can sustainability be sold?'

It is extremely unlikely that the world of capitalistic economy, founded on the principle of profit and on consumption, may all of a sudden convert itself to (the doctrine of) sustainability without evaluating it on its usefulness. It is but natural that the traditional economy demands to ascertain an explicit relationship between sustainability and increased competitiveness on the marketplace due to a change in attitude and preferences among consumers.

It is a very thin line between opportunism and persuasion ethics, between the principle of utility and the ethics of responsibility. On the other hand, Bernard de Mandeville's famous paradox according to which the government of mankind needs to rest on the power of their vices rather than that of their virtues⁶ is an exquisite lesson in realism. With that in mind, and especially in the advertisement industry, the path towards the establishment of sustainability coincides with that of the consumer's preferences and lifestyle.

On the other hand, the model of consumerism rests on viscous and stagnant habits and patterns that prevent individuals from modifying their actual behaviour even when ideally exposed to an environment in favour of sustainability.

Thus, the initial questions - as to whether sustainability can sell and whether it can be sold - may find an answer in a reciprocally functional relation. On the one hand, by exposing a larger audience to the concept and the reasons of sustainability as a vital necessity, while - on the other hand - encouraging companies to adapt their products and/or services, and marketing strategies, to the change in sensibility among consumers. The market populated by this new generation of consumers is in fact bound to acquire more conspicuous segments and to adjust itself around brands and products that are essentially compatible with the concept of sustainability.

2.2. A Better World in Fifty Actions

⁵ Longhurst M. (2002), *Can Sustainability Sell?*, UNEP Eds.

⁶ Mandeville B. (1705), *The Grumbling Hive: or, Knaves turn'd honest*'.

The relationship between sustainability and consumers at large has been recently investigated . with interesting and informative results - by Eugenie Harvey, a communications and public relations expert. Eugenie Harvey managed to solve one of the most critical problems, i.e. conveying the concept of sustainability in layman's terms, thus making it accessible, convincing, concrete and easily understandable by the population of consumers at large. These may in fact be inclined to apply the principles of sustainability to their own way of life, but often lack the semantic knowledge that would enable them to translate the formula of sustainability into an immediately applicable lifestyle, into a series of daily actions. Her bestseller *Change the world for a fiver* suggests fifty simple actions that have the power to change the world. Such actions cannot be defined as extraordinary, rare or original. The author simply managed to convey her message in such a simple way as to make herself understood even by children or by the most unscholarly housewives, while her intelligent and effective copy strategy allowed her book to enjoy an overwhelming success⁷.

This as opposed to the famous definition of sustainability as formulated by the Brundtland Report; a definition that in spite of its global audience was considered by the industry's experts as scarcely approachable and accessible. The Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development hosted by UNEP in 2002 labels the aforementioned definition as 'difficult to translate into operational terms and unable to involve the population at large'. It is in such occasion, and particularly within a report issued by EACA (European Association of Communications Agencies . Brussels) and WFA (World Federation of Advertisers-Brussels), that the stress falls on the role which the communications and advertisement industries may have in applying the principles of sustainable development. This report, called *Advertising & Sustainability*, contains the definition of an *exemplary* strategy in terms of operational circumstances that allow maximising the efficiency of the synergic combination between the advertising industry and sustainability.

At a later stage, we shall shortly investigate which interventions were strategically planned thanks to this common effort, such as the motivational research carried out by ESOMAR on behalf of UNEP, and by the Hartman Group on behalf of Co-op America.

2.3. Advertisement as a Critical Success Factor

Advertisement is an essential part of our lives. Advertising messages are persuasive, creative and especially ubiquitous. Thanks to these qualities and by means of the media, advertisement communications are able to reach their target with an extremely high level of actual penetration. Their role is therefore a major one when it comes to the challenging project of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. In particular, this role can consist of:

⁷ Harvey E. (2004), *How to change the world for a fiver*, Short Books Ed. Bestseller, London.
(web site : www.wearewhatwedo.org)

promoting products and services with the concrete potential to improve our life quality and expectations thanks to the environmental and/or social assets they possess (while at the same time meeting the requirements and preferences of the next generation of consumers);

Promoting a more sustainable use and consumption of the products already available on the market;

Favouring the spread of a wider environmental awareness, by means of campaigns and messages with a broad social target, in order to cultivate in the consumers the principles promulgated by sustainability

Encouraging the development of sustainable characteristics and performances within companies, for instance by enhancing the level of corporate social responsibility and by focusing also on the less visible implications of a corporate brand.

As UNEP Executive Director Klaus Topfer states, consumers are increasingly interested in what lies behind the products they purchase. Besides considering price and quality of such products, they demand more transparency as to where, how and by whom the same goods were produced. As Jacqueline de Lardarel, one of the most authoritative officers and Assistant Executive Director at UNEP says :+We need to consume not less, but differently. In other words, consuming more efficiently and promoting good quality of life worldwide. Sustainable consumption creates opportunities, not sacrifices; more choices, not less %o

2.4. Is Sustainability Applicable to Language?

As part of the advertising techniques, messages shall adopt a creative but simple language, focusing on the behaviour they aim at promoting. It is crucial that messages create a bond with everyday life, as was the case with Eugenie Harvey and as the European Union did when it provided all students in the compulsory education with an educational kit containing ten simple rules for ~~the~~ shopping that might save the worldq

Even the consumers who are genuinely interested in adopting the principles of sustainability, have in fact but a vague notion of how they can contribute to it with their daily routine.

Awareness campaigns should initially involve only a restricted range of behaviours and address themes that concern directly the local community in order to broaden, at a second stage, the horizons of such behaviours.

As a research by ESOMAR points out, the communication of sustainability must take place in a clear and straightforward way. One comes too often across 'ecolabel claims' that are extremely generic, vague, impossible to verify and hardly convincing; furthermore, they appear to be focused on long-term benefits only, thus failing to appeal to the consumer. On the contrary, communicating the benefits is a vital factor. The so-called *green benefits* are intangible benefits complementing the range of primary assets and as such

⁸ UNEP, WFA, EACA (2002), Advertising. Industry as a partner for sustainable development, p.9.

need to be communicated and explained in detail in order for them to lead to any practical result.

2.5. Segmentation and Values in the Relationship between Consumers and Sustainability

In considering which set of values . as part of a community's equity - are involved in the concept of sustainability, the Hartman model proves itself to be simple and effective at the same time.

Having established that the choice for a sustainable lifestyle affects consumers' behaviour at various degrees of intensity, the Hartman Model segments such consumers in two main categories, i.e. a core and a periphery dimension. These represent respectively on the one hand a group of consumers who are most actively, consciously and nearly ideologically involved with sustainability; on the other hand, a group showing but a minimal degree of involvement with the products that may be labelled as sustainable consumption.

Between these two extremes there may be observed a dominant mid-level of consumers who introduced some changes in their consumption patterns and lifestyle, but do not fully engage themselves in a radical behavioural change. These consumers actually do use sustainability-inspired products but to an extent: the use they make of these products is sporadic and intermittent.

The next area of investigation concerns the reason based on which a consumer is inclined to approach a certain brand or buy a product that respect the principles of sustainability.

It is certainly to be found in a bond based on the spheres of affection and of emotions and values.

Under this point of view, the Hartman Model suggests an interdisciplinary interpretation of the key findings provided by the cultural and ethnographic analysis . the so-called languaculture . of the three segments in which consumers have been categorised. Thus, there may be observed a certain degree of continuity in the demand for wellness, from the individual's desire for a healthier body at periphery level to the broader perspective of the key concept at core level, as the desire for a healthier planet. Within this streamlined continuity of key concepts there may be identified a set of other values, gradually and increasingly focusing on the spiritual and immaterial aspects of life. This set of values goes from the desire for a healthier family to an enhanced feeling of belonging to a community and progressively towards the extension of this to one's love of the land. Furthermore, while prices have a primary influence on periphery consumers, core consumers are more focused on the authenticity of a product, i.e. on its genuine interaction with nature. Authenticity is the as a matter of fact one of the hardest requirements to be met.

3. Best Practices in Communications

Bearing in mind the complex and increasingly substantial relationship between the advertisement industry and sustainability, this study offered occasion to rely on exhaustive consultations by means of online contact with leading institutional organisations, agencies and personalities in the industry. These consults were aimed at individuating examples and best practices that may provide evidence of the implementation of the above concepts and some model which may be put into practice.

Among the examples and projects provided, two stand out as particularly excellent: the presentation by UNEP officer Solange Montillaud and by McCann Erickson's vice-president Mike Longhurst at the Euroforum that took place in 2004 in Vienna⁹.

3.1 UNEP and the Institutional Campaigns for Sustainability

Ms Solange Montillaud-Joyel has been keynote speaker for UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics for years, and took part in several international Conferences and Forums. These resulted in an increasingly effective cooperation between . on the one side - the institutional strategies devised by the UN in view of sustainable development and . on the other . the business strategies adopted by corporations, advertisement agencies and ONGs. Such strategies pay increasing attention to the implications of sustainability at environmental, social and economic level.

UNEP grouped around its institutional communication strategy two partner networks, a first one with firms or companies, and a second one consisting of social enterprises or ONGs in the service industry.

3.2. McCann Erickson's Campaigns for Sustainability

Mr Mike Longhurst's work is exemplary under two points of view;

The first one concerns communication and the specific competences of advertisement, such as the copy strategy contents, the language and images employed, the emotional aspects, the tone and representations constituting the message.

The second point of view is that of vision and moral commitment, by which the paradigm of sustainability can become a life project or on all accounts a credible goal for the sake of which one may invest one's capacities and creativity. In the report he delivered at the ISBA conference¹⁰, Longhurst states that sustainability not only impacts our businesses of marketing and advertising, but it creates a new paradigm, a new set of rules and expectations for our sector.

In his report on sustainability and advertising Longhurst observes in the first place how the major brands modified their strategies to begin from the Eighties, thus in coincidence with the gradual establishment of the

⁹ UNEP (2004), *Tomorrow's Europe: realize the opportunities*, Euroforum UNEP, Vienna.

¹⁰ Longhurst M. (2003), *Advertising and Sustainability-A New Paradigm*, ISBA, London.

sustainability paradigm, and especially of one of its most characteristic aspects, that of corporate social responsibility.

3.2.1. From Governments to Brands

Within the contemporary global economy, governments appear increasingly weak and inadequate to the task of ensuring the expected quality of life and environment. Consumers therefore seem inclined to transfer their demands on and make use of their negotiation power with the brands. Thus, they demand brands not only to constantly improve the quality and user-friendliness of the products and services they provide but also to offer guarantees in terms of quality of life. This is due in the first place to consumers being more consistently orientated towards 'inner-directed' rather than 'outer-directed' personal values (the so-called post-materialistic values, as already extensively defined in countries like Denmark or The Netherlands). In spite of the fact that such a shift of perspective is not generalized or complete yet, still Mr Longhurst points out how the vision and philosophy of sustainability appears to have an ever-growing impact on consumption.

Over 20% of consumers at global level ¹¹ declare they avoid buying the products of a determined company where production takes place in a socially disrespectful environment and manner.

We all are acquainted with the alternative image the Benetton brand managed to create for themselves within the marketplace thanks to their advertising campaigns associating the brand itself with socially relevant themes.

Further, when it comes to large corporations, in exchange for trusting the brand in terms of social responsibility consumers also demand good value for their money.

Consumers can thus earn the definition of 'hedonistic idealists' i.e. individuals pleading on the one hand for a better world, without poverty, violence and pollution; on the other, expecting to wear the trendiest garments, drive a new car, show off the most recent model of mobile phone.

The consumer is perfectly aware of having the power to demand all this in contemporary society.

Besides, several surveys carried out globally by McCann Erickson among youth between 16 and 25 years of age testified how, in spite of a growing interest for social and environmental issues, there is no actual leadership to promote actions aimed at the realisation of these ideals. Thus, the advertising industry and the brands are facing the challenge of meeting the requirements by consumers, but at the same time are given a great opportunity. This opportunity consists of helping consumers to solve that inner conflict by which their vision of the world is opposed to that of their own lifestyle. In other words, the opportunity to be the brand that takes care of the world for them.

3.2.2. Teaching Sustainability

¹¹ EACA-WFA (2002), Advertising Industry Partner for Sustainable Development, UNEP Ed.

Mr Longhurst points out, however, that if on the one hand advertising agencies may be expected to meet themselves the ethic requirements of transparency, integrity and veracity, on the other one can hardly demanded them to take upon themselves the task of censoring or boycotting the companies that may be considered impermeable to the principles of sustainability.

The new element of sustainability offers great opportunities, but it places one crucial condition: the need for education. To this purpose, governments and institutions shall open the way towards working together with the advertising industry to ensure more efficient results. These are to be reached on the one hand by helping the most aware consumers to put into practice their values and ideals . without frustrating their need for quality products and services . and on the other hand by contributing to a better awareness and knowledge of sustainability among those who appear to be insufficiently informed on the subject.

3.3. Can Sustainability Sell?

There are 168 corporations within the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, among which are several of the most important brands. Of these, the brands deserving special attention are those in the oil, energy and chemical industries, having the longest history of negative environmental impact and therefore reluctant in adopting the paradigm of sustainability, which is perceived as a hindrance to making profits. Of all companies, these are the ones that radically changed their strategies and re-defined their image and mission, adopting a policy of greater respect and sensitivity towards sustainable and socially responsible practices.

This is where Mr Longhurst formulates his . and our . crucial question: Can sustainability sell?

The answer is affirmative, without hesitations.

The world of advertising needs to work together with that of business in order to export the principles of their corporate mission outside the dimension of web sites and lend them to more proactive media. Advertisement needs to find some vehicle to communicate what is often hard to explain, and accept the challenge of creativity in order to devise a communication vehicle that is likely to awaken interest and involvement, avoiding the dullness of preaching.

These ideals are to be promoted by setting up a network of communication and promulgation channels where especially ONGs are involved.

Within this new scenario it becomes apparent that advertising and communication agencies cannot limit themselves to following their own script, but are in need of new structures, competences and communication strategies.

This contribution can be successfully put into practice with both aspects of the relationship between advertisement and sustainability: in terms of promotion, especially by institutions and political entities, as well as in terms of communication strategies and concepts adopted by private enterprises in view of sustainability policies, such as that of corporate social responsibility. Aim of the latter is to increase the corporate brand value and the company's image on the marketplace.

3.3.1. Advertisement for Institutions and Political Entities

An example of advertising and communication strategy of the first kind is the waste collection campaign devised by McCann Erickson on behalf of the Northern Irish Assembly, which employs a synergic combination of television and direct mailing.

3.3.2. Advertisement for Private Companies

Examples of the second type are the campaigns created for a number of important private enterprises such as DuPont, a renowned chemical corporation that recently reinvented their image. Previously famous as a polluting company in a old economy style, DuPont managed to acquire a name as a pioneer in safeguarding the planet, so much as to change their slogan from *Better Things for Better Living through Chemistry* into *The miracles of science*. DuPont's advertising campaign covers every industry, from the restoration of historical buildings to providing food and drinkable water where such necessities were unavailable. Interesting is also the employee's motto according to which they dedicate themselves every day to the work needed for a better life on our planet. The claim "to do list for the planet" is an allusion to the list of the various activities DuPont engaged itself to carry out. Speaking of DuPont, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson said she'd like to challenge DuPont in finding out how far the new strategy could lead. Pleading for a greater sense of responsibility and community concept, High Commissioner Robinson recognises how governments are getting weaker, and invites DuPont to pursue a gentler globalisation strategy where values have a leading role, and concluded by defining the corporation's efforts towards sustainable development as a step in the right direction.

Ikea holds a frontline position in the industry's effort towards sustainable furniture production. The first company to launch low energy bulbs, it discontinued the use of PVC in nearly the whole range of products, is a member of the Forestry Stewardship Council and a few years ago launched an original initiative to reduce unnecessary disposal at the end of the Christmas season. The promotion consisted in a 5 Euro-Ikea bonus to be given to anyone returning their 6 Euro Christmas tree for recycling after use.

Another important example of multinational choosing for a campaign based on social and environmental responsibility is paradoxically that of Shell, aimed at smoothing away people's perception of Shell as a company that exploits nature's resources in view of profit. The campaign shows how Shell finances the conservation of protected areas and eco-systems, while searching for alternative energy sources. We are obviously not at liberty to judge whether this engagement is authentic or opportunistic. On all accounts, the headline "Protecting endangered species or becoming one?" and the well-visible Shell logo acting as a shield to protect the little green tree frog from being swallowed by a carnivorous flower suggests it is Shell's own brand to guarantee the respect of sustainability principles. Further, the slogan *Profits*

and Principles: Is There a Choice? stresses the necessity to conciliate principles with profits.

The re-positioning of Master Card on the market took place by means of a radical denial of the stereotypical image of the credit card as a status symbol of success. The claim "There are things that money can't buy. For everything else there's MasterCard" suggests a more responsible attitude towards the use and misuse of money and indirectly supports a more sustainable consumption model, thus allowing MasterCard to differentiate itself from the competition which the company had suffered for years. MasterCard does obviously not sell sustainability, but the attribution in 2002 of a European award for the effectiveness of its campaign proves the successful global appeal of the new concept.

Automobile Manufacturers. Since 1959, thanks to the overwhelming success of Mini Minor, the segment of small and still comfortable cars has been growing remarkably. Until recent times, however, advertising campaigns laid the stress on the "emotional" aspects of owning a fast, stylish and prestigious car. The success of campaigns such as those for Opel Agila, Renault Clio and especially Mercedes Class A proves how advertisement helped increase the "desirability" of smaller and cleaner models. Campaigns managed to convince the audience that "as the Renault Clio claim says "Good things come in small packages"

A different case is that of the Land Cruiser by Toyota, where the car's spaciousness and endurance/reliability were outlined by having Toyota take part into the World Food Programme. The Land Cruiser contributed to the expediency and efficiency of the distribution of victuals to the poorest countries.

Similar consideration is also relevant for other examples quoted by Mr Longhurst in his report, such as Unilever, Levi's, Lufthansa.

4. Conclusions

The object of this study "consistently with the values of professional engagement which our Faculty of International Communication promulgates - coincides with one of the most meaningful and fascinating perspectives of professional development. This is the case independently from the areas of involvement: either by further investigating and applying the competences acquired thanks to the study of the promotional and communication campaigns enacted by public institutions (from local bodies to international organizations); or by joining advertisement agencies to translate into sustainability consistent concepts the marketing and communications strategies implemented by the business world.

In fact, based on the considerations and testimonials above, one may state that the paradigm of sustainability has integrated into the intellectual property of advertisement and communications to the extent that we are about to

experience a remarkable revolution of the current marketing strategies and consumption habits.

However paradoxical it may seem, the world of advertising and its foremost representatives have detected the symptoms of this general change and are increasingly engaging themselves to face the challenges generated by the demand for sustainability and a better quality of life on this planet. As Mike Longhurst states, in fact, **“A consumer should feel that an easy way to contribute to the good of the world is to choose your brand”**.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Darnton A. (2004), Driving Public Behaviours for Sustainable Lifestyles . Report 2, Research & Analysis Ed., London.
- Darnton A. (2004), The Impact of Sustainable Development on Public Behaviour . Report 1, Research & Analysis Ed., London.
- EACA-WFA (2002), Advertising Industry Partner for Sustainable Development, UNEP Ed.
- Earnshaw M. (2002), Advertising and Social Responsibility, ISBA Conference, London.
- Hartman Group (2003), The Hartman Report. A consumer perspective on Sustainability, Co-op America Eds.
- Harvey E. (2004), How to change the world for a fiver, Short Books Ed.
- Longhurst M. (2002), Can Sustainability Sell ?, UNEP Eds.
- Longhurst M. (2003), Advertising and Sustainability . A New Paradigm, ISBA Conference, London.
- Longhurst M. (2004), Responding to the New Consumer Paradigm: can Sustainability sell? Euroforum UNEP, Vienna.
- McCann Erickson (2002), Can Sustainability Sell? UNEP Ed.
- McCann Worldgroup (2004), The UN Millennium Development Goals, United Nations Ed.
- Meadows D.L. (et al.) (1972), The Limits to Growth, Universe Books, New York.
- Montillaud-Joyel S. (2004), Communication for a Sustainable World, Euroforum UNEP, Vienna.
- MPG International (2004), Sustainable Motivation. Attitudinal and Behavioural Drivers for Action, ESOMAR-UNEP Ed.
- Pine B.J.-Gilmore J.H. 1999), The Experience Economy. Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage, Harvard.
- Schumacher E.F. (1973), Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered, Blond & Briggs Ltd, London.
- SustainAbility (2003), Opportunity Space. How Communications Agencies can make sense of corporate responsibility, UNPE Ed.
- SustainAbility (2004), Gearing up. From Corporate Responsibility to good governance and scalable solutions, UNEP Ed.
- The Earth Works Group (1989), 50 Simple Things you can do to save the earth, Earthworks Press, Berkeley.
- UNEP, WFA, EACA (2002), Advertising. Industry as a partner for sustainable development, UNEP Ed.

WEB SITES

- www.abetterfuture.org/campaign
- www.adforum.com
- www.clubofrome.org
- www.consumerinternational.org
- www.eaca.be

- www.ecotrans.org
- www.esomar.org
- www.ethicaltrade.org
- www.focus-lab.it
- www.iclei.org
- www.isba.org.uk
- www.minambiente.it
- www.mpgintl.com
- www.nospodemos.org.br
- www.raceagainstwaste.com
- www.sovereign-publications.com
- www.sustainability.com
- www.unep.org
- www.uneptie.org/sustainability
- www.unglobalcompact.org
- www.wearewhatwedo.org