

# able consumption?

"Consumers are increasingly interested in the world that lies behind the product they buy.

Apart from price and quality, they want to know how, where and by whom the product has been produced. This increasing awareness about environmental and social issues is a sign of hope. Governments and industry must build on that."

*Klaus Töpfer,  
Executive Director,  
United Nations Environment Programme  
(UNEP)*



## UNEP DTIE

Sustainable Consumption is part of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics. The mission of UNEP DTIE is to help decision-makers in governments, local authorities, and industry develop and adopt policies and practices that:

- are cleaner and safer
- make efficient use of natural resources
- incorporate environmental costs and
- reduce pollution and risks for humans and the environment

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[www.unepie.org/pc/sustain/home.htm](http://www.unepie.org/pc/sustain/home.htm)



If you polluted the air in the 80's,  
here's your chance to redeem yourself

Courtesy: [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)



# What is Sustainable Consumption?

There is wide recognition that current patterns of consumption and production, particularly those in the highly industrialised regions, are one of the main

causes of global environmental degradation.

The goal of sustainable consumption was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Since then it has moved from the conference hall into communities and the marketplace. Sustainable consumption will be an important component of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) that will be held in Johannesburg in September 2002.

Sustainable consumption is about consuming differently and consuming efficiently. It also means sharing between the rich and poor and protecting the global environment, while not jeopardising the needs of future generations.

## UNEP's Advertising & Communication Forum on Sustainability



## Who is Interested?

Various research sources reveal high levels of consumer interest.

Whilst consumers do not buy products exclusively for sustainability reasons, there is ample evidence that

sustainability adds value over and above product performance.

As a valuable component of the corporate image it differentiates brands in a positive and persuasive way.

## What could the Advertising sector do?

The advertising sector (advertisers, advertising agencies & the media) can have a significant influence over consumers. Thus, by utilising its talents and communication skills the advertising sector may not only make its messages more effective, but also help shift consumption patterns even more towards sustainability:

- Companies can have a key role in promoting sustainable products and services, benefiting both themselves and the environment.
- Governments/non-governmental organisations can conduct campaigns that improve environmental protection and foster sustainable consumption.

- Advertising agencies may add consumer relevance to communication strategies and further inspire their clients to develop more sustainable products.

- The media could increase awareness of sustainable consumption by constructive comment.

- Within the advertising sector: stakeholders could focus on environmental management and ensure that their practices move towards energy efficiency, recycling and waste reduction.



Courtesy: www.adbusters.org

## How could the Advertising sector benefit?

### Businesses:

Offering greener products and services to the market will aim to:

- Enhance brand image
- Spur innovation
- Increase revenue and market share

Promoting green marketing and communicating on the sustainable consumption facets of a product or service offer opportunities for creating business value, since consumers become more aware of the environmental impacts related to the consumption of specific products.

### Advertising agencies:

Companies are increasingly aware that a strong eco-performance associated with good reporting and communication could generate a competitive advantage. There will be advantages for agencies in understanding sustainability issues and in becoming expert in articulating them to different target markets. Furthermore, governments, NGOs and international organisations need to communicate on environmental issues like energy

savings, water use or waste recycling, but also on social issues such as child labour, human rights or, more generally, on quality of life. They are increasingly demanding good expertise from agencies in the sometimes difficult area of delivering these messages.

### The media:

Offering broadcasts on sustainable consumption as well as free-space for campaigns will lead to greater depth and quality of coverage of serious issues.

### The entire sector:

Financial savings come from implementing eco-efficient policies (e.g. recycling) & the sector could benefit from increased corporate credibility and brand valuation.

## What is the purpose of the UNEP forum?

- Work together to raise general awareness on sustainable consumption
- Use communication skills and techniques to promote sustainable consumption patterns
- Promote products, services and campaigns that foster sustainable consumption
- Pursue the best practice in environmental management
- Inform and inspire each other through workshops, meetings, publications, websites, etc.

## What are UNEP's tools for change?

UNEP inspires change through:

- Workshops/conferences
- UNEP publications
- Spreading information via other sources (e.g. websites, sector publications).

## UNEP main partners

Since 1999, UNEP has developed partnerships with several organisations, in order to spread information on sustainable issues among the advertising sector and benefit from their regular input in its activities related to advertising and communication. In particular, we would like to mention:

- The European Association of Communication Agencies
- The World Federation of Advertisers
- McCann-Erickson Europe, and
- Unilever

