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SELF-REGULATIONS AND CREATIVE ADVERTISING IN THE AUTOMOBILE SECTOR IN SPAIN: STOPPING THE GREEN TRAIN

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Abstract

The abusive use of ecological words in the engine field has led national and international institutions related to advertising self-regulation to come up with environmental regulations codes regarding trading communications. Despite the existence of new behavior standards, the big motor vehicle brands, which have an unperturbed attitude, keep on profaning the Word 'ecology again and again. They only bear in mind their own interests, which are against those of the consumer. This article brings up a general view of the present situation and it does it by making a tour through the main self-regulation rules, the so far existing judicial judgments as well as the law-breaking campaigns so that the reader may be able to decide whether self-regulation has succeeded in stopping this green train.

Keywords

Self-Regulation, Advertising, Ethic, Creativity, Environment, Motor Vehicle Field.

AUTOREGULACIÓN Y CREATIVIDAD PUBLICITARIA EN EL SECTOR DEL AUTOMÓVIL EN ESPAÑA: FRENO AL TREN VERDE

Resumen

El abuso de términos ecológicos en el sector motor ha llevado a las instituciones nacionales e internacionales relacionadas con la autorregulación publicitaria a crear

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Códigos de regulación medioambiental en las comunicaciones comerciales. A pesar de la existencia de nuevas normas de conducta, las grandes marcas de automóvil con impávida actitud, siguen profanando una y otra vez el término ecología, atendiendo a intereses propios y contrarios al del consumidor. Planteamos en este artículo una visión general de la situación actual: haciendo un recorrido por las principales normas de autorregulación, las sentencias existentes hasta el momento, y las campañas infractoras, con el fin de que el lector pueda decidir si la autorregulación ha logrado o no frenar este tren verde.

Palabras clave

Autorregulación, Publicidad, Ética, Creatividad, Medio ambiente, Sector automóvil.

1. Introduction

1.1 ECOLOGICAL VALUE IN THE ADVERTISING SPEECH

The use of values in the advertising strategies is not an innovative practice. From pre-advertising to advertising, its speeches have been an effective diagnosis of social and cultural values that have prevailed in every age.

Both collective values (youth, modernity, technology, tradition) and transitive values (friendship, solidarity, ecology), which are the foundations of advertising campaigns, have enabled the creation of attributions of new symbologies to the product and / or brand per se that it could never have incarnated .

The events of 1968 raised the value of struggle and youth. From that moment on, Coca-Cola became the champion of this social value: heavenly, hedonistic and unwrapped messages; Marlboro made reference to the value of freedom and independence already personified in the mythic cowboy, the arrival of the social awareness of solidarity led Benetton to show large images for controversy. We could name a long list of brands associated with booming values in each era.

In the last decade, according to Ronald Inglehart² , professor and researcher at the Center for Political Studies (University of Michigan); there has been a true "silent revolution" by changing values in industrialized countries. The transition from the old materialistic values (high income, growth, order, security) to post-materialist values (participation, ecological balance ...) has generated important consequences including the emergence of ecological trends involving sudden concern for the environment. As the researcher says, the values are quasi-axioms, they represent a kind of imperative to be respected. The values are not optional, they are there and are

² Inglehart R., "Modernization and Post-modernization: The Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies." Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997

part of the social system.

The study by the World Value Survey³ 2 in 2000 already supports the hypothesis about changing values. When faced with the variables of "environmental protection" or "economic development" and "creation of jobs" in Spain, 53.6% preferred environmental protection and 39.2% opted for economic development and creation of jobs. 56.5% of women opted for environmental protection, men 50.7%. The most significant differences are in the generation jump from 20 to 50 years. In the segment of 15 - 29 years, 60.5% preferred environmental protection when compared to the segment of 50, where 47.8% made the choice of environmental protection.

Juan Diez Nicolás⁴, Professor of Sociology at the Complutense University of Madrid, in his latest research, wonders why this transition of values. His answer: "you dare to suggest that the success of industrialized societies to achieve increased living standards for large population groups has led to a deterioration of the environment that has become a threat to the survival of mankind. Therefore, post-materialism, as a system of values that gives less importance to economic growth than to environmental protection, is exactly the value system necessary to respond to this new world situation. "

If the value "ecology" is part of the social system, no doubt, it will also be present in the process of branding, becoming a clear example of the ultimate expression of the product or brand.

Thus, in advertising campaigns of the motor vehicle sector conducted in the 1980s, it was very common to find appeals related to materialistic values such as power or speed.

"Audi A4, from 0 to 100 in a second"

"Alfa 145, total power ..."

In the 1990s, the dominant value was security:

"Audi A8 has created the safest car in the world"

"Alfa 146 TI. The more powerful the safer "

From 2000, the battle for wanting to be and look green began:

"The cleaner, which emits less CO² ..."

"Audi A8 Hybrid: Eco Luxury on wheels"

"Volkswagen: Reduces what you can, makes up for what you cannot"

"Opel: green, greener, ecoflex"

According to the study published in the journal *Environment and Behavior* "emotional experiences related to nature" a work by the researchers Hartmann, Patrick;

³ Valuessurvey World Association. Available at: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>. Consulted on January 30, 2015

⁴ Valuessurvey World Association. Available in: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/Upload/5_Soc-Pos-Inf-Post.pdf. consulted on January 30, 2015

Apaolaza Ibáñez, Vanessa (2008)⁵, images of a "virtual nature" of forests, coasts and waterfalls that people perceive in the media reflect the desire to experience and enjoy nature and get the "psychological benefits" of interacting with the environment. The consumption of green products is thus the replacement of "real" contact with nature. So images and texts with natural motifs used to promote a brand have "a positive and significant influence on the attitude construct", creating green brands is positive for the company, the environment and consequently the recipient.

2. OBJECTIVES

The identification of products and brands with anything that revives this value will be positively valued by the recipient subject who will tighten some intense emotional bonds consistent with his model of society and his values.

According to a study by 6thdimensión, 65% of Spaniards would be willing to pay more for products that do not harm the environment. 56% would pay more taxes if it would help to better preserve the environment.

Two defining aspects in the "green" appeal come together in this new post-materialist value: first, environmental protection leads to rejection of those brands or products that contribute (with their systems of production, distribution, consumption, waste disposal, etc.) to the deterioration of the environment and, on the other hand, absolute acceptance of and identification with those showing efforts for environmental conservation. This is ultimately to bring about a change of attitude by associating this value with our products.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study provides an overview of the current situation, reflects and contributes: making a tour of the main standards of self-regulation, the existing judgments so far, and the law-breaking campaigns, so that the reader can decide whether self-regulation has succeeded or not in stopping this green train.

4. DISCUSSION

The car is by definition an anti ecological product, so it can produce, based on this new social value, a clear rejection. Countering that by using green claims, either implicitly or explicitly, can make a brand in this sector, potentially rejectionable, become a product fully accepted by the market.

⁵ Hartmann, Patrick; Apaolaza Ibáñez, Vanessa (2008) "Virtual nature experiences as emotional benefits in green product consumption: the moderating role of environmental attitudes" *Environment and Behavior*, 40 (6)

There is nothing dishonest in using green claims about the benefits of the product or service. Throughout the history of advertising, it is common to create the emotional branding using the prevailing values in society. The real problem begins when the use of these values may confuse, mislead and harm the society directly. When creating symbols leads to lack of honesty, truthfulness and respect for good taste and good faith of the consumer, at this point we can say that it is not making good use of the prevailing social values in society.

The ecologist New Yorker Jay Westerveld was the first one to use the term "greenwashing" to refer, in the 1980s, to hotel chains that used environmental claims to attract a clientele that began to arise as a consequence of a new leisure activity: ecotourism. These chains promoted towel reuse but, however, lacked defined recycling strategies.

"Greenwashing" (ecologic) is defined as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service."

This prolific advertising activity is the use of environmental claims with the sole purpose of cleaning the image of companies that normally cause much pollution or environmental degradation. Their goal could be summarized in the classic saying: "if you cannot beat them, join them". So they try to overcome the rejection they could produce a priori by turning brands into bearers of ecological value, thanks to statements that often have little or nothing to do with reality.

After this pro-nature boom, and at the flagrant deception that it entailed to consumers, the main associations of European self-regulation echoed the problem of misleading green speeches, trying to minimize the damage by creating codes that regulated these practices.

On October 15, 2007, the Norwegian people became determined to regulate the use of terms such as; "clean", "ecological" or "green", "environmentally friendly" in the commercial vehicle communication, considering that the use of these terms of ambiguous and imprecise fact constituted false advertising directly attacking environmental values.

In October that same year, the Consumers Union of Spain-UCE⁶ asked the Ministry of Industry for a ban on using the terms green, ecological or clean in vehicle-related advertising, with no response from the relevant authorities.

In 2007 EASA ANNUAL REVIEW, the European Association, in a brief article, calls

⁶ Consumers Union of Spain, consulted on January 12, 2014, available at:

http://www.consumidors.org/UserFiles/File/PDF%20Altres%20entittats/Nota%20de%20prensa_Publicidad%20coches%20ecologicos.pdf

for responsibility towards the environment by requiring that environmental statements be based on demonstrable evidence and real advantages.

In 2008, representatives of EASA met with representatives of DG ENV and DG SANCO to talk about advertising self-regulation of green claims. EASA considered it essential to train judges on technical expertise to decide on the truth or falsehood of these claims. A year later, in 2009, there was still no international regulation.

EASA claimed the International Chamber of Commerce about the need for self-regulation of these practices by including a chapter in the Code of Advertising Practice and Marketing to ensure consumer confidence to the claims made by the motor industry, since not only the consumer was being misled as regards certain brands but we were starting to run the risk of losing effectiveness when compared to the value of campaigns really committed to the environment and necessary to combat global warming.

In 2009 in Spain, the Ministry of Environment agreed with automotive companies, rural and marine environment, energy and self-control sector, to sign a code of self-regulation "Code of self-regulation on environmental grounds in commercial communications"⁷ which seeks to curb the flood of green arguments in this sector.

Nineteen companies joined the initiative by accepting and committing to the new Code of Self-Regulation. In the energy sector, the following companies adhered to commit themselves: Cepsa, Repsol, Acciona, Endesa, Iberdrola and Natural / Union Fenosa Gas. The signatories companies from the motor industry make up almost 95% of the industries in our country: Kia, Chrysler, CitroPeugeot, Renault, Seat, Volkswagen Group (Volkswagen, Audi and Skoda) Ford, Toyota and Lexus, Honda, General Motors (Opel and Saab), Chevrolet and Fiat.

The new code does not prohibit the use of environmental arguments, but establishes a number of restrictions on their use, demanding responsible, truthful, accurate and verifiable arguments.

It will also provide a set of guidelines for using adjectives associated with the environment such as: "not harmful to the environment", "green", "ecological", "sustainable", "compostable", "degradable," "recyclable "," reusable "," recycled ", "reduced energy consumption ", "ecological ", which should be avoided or justified by clear, visible and easily understood dimensions.

In 2010, being faced with constant pressure from Europe and the prolific number of speeches with deceptive green advertising claims, the International Chamber of Commerce chose to include a full chapter in its Code of Advertising Practice and

⁷ Self-control. Codes. Available at:

http://www.autocontrol.es/pdfs/pdfs_codigos/CODMEDIOAMBIENTE.pdf. Consulted on February 25, 2015

Marketing, about self-regulation on the environmental claims in business communications: Chapter E⁸.

This chapter responds to claims made by EASA in matters of environmental education because it includes a table of relevant concepts along with current interpretations of environmental marketing issues, and complaints of users and environmental associations, asking for a stop in the practices of greenwashing.

According EASA⁹, all marketing communications should be judged by their likely impact on the reasonable consumer, taking into account the characteristics of the target group and the medium used. The interpretation of a consumer of a green claim is affected by the context in which the level of knowledge and experience and how it is transmitted is shown. Therefore, a green claim is scientifically accurate, it could be misleading if its understanding could lead to misunderstandings, both by omission and by action. In addition, reasonable consumers may have different interpretations of a complaint filed in a particular context. Advertising of the environmental aspects of a product often requires additional clarification and explanation, not just the use of trending words to attract consumers. As a result, using green claims is a more complex task that requires more explicit and specific legislation.

The chapter of the Code of Advertising Practice of the International Chamber of Commerce regulates advertising speeches that refer to environmental or ecological aspects relating to the production, packaging, distribution, use / consumption or disposal of products, and under any means, including labeling, inserts in packages, promotional materials and points of sale, product literature, as well as telephone, digital or electronic media such as email and Internet channels.

Just as the Spanish self-regulation code, the International Code makes clear reference to the adjectives associated with the environment and the need to be accompanied by demonstrable and truthful statements.

The figures presented in the annual reports of EASA¹⁰ are alarming; of all claims made in 2009, 2.7% were related to offenses against the environment. In the year 2010 they increased to 21%, the motor industry ranking second with more violations, only one step behind of the energy sector.

⁸ International Chamber of Commerce. Code of Advertising Practices. Available at:

<http://www.iccwbo.org/uploadedFiles/ICC/policy/marketing/Statements/Spanish%20ICC%20Consolidated%20Code%20on%20MA%20Practice.pdf>. Consulted on March 19, 2015

⁹ European Advertising Standards Alliance. Press Release. Available at <http://www.easa-alliance.org/Search/page.aspx/18?sRequest=capitulo%20E>. Consulted on February 2, 2015.

¹⁰ European Advertising Standards Alliance. 2009 Reports, Available at: <http://www.easa-alliance.org/Publications/Statistics/page.aspx/375>. Consulted on December 20, 2014

The figures speak for themselves, but perhaps we should be cautious when analyzing this data, it may not represent an increase in offending ads, but rather an increase in the sensitivity of users, since 80% of claims made during the year were made by the recipient and / or user associations. We can infer that increased environmental awareness, which turns users into vigilantes of advertising against false organic claims.

4.1. A clear example of greenwashing: automobile sector

We will classify the most common "green sins" committed by advertising in the automotive sector into three groups:

1. Incitement to inappropriate behavior: encourage actions involving the deterioration and degradation of natural areas, showing complete disregard for nature.
2. Vague and imprecise terms: use of terms related to the environment in a vague and imprecise way, abusing in the use of affirmations that state continuous environmental claims that in no case represent a real benefit.
3. Hidden compensation: companies using social responsibility campaigns in which they committed to the environmental cause, minimizing to the consumer the real consequences of environmental impact, with the sole purpose of distorting the perception of the brand to the usual practices carried out by these companies related to environmental instability.

4.2. Incitement to inappropriate behavior

It is perhaps the oldest "green sin" and the one that most commonly has been infringed by advertising messages of cars, especially for those vehicles known as "jeeps" or "4x4".

In the 80s and 90s it was very common to find advertising speeches revolving around the nature axis. The most recurrent argument was to present vehicles brutally circulating in natural areas: crossing crystalline rivers, culminating inhospitable peaks, reaching inaccessible locations; images dressed with claims that invited to enjoy values such as freedom, exclusivity and adventure.

"Suzuki Grand Vitara for its excellent performance in the most unusual terrain. From what I've seen on the mountain it is what struck me most "Suzuki culminating the summit of a mountain.

"Volvo Cross Country. There is a class of people who think that adventure and driving pleasure are just the same. "Volvo Cross crossing a wild river in a natural landscape.

"Jeep Cherokee on the summit of success." Finishing off the top of a mountain.

"Jeep Cherokee: even in the wildest territories of the world". Immersed in a jungle setting.

"Where a Mitsubishi Pajero takes you it is a long time that no one has gone." Vehicle plunged into an impenetrable natural setting.

"Nissan Terrano II, nature selects those who are best suited to the environment". Vehicle camouflaged in the Amazon Forest.

"Land Rover Freelander: pleasant feeling of freedom." Lost in the African savannah.

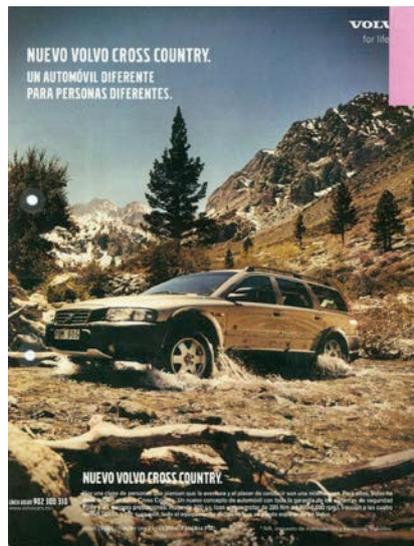


Image 1: Volvo Cross Campaign

In short, images encouraging us to freely drive these vehicles through nature with the promise of freedom, adventure, escape.

The message is clear: using vehicles in natural environments is not harmful; it is an accepted and successful practice. This type of practice is a clear invitation to unwise and disrespectful use of nature that has serious damages.

Such practices, when negligently performed, may cause land deterioration, degradation and compaction, which can generate lower permeability and decreased capacity to absorb water and air, altering the natural cycle of plants and animals : traction damages the micro fauna (fungi, zooplankton), rolling crushes plants, accelerates the decline of diversity and the vegetation cover, affecting the scent trails left by animals to mark their territory, causes noise pollution, environmental pollution, tire wear debris, etc.

Driving 4x4 vehicles, whether trucks, jeeps, ATVs and / or endure motorbikes among others, causes damage to nature even if appropriate precautions are taken. However careful the users of this type of vehicle may be, the impact that violates the environment is severe.

Given this widespread practice during the 1990s, the need to establish rules limiting the appearance of vehicles in natural areas is essential. Legislation is beginning to be passed about the traffic of vehicles in the mountains, the traffic of motor vehicles is limited to any road other than a road of the state network. (Law 3/95 as of March 23 on trails, Law 33/2003 on Heritage of Public Administrations ...)

There is a prevailing need to convey to the receiver a change of conduct towards the environment. Despite the flood of damaging speeches, only two complaints to Self-Control occurred based on rule 12 of the General Advertising Code of Conduct: "Respect for the environment: Advertising will not incite or encourage behaviors that harms the environment."¹¹

In 2006, the first claim was filed. This time a private person was the one who file the claim against Volkswagen - Audi Spain for advertising its car Volkswagen Touareg. The claimant alleged that the vehicle runs brutally through nature, destroying roads and degrading the riverbed, competing with a salmon trying to trace it and, ultimately, eroding a natural area. The claimant requested the withdrawal of the ad based on a breach of rule 12 of the General Code of Advertising Conduct.

As stated in the judgment, the argument of the ad could be summarized as follows:

"Driving along a road between mountains. In a moment, it takes a detour and goes right into the countryside. The vehicle moves through a dirt and gravel road, saving the uneven terrain, taking turns and even through puddles. At the bottom of the screen, it reads: "Images shot by specialists in rural roads fit for circulation." On its way, the vehicle stops while crossing a river. While we are listening to the flow of running water, there is a close-up of one of the rear wheels, which is in the water. Through cutting, there is an image of a salmon trying to move upstream in the rocky river bottom. Once the salmon is out of screen, there is return to the image of the vehicle undertaking the march out of the river. "

Volkswagen argued in his defense that the ad included a scroll that read "images shot by a specialist in rural roads fit for circulation"¹² Thus, the ad in no way would show scenes or behavior absolutely contrary to the environment and, therefore, it would not incite detrimental to it.

The jury of Self-Control, in its resolution, called on the rectification of the legend, as the jury considered it to be virtually undetectable by the receiver, due to the size and

¹¹ Self-Control. Codes. Available at:

http://www.autocontrol.es/pdfs/Cod_conducta_publicitaria.pdf. Retrieve on March 20, 2015.

¹² Self-Control. Judgments. Available at:

<http://www.autocontrol.es/panelcontrol/web/paghtml/download.asp?file=rest0774.pdf&type=rest&year=2006>. Retrieved on March 17, 2015

time spent on screen. The legend should be increased in size to get the message clearly to the receiver.

This was a judgment that we could consider to be benevolent based on Rule No 3 of the General Code of Conduct on the interpretation of ads:

"3.1 The ads and advertising expressions must be analyzed as a whole, without breaking down its component parts and considering the overall impression that they produce in their recipients.

3.2 Notwithstanding the above, those parts, particularly those that, for appearing prominently, mainly capture consumer's attention may be subject to specific analysis.

3.3 In any case, when an ad contains a message clearly highlighted in the sense of the preceding paragraph, the advertiser must take the necessary measures to ensure that the remaining parts of the announcement are clearly understandable and do not introduce significant limitations to or modifications of the main message "(General Code of Advertising Self-Regulation. Self-Control)

Clearly there is a disparity between the scenario shown in the ad and the scroll, to which, and in spite of rectification, few recipients possibly pay any attention. Lack of information or lack of consumer incitement can lead to behaviors that harm natural areas. The overall interpretation of the ad is a clear incitement to invade natural surfaces without any qualms. Can a river be part of a country road suitable for vehicular traffic? Would it be lawful to show violent images or pornographic scenes with a scroll that read: "Do not be bad, this is not real"?

The second claim made by a particular person too dates from 2007, this time against advertising which was the responsibility of Nissan Iberia, S.A¹³.

The ad begins with a Nissan Pathfinder vehicle running in a rugged area that goes into a kind of lake where it is transformed into an alligator. It leaves the lake and recovers the shape of a vehicle, now a Nissan Navara and it travels through a rocky desert area and transforms again, this time into a sort of big snake. Finally, the Nissan Murano traveling along a road is shown. A voiceover closes with the sentence: "Nissan 4x4. Unlimited capabilities" Again a legend: "Ad shot in a closed circuit or in forest tracks suitable for traffic". On this occasion, the legend was perfectly visible and readable by the recipient, so the case was dismissed. There is no other judgment in the files of Self-Control in this regard, neither accepted nor rejected.

The need to fill new niches and create new advantages when faced with the competition, made advertising discourses of these products turn. Following clear

¹³ Self-Control. Judgments. Available at:

<http://www.autocontrol.es/panelcontrol/web/paghtml/download.asp?file=rest0662.pdf&type=rest&year=2005>. Retrieved on March 20, 2015.

marketing strategies, all terrain vehicles became part of the urban landscape: "There are few things of the countryside that adapt so well to the city": Mitsubishi Montero. This new strategic shift led manufacturers to replace natural areas with urban spaces, thus curbing the rush of abusing natural scenarios.

Despite this shift and presenting total impunity, we continue to find listings where the vehicles burst into inaccessible natural areas and which promote disrespectful behavior to the environment. This is the case of the campaign launched by Renault in 2008 (Figure 2). The show the image of a vehicle invading a beautiful landscape with the support of the brand par excellence of adventurers: Coronel Tapioca, and of course, without a legend.

The campaign by Toyota Land Cruiser in 2010 (Figure 3) where the vehicle, oblivious to the damage caused to the flora and fauna that inhabit the river, runs showing its ability to reach the most inaccessible places.

The campaign by Mini (Figure 4) where the receiver is directly urged, "Go astray." Or the latest campaigns by the Jeep brand this year, 2015, in which running through the mountains is easy and recommended for users of its vehicles, we can even find a forest turned into a garage¹⁴. (Figure 5)

Perhaps the receiver has become so accustomed to these images, with the danger that it entails, that he not even sees the offense against the environment.

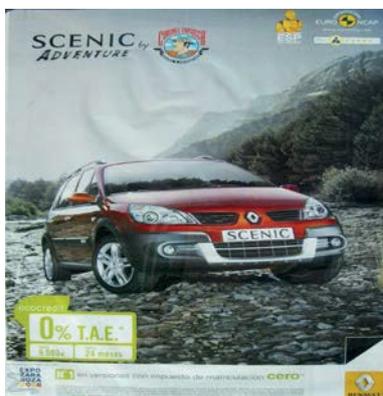


Image 2: Campaign by Renault Scen



Image 3: Campaign by Toyota Land Cruise.

¹⁴ The Kamasutra of Advertising. Available at:

<https://elkamasutradelapublicidad.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/jeepsi/><https://elkamasutradelapublicidad.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/jeepsi/>. Retrieved on January 12, 2015.



Imagen 4: Campaign by Mini



Image 5: Campaign by Jepp.

4.3. Vague and imprecise terms

According to a report by the European Environment Agency, road transport is responsible for 21% of emissions of greenhouse gases in the EU. Air pollution and the emission of CO² emitted by traditional vehicles, or emissions of carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, unburned hydrocarbons and other particles emitted by hybrid cars, including energy production (most of it being nonrenewable) required for electric vehicles, by definition make the motor industry be little or no ecological at all. We can categorically say that green cars do not exist.

Despite this, and with great insistence in recent years, the motor industry tries to rebuild its image through campaigns that show its social commitment to respect the environment. The vehicle - ecology tandem has become in the last decade the leitmotiv of advertising in this sector.

We just have to take a look at the naming of cars, to notice this "green fever" Ecoflex Opel, Seat Ecomotive and Ecofriends, Toyota Ecopotencia, Ecocup Peugeot, Renault Eco, Ecotec Chevrolet, Nissan Eco T100, EcoRacer Volkswagen, Ford Focus ECONetic ... All these compositions are usually seasoned with images of natural areas free of contamination.

The receiving little versed in the subject, to claims such as: "Make the most of nature and make minimal impact: Peugeot Ecocup" or "Beyond the asphalt, all you need to make the most of nature: Seat Ecomotive " may conclude that driving them contributes to improving the environment as he drives an environmentally friendly vehicle. The identification, respect for nature - driving is ensured, thereby forgetting the true role of vehicles in the greenhouse effect.

The strategy is simple: use of ambiguous and inaccurate terms associated with the

environment, preferably the term "ECO" coalesced to a promise of social responsibility and seasoned with images of natural spaces next to a claim where you are invited to enjoy natural spaces. The difference between this type of ads and those mentioned above is that no vehicles run through natural areas, but they use them as secondary scenarios. The vehicles roll on roads immersed in green spaces of great beauty, soaking up the characteristics typical of these environments.

Behind this marketing strategy we find out that these statements in favor of the environment consist of minimal reductions in CO₂, regardless of that, the fact that a vehicle emits less carbon dioxide, does not make it a green car, because still they produce a very worrying environmental impact, with rates that are clear contributors to air pollution.

Thus this "environmental excellence" (reducing CO₂), has been converted by the big brands of cars at an advantage over their competition, presenting them as environmentally friendly alternatives and providing them with nonexistent environmental qualities and eventually causing a clear deception in the receiver and driving behaviors that can be counterproductive to the environmental cause.

If the consumer believes that using the vehicle causes minimal impact on the environment since he has an ecological vehicle, far from considering it essential to end the current pollution alternatives, the consumer will make extensive use of the vehicle, thus encouraging a behavior that can lead to unfavorable negative consequences.

Another of the most common fallacies is to convert an obligation into a clear advantage over the competition. Royal Decree 837/2002, transposing Directive 1999/94 / EC regulates the obligation to report the CO₂ emitted by vehicles. This directive states that information about levels of CO₂ emissions and fuel economy should be displayed at points of sale and in promotional literature for cars. Often these issues are strategically used by manufacturers, exploiting the lack of consumer awareness in this area, since the proximity of the term "consumption of CO₂" and "eco" can merge the two concepts, leading to false inferences about the ecological powers of that vehicle, even though the reality is that its emissions are equal to or greater than those of the competition. Thus, the brand reduces the negative impact of the product and gives it a clear advantage for the social cause.

In 2007, the Renault brand launched an advertising campaign to promote the Eco² label (Figure 6) of some of its cars. The promise in the speech is based on promoting its new range of more economical and more environmentally friendly vehicles able to contribute to the reduction of air pollution. But ... what is ecological in a car emitting more than 200 grams of CO₂ per kilometer?



Image 6: Logo of Renault Eco²

Far from providing a real benefit to the environment, none of the vehicles advertised as supposedly ecological was one of the less polluting vehicles on the market (according to a study by the RACC together with the FIA Foundation and the German club ADAC¹⁵), one of its models, Renault Grand Space 3.0 dCi, being the second most polluting.

With their reasoning in their campaigns: "We all want a green car", "because we all have a little heart, Renault ecology within the reach of everyone", "pay less for being green today", they take a turn to the social responsibility of the user, blaming those who do not consume their products for the greenhouse effect.

Renault would be followed by many brands like Seat Ecomotive "spends less and is respectful of the environment" (Seat Ibiza and Altea).

Despite this background, during the years 2007/2008, Self-Control did not receive any such claim, and brands argued ecological advantages without any restrictions.

The sanctions came in Spain in 2011. There were two complaints in Self-Control that were solved by applying the Self-Regulation Code on Environmental Claims in Trade Communications¹⁶. The first dates from May 26, 2011, in which the jury considered the complaint by the Association of Friends of the Earth against advertising of which Honda Automobiles Spain, SA was responsible (Figure 7). According to the jury, the announcement violated Rule 11 or the Code¹⁷ "generic or specific assertions about environmental benefits, including statements such as "not harmful to the environment ", " green ", "ecological ", "sustainable" must be avoid or justified by quotations. The quotations should be clear, prominent and readily understandable, they should be near the quoted assertion to ensure they read together. "

It was an ad published in the press and on the web, where the picture a Honda Accord was accompanied by a body of text in which it was written: "Honda Accord Special Series (...) With a more respectful engine to the environment. And now, more within your reach than ever. " Additional information is provided below on the car performance and characteristics of the promotion, but nothing that specifies the ecological appeals that were made.

Claims about the ecological condition of the engine of the promoted vehicle did not provide the necessary dimensions that made that environmental advantage explicit.

The jury therefore urged the brand to rectify its advertisement. Although Honda is

¹⁵ RACC Automobile Club. Press Dossier. Available at:

http://imagenes.w3.racc.es/uploads/file/2566_NP_ecotest_fase_1_2003.pdf. Retrieved on April 14, 2003.

¹⁶ Self-Control. Regulation Codes. Available at:

http://www.autocontrol.es/pdfs/pdfs_codigos/CODMEDIOAMBIENTE.pdf. Retrieved on March 14, 2015.

¹⁷ Self-Control. Resolutions. Available at:

<http://www.autocontrol.es/panelcontrol/web/paghtml/download.asp?file=rest1335.pdf&type=rest&year=2011>. Retrieved on January 14, 2015.

one of the companies participating in the Environmental Code, it did not comply with the regulations of Self-Control, claiming that the notice came when the campaign was over, "green" being replaced with "efficient" only in the web.



Image 7: Announcement of Honda Accord

The second complaint received by Self-Control came from the Association of Communication Users (AUC) to an advertisement broadcast on national television for which General Motors Spain, SL was responsible¹⁸. It an ad of the Opel Corsa , where the protagonist, a city boy, drives the vehicle through the streets of the city while animated images begin to appear on the walls of the buildings, at the bottom there is an illegible overprint: "The new Opel Corsa has come to your city. Let the show begin. New Opel Corsa from € 9,600. Opel. Wir Leben Autos "

The jury concluded that the claimed advertisement violated standard 3.3 of the Code of Advertising Conduct, as the scroll included in the ad was completely illegible under normal viewing conditions, and for the same reasons, it violated Rule 12 of the Self-Regulation Code on Environmental Topics in Trade Communications¹⁹: "If such additional or explanatory information is provided through an overlay or scroll, care must be taken regarding the size of the indications, the contrast with the background,

¹⁸ Self-Control. Complaints. Available at:

<http://www.autocontrol.es/panelcontrol/web/paghtml/download.asp?file=rest1347.pdf&type=rest&year=2011>. Retrieved on September 21, 2014.

¹⁹ Self-Control. Codes. March 14, 2014

http://www.autocontrol.es/pdfs/pdfs_codigos/CODMEDIOAMBIENTE.pdf

and in the case of the scroll, the speed of passage through screen "

And these are the only two claims that have been processed by Self-Control, despite the continuous references to environmental ecology, to social responsibility with global warming ...

To test a button: no car brand has removed the ECO prints from its products as required by the Self-Regulation Code on Consolidation of Marketing and Advertising Practices of the International Chamber of Commerce:

"The Environmental Claims can be made in any medium, including labeling, packaging inserts, promotional materials and points of sale, product literature, as well as telephone, digital or electronic media such as email and Internet channels. All are regulated by this chapter, " "the commercial message must not contain any statement or image likely to mislead consumers about aspects or advantages of environmental types of products, or about actions being performed by the advertiser for the benefit of the environment ... ", " General Environmental claims should be bounded or avoided. In particular, claims such as "environmentally compatible" or "ecologically safe", "green", "sustainable" or any other statement implying that a product or activity does not impact the environment, or only does it positively, should not be made without proper dimensioning, unless a high degree of evidence available has been obtained. It should not be asserted that sustainability has been achieved or confirm that it was achieved, as there are no generally accepted methods for measuring such achievements ... " ²⁰ .

4.4. Hidden compensation

An increasing number of companies use campaigns of corporate social responsibility in which they commit themselves to the environmental cause, with the sole purpose of distorting the perception of the brand regarding the usual practices carried out by these companies and intimately linked with environmental instability.

Through these social campaigns, companies expect to achieve an increase in positive attitude towards the brand, minimizing to the consumer the real consequences of the environmental impact of their responsibility. Tourism and power brands have prepared in recent years their own carnival, disguising Mr Carnal as Ms Lent.

One reason that could explain this situation is lack of sustainability certification. At present there is no universally accepted certification to assess sustainability and thus the environmental responsibility of a company. There are hundreds of environmental

²⁰ ICC Code on Advertising Self-Regulation. Available at:

<http://www.iccwbo.org/uploadedFiles/ICC/policy/marketing/Statements/Spanish%20ICC%20Consolidated%20Code%20on%20MA%20Practice.pdf>. Retrieved on March 10, 2015.

certifications related to brand and environmental responsibility, many of them created by the brand themselves (neither annotated nor demonstrated certifications) originated on their foundations. So the consumer must use their knowledge and expertise, to carry out an arduous work of collecting information to differentiate a sustainable brand from another that is unsustainable. This entails removing consumer freedom when choosing the healthiest option for the environment, and what is worse, undermining the confidence of the receiver in the environmental campaigns so necessary in recent years.

Some companies are making genuine efforts to implement measures to strengthen a more sustainable development, better waste management, the use of biodegradable products, development of sustainable designs and buildings that incorporate environmentally friendly materials, saving systems and renewable energy, training of their workforce and recovery of ecosystems through reforestation. These measures are part of building their own brand image and allow receivers to contribute to sustainability. Receiver, brand and environment benefit from this strategy.

These successful experiences may be in danger if the subject gets used to environmental advertising claims. Continuous environmental benefits offered by advertising messages cause habituation of the subject and thereby reduce the reactivity to this value by decreasing the probability of response, a fact that will be reflected in a change of behavior towards this type of stimuli, considering them increasingly irrelevant. So this kind of messages generate, on the one hand irrelevance and on the other hand distrust by virtue of which there can be psychological barriers preventing the message from being correctly parsed and not enabling discernment between what is a true and sustainable effort and what is a false promise. This would jeopardize the interest of some brands to generate a green image through real sustainable measures, undermining the environmental social value, and becoming a real advantage in an irrelevant stimulus. This fact would constitute a serious violation against society in general and the individual.

According to a study conducted by foundation Business & Climate²¹, most consumers do not believe that companies support green initiatives because they worry about the environment: 49% believe it is for marketing or to sell more products, 29% consider it is done to improve the image that people have of the company, only 29% believe it is due to a real concern for the environment.

The production itself of a car, regardless of its polluting emissions, along with the energy consumed (non-renewable resources) make it almost unthinkable that this sector may lead sustainable initiatives. The car is a real devourer of natural resources

²¹ Business and Climate. Press Dossier. Available at:

<http://www.clubofrome.at/2009/barcelona/p/elviracarles.pdf>. Retrieved on September 8, 2014.

(57% of world oil production is used for road transport, about half for private cars) and is responsible, to a large extent, for the greenhouse effect and, even so: is it a sector commitment to the environment?

The leading German manufacturer Volkswagen affirms it ranks first as the most responsible company with the environment. In its "Think Blue" (Figure 8), it tries to present its products in a more sensitive approach towards the environment. They choose the blue color to break the habituation of the receiver to the green, also associating it to its environmental brand "Bluemotion". In the words of marketing director Luca de Meo²²: "Our goal is to establish a 'Think Blue' as an expression of our mindset and attitude at the corporate level, and as a firm feature of the environmentally sustainable activities of Volkswagen brand. The slogan 'Think small' symbolizes the achievement of Volkswagen brand in the democratization of mobility worldwide. The challenge ahead is to achieve efficient and sustainable mobility in the world. Volkswagen leads the way. The campaign expresses this concept: 'Think small' has become Think Blue.



Image 8: Think blue campaign.

In a recent campaign associated with its environmental brand (Figure 9) Volkswagen says: At Volkswagen, we include ecological equipment in all new vehicles: a tree that is standard and is planted in the BlueMotion forest to offset CO2 emissions in the first kilometers you drive. " According to the data available on the website of Volkswagen BlueMotion, planting a tree for every sold car would absorb about 300 kg of CO2 over 40 years. Considering that emissions are 300 kg corresponding to 2,000 km in a common drive (which emits 150 g / km) or 1,300

²²Volkswagen. Communication Room. Luca de Meo. Available at:

http://comunicacion.volkswagen.es/actualidad/notas-de-prensa/la-partitura-mas-sostenible-de-volkswagen_887-889-c-28301_.html. Retrieved on February 25, 2015.

km in an SUV (a simple trip round Madrid-Barcelona)²³, planting one tree per sold car will not be very profitable to our environment. Once again, half truths, highlighted benefits obtained with questionable less damage that becomes an advantage over the competition. The question is whether the principles of honesty and good faith are respected or misleading: General Code of Advertising Conduct, Article 27 "Campaigns with social causes"

"27.1.- When referring in advertising to the participation of an advertiser in a charity event or campaign, the advertisement should scrupulously respect the principles of honesty and good faith.

27.2.- In addition, the following rules must be observed:

a) The advertiser should explicitly, unequivocally, and without misleading disclose the extent of their participation in the relevant charity event or campaign. "



Image 9: Blues Movement Campaign. Motions

And they even dare to establish metaphors with moralizing intentions in their latest campaigns to promote "The new ecological and economical golf ", clearly and explicitly transgressing all national and international codes of self-regulation. (Figure



²³ El País Blog. Clemente Álvarez. Available at: <http://blogs.elpais.com/eco-lab/2010/12/enga%C3%B1os-de-la-publicidad-verde/comments/page/5/>. Retrieved on January 14, 2015.

Image 10: New Golf Campaign.

Clearly, half-truths mislead the consumer, decreasing environmental damage cannot turn the product into an environmentally friendly product because, as we discussed above, this is almost impossible. However, the reception by the subject can come to infer values of respect for nature, commitment to the environment, values that will be added to the image of the product and brand, and whose inevitable conclusion is: using a Volkswagen vehicle is consistent with protection of the environment.

Toyota develops a similar project (Figure 11) in collaboration with the Foundation Sponsor a Tree. The company offers, when buying a vehicle of its brand, the opportunity to sponsor a tree, specifically Toyota sponsored a total of 900 trees in Dehesa de Solanillas in the province of Guadalajara

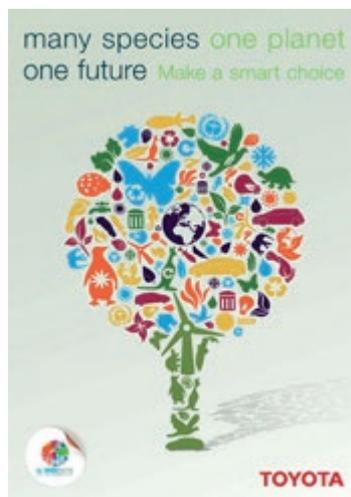


Image 11: Image Toyota Campaign. Sponsor a tree.

It is funny how such campaigns fail to generate a green image, producing results as curious as the one found on the website The independent traveler.com²⁴. This page offer ecotourism operators, green hotels, green vehicles, allowing users, as they say, to reduce confusion by collecting brands and companies that respect the environment, including: Seat Ecofrieds.

3. CONCLUSION

The reality is that, in many cases, these companies that define themselves as defenders of the environment invest a higher budget in advertising their apparent sustainable achievements than in actually putting into practice measures to improve

²⁴ Independent Travel. Available at: <http://www.independenttraveler.com/travel-tips/specialty-travel/green-travel-resources>. Retrieved on December 20, 2014.

the environmental situation.

The demands on the environment, sustainability, ecology ... made by this sector lead to clear deception of consumers, diverting their attention to these supposed advantages and leaving aside aspects and attributes that have nothing to do with being environmentally friendly.

This confusing strategy that most of the automotive sector follows is counter to the efforts made by both NGOs and official organizations, to arouse ecological awareness to help us have a life more in line with sustainability and care of the planet.

The exaltation of the environment for their own benefit and to the detriment of all does not seem to have any social, legal or ethical consequences. As we have shown, the claims are virtually nonexistent and practices are blatantly immoral. Which leads us to conclude that advertising self-regulation has failed to stop the green train of the motor sector.

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