United Nations Environment Programme

Division for Technology, Industry and Economics

Sustainability Communications
A Toolkit for Marketing and Advertising Courses

Sustainability is an expression of the issues that production and consumption patterns will have to address to build a society where individuals and the environment are respected. Numerous public and private actors have already committed themselves to this path. For them, the issues of sustainability – which are at once ethical and strategic, political and economic – are also issues of communication. From marketing to advertising, from corporate communication to public awareness campaigns, the messages of sustainability are embodied in practices that are increasingly well-established. These are something for marketing, advertising and communication professionals to reflect on, and also to learn from.

This CD-ROM is part of that process of reflection and learning. It is not meant to impose a particular outlook but to provide a resource for the educators training tomorrow's marketing, advertising and communication actors. It should provide an understanding of the context and practices leading companies and public institutions to use sustainability communications as they seek to position themselves in the public eye. It is not a "turnkey" teaching syllabus but a flexible, interactive tool which provides a synthesis of theoretical and methodological knowledge illustrated by numerous specific case studies. In this regard, it offers all kinds of pedagogic resources – short presentations, campaign analyses, exercises, documents, web links and bibliographies – to encourage students to think about and involve themselves in one of the major issues facing society today.

Contents

About this CD-ROM

This CD-ROM deals with sustainability communications and is meant as a tool for teachers and students in higher education, particularly in the fields of marketing, advertising and communication, but also in other disciplines such as corporate communication or management sciences. The contents of the CD-ROM can be adapted and applied to different objectives and numerous types of professional training courses in universities and other institutions of higher education, from first degrees to specialized masters.

The contents of the CD-ROM are organized into four modules which summarize a body of theoretical and methodological information, illustrated by a large number of case studies:
-   The first module takes stock of the main ethical and practical aspects of sustainability, with a particular emphasis on communication.
-   The second module addresses the main social and economic issues against whose background sustainability communications take place: efforts to codify corporate social responsibility and their effects on communication practices; attitudes to responsible consumption as opposed to actual behaviour, and the effects of these on sustainability markets; and the challenges and opportunities of sustainability communication for companies (business case) and public institutions.
-   The third module summarizes the practices involved in sustainability communication: green marketing, corporate communication, social and responsible marketing, civic participation and awareness campaigns. It also deals with the risks involved and shows how transparency and strategic planning are essential prerequisites for communication. It concludes with the methodologies employed by actors and professionals to communicate whilst managing risk.
-   The fourth module, lastly, presents a series of five exercises dealing with sustainability communications in theory and practice: an investigation into the consistency between a company's communication strategy and its actions, a comparative campaign analysis, a corporate image study, the identification of advertising performance indicators, and the preparation of a communication strategy.

The modules employ a variety of educational resources to enable users to tailor the CD-ROM to their own needs: case studies, documentary resources, links to websites, and bibliography. These resources can be found in the "Case studies" and "Resources" sections of the CD-ROM. Direct links to selected case studies and resources are provided in each module.

Case studies:
-   Case studies of communication campaigns are presented using both contextual and strategic data. The CD-ROM contains 31 in-depth case studies and 22 short case studies.
-   A large proportion of these case studies are from a research project conducted by UNEP and the Utopies communication consultancy. Some were prepared for inclusion in two different publications: *Communicating Sustainability - How to produce effective public campaigns* (joint UNEP/Futerra publication) and *Talk the Walk. Advancing Sustainable Lifestyles through Marketing and Communications* (joint UNEP/Utopies publication).
-   The contents of the modules regularly refer to the case studies. There is also a multi-criteria search engine in the "Case studies" section of the CD-ROM which provides rapid access to the most relevant case studies.

Resources:
-   The "Resources" section of the CD-ROM provides direct access to a selection of PDF documents (reports, guides, articles, studies, educational tools) that can be downloaded from the Internet, plus numerous reference sites. It also contains a reading list organized by theme.
-   There is a multi-criteria search engine for rapid access to the most relevant documents. A summary briefly describes each document, clearly displaying the authors and the sources associated with it (website and link to the document).
-   In addition to the thematic reading list that can be accessed from the "Resources" section of the CD-ROM, selective reading lists are integrated into each module, giving immediate visibility to the reference material used to prepare the text.

Limitations of the CD-ROM and perspectives as formulated by the members of the Expert Panel associated with the project:

- The discussion of marketing here relates essentially to the communicational or promotional dimension of that discipline and its practices. It does not cover the full range of aspects involved in the preparation of a "marketing mix" (product design, price, availability, etc.), although these are all present, and indeed interdependent, in sustainability marketing.
- In dealing with pro-sustainability communications by businesses, there is no room for naivety about the underlying economic issues. The financial and strategic aims or constraints of businesses must not be overlooked when modes of production are so often felt to be incompatible with the principles of responsible consumption.
- These constraints and aims, whether explicit or implicit, proclaimed or left unmentioned, need to be analysed beforehand for corporate communication practices to be understood. As part of this, in-depth case studies need to look at the essential features of the markets in which communicators are operating. Given the size limitations of this CD-ROM, however, it was difficult to see how the systems of constraints associated with each business sector could be adequately described. For the purposes of analysis, therefore, there is a need for further research into the financial and competition conditions under which markets operate.
- The great majority of the corporate sustainability communication themes dealt with initiatives taken by companies to show that they are willing to adapt their own practices to sustainability principles. More space could have been given to sponsorship activities.
- It would certainly have been relevant to look at sustainability communication from the media standpoint as well, thereby helping teachers whose students are planning careers in journalism. Journalism is very clearly distinguished from the fields of communication and marketing in that its objective is information as opposed to awareness-raising or persuasion. The practice of journalism also has very specific characteristics. To analyse journalistic research, reporting or writing techniques and their impact on the spread of sustainability values and practices, therefore, would require the design of a completely new tool.

The United Nations Environment Programme has prepared this CD-ROM in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and the International Association of Universities, with financial support from the Swedish Ministry of Sustainable Development.

About UNEP Division for Technology, Industry and Economics

The UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) helps governments, local authorities and decision-makers in business and industry to develop and implement policies and practices focusing on sustainable development.

The Division works to promote sustainable consumption and production, the efficient use of renewable energy, adequate management of chemicals and the integration of environmental costs in development policies.

The Office of the Director, located in Paris, coordinates activities through:

- **The International Environmental Technology Centre** - IETC (Osaka, Shiga), which implements integrated waste, water and disaster management programmes, focusing in particular on Asia.
- **Production and Consumption** (Paris**)**, which promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns as a contribution to human development through global markets.
- **Chemicals** (Geneva), which catalyzes global actions to bring about the sound management of chemicals and the improvement of chemical safety worldwide.
- **Energy** (Paris**)**, which fosters energy and transport policies for sustainable development and encourages investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- **OzonAction** (Paris), which supports the phase-out of ozone depleting substances in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to ensure implementation of the Montreal Protocol.
- **Economics and Trade** (Geneva), which helps countries to integrate environmental considerations into economic and trade policies, and works with the finance sector to incorporate sustainable development policies.

UNEP DTIE activities focus on raising awareness, improving the transfer of knowledge and information, fostering technological cooperation and partnerships, and implementing international conventions and agreements.

For more information, see www.unep.fr

About UNESCO

UNESCO was created in 1945 to contribute to peace and security by encouraging collaboration between countries through education, science, culture and communication. UNESCO is the lead agency for the promotion of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).
UNESCO first demonstrated its concern for sustainable development in the Science Sector. Today, that goal is present in all UNESCO fields of competence – education, the social and human sciences, science, culture and communication.

About the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) aims to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behaviour which will enable a more viable and fairer society for everyone.
During this decade, education for sustainable development will contribute to preparing citizens better prepared to face the challenges of the present and the future, and decision-makers who will act responsibly to create a viable world.
Five kinds of fundamental learning have been identified: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together, and learning to transform oneself and society.

About IAU

Founded in 1950 under the aegis of UNESCO, the International Association of Universities (IAU) is a worldwide association of higher education institutions. IAU brings together universities, institutions of higher education and national and regional associations of universities from around the world for reflection and action on common concerns. It aims to promote debate, reflection and action on key issues in the field of higher education.

IAU actively supports higher education for sustainable development as one of its thematic priorities. Sustainable development initiatives include developing partnerships (eg. with UNEP and UNESCO), holding international conferences and meetings, and producing and sharing information online or through publication. The Association provides input to the agenda and objectives of the UN-DESD, and is a founding member of the Ubuntu Alliance, a consortium of the foremost educational and scientific organizations working together towards a "new global learning space for sustainable development".

Module I

Sustainable development: the ethical and practical issues

1 - Introduction to the principles of sustainable development

a) The sustainable development debate: reviewing some familiar and controversial principles

The merits of debate

- Ever since it became a public issue at both the national and the international levels, the concept of sustainable development has been a subject for debate (M-C. Smouts (dir.) 2005). Its applicability to a wide range of situations accounts for its popularity, but also for the scepticism with which it is often viewed.

- From a pedagogic point of view, then, any introduction to sustainable development also deserves to take the form of an organized debate in which the issues at stake are clearly analysed and different ideas compared.

- An introductory discussion will provide an opportunity for open-minded debate about the different subject areas of sustainable development while bringing in the critical angle that is essential to proper analysis. By giving free expression to students' thoughts and feelings about the principles and practicalities of sustainable development, this will serve to isolate commonplaces and lay the groundwork for an informed dialogue.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

THE CHALLENGES

- Environmental challenges: depletion of natural resources (non-renewable energies), waste, air pollution, water and soil, destruction of the ozone layer, global warming (or "greenhouse effect") and climate change, loss of biodiversity.

- Social challenges: poverty, unhealthy living conditions (housing, drinking water access), inequality, child labour, lack of basic services (health, education, transport, communication), chemical pollution, food hazards, obesity, high-risk practices, discrimination, marginalization, political instability.

- Economic challenges: unfair competition (in opposition to fair trade), working conditions, unemployment, responsible production (subcontracting chains), over-consumption.

- Challenges of communication: conveying sustainable development values in advertising, public relations, marketing and all other forms of public or corporate communication.

THE GOALS

- Advance technological progress to reduce the environmental impact of human societies.

- Change behaviour in the North and create new development models in the South. Technological progress is a priority, but it is not enough. Global consumption is growing much faster – particularly in certain sectors such as cars and energy – than the kind of scientific know-how that might alleviate the impact of human societies on the environment. In addition, technology is unlikely to be able to neutralize certain planetary phenomena such as climate change.

DOCUMENT TO BE CONSULTED
The United Nations Environment Programme "Resource Kit on Sustainable Consumption and Production" (http://www.unep.fr/pc/sustain/10year/SCP_Resource_Kit.htm)

THE ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

The ecological footprint is a way of measuring human pressure on the natural environment. Created by two researchers at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver (Canada - M. Wackernagel & W. Rees 1995), the concept was very quickly popularized by numerous environmental NGOs such as the WWF (http://www.wwf.org).
"The ecological footprint of a population is the biologically productive land and water areas required to produce the resources consumed and assimilate the wastes generated by that population using prevailing technology." (WWF, UNEP, WCMC et Global Footprint Network : 2004)

According to the WWF "Living Planet Report 2002", humanity's global ecological footprint has almost doubled over the last 35 years. It is now 20% in excess of the biological capacity of the earth. The study also shows profound inequalities between countries: on average, the footprint per person is six times as great in high-income countries as in low-income ones. In 10 years, the ecological footprint per person has grown by 8% in rich countries and diminished by 11% in the poorest.

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Some background concepts

- Future generations
  - According to the accepted formula, the term "sustainable development" means "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future,* 1987, known as the "Brundtland Report").

- A three-pillared approach
  - While respect for future generations is the main thrust of sustainable development, it also denotes a shift in outlook and methods in favour of more transversal approaches. By contrast with the narrowly economistic conception of development that prevailed until the early 1990s, sustainable development entails "the balanced integration of societies' economic, social and environmental goals in a spirit of equity and with a concern to preserve the interests of future generations" (M.C. Smouts, D. Battistella & P. Vennesso 2003).

- The interdependence principle
  - Recognizing the social and environmental factors of development alongside the economic ones does not mean simply juxtaposing these three dimensions; attention also needs to be paid to the interdependence between them in the evolution of human societies.

- Pluralism and communication
  - The interdependence of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development also implies the interdependence of actors. Consequently, sustainable development has often been seen as having a fourth pillar, frequently designated by the term "governance". The concept is both prescriptive and functional (J.N. Rosenau & E.O. Czempiel (eds.) 1992; M.C. Smouts (dir.) 1998), and it is now a strong feature not only of public initiatives but of corporate activities as well. It ascribes a central role to communication and the involvement of a plurality of legitimate actors ("stakeholders") in environmental and development policy inputs and decision-making.

Although it has been defined in many ways, sustainable development has a single aim: a shift in the social and environmental practices of development so that this can be framed within a logic of security, balance and continuity - in other words, "sustainability".

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Areas of disagreement

- The public authorities, citizens and businesses are broadly agreed about the ethical dimensions of sustainable development. There is disagreement, however, when it comes to the best way to go about turning values into realities. Many criticisms have been levelled at the very notion of "sustainable development", and some are essential to the debate.

  o The furthest-reaching of these criticisms identifies an insoluble contradiction between the economic objectives inherent in the development principle and the environmental or social concerns encapsulated in the notion of "sustainability". A number of questions are raised in this respect, for example:
    - Is sustainable development possible in a consumer society?
    - Does today's global economic system allow businesses to incorporate objectives of collective interest into their activities?

- In this dispute, two broad schools of thought confront each other:

  o The first tends to argue that sustainable development is utopian given the way the global economic system operates today, driven first and foremost by the imperatives of profit. Even when they try to organize themselves in such a way as to reduce the environmental or social consequences of their activities, therefore, economic actors are operating within a framework that hinders these efforts:

    - The underlying structures of a capitalist business enshrine individual and not collective interests. The fact is that the "shareholder value" of a business (the level of reward for shareholders) remains the chief criterion for evaluating activities and performance. Businesses therefore find it functionally impossible to incorporate the pursuit of the common good into their activities (S. Pollard ; C. Gendron, A. Lapointe & M.F. Turcotte 2004).

    - The amount of products/services sold – and not their social or environmental qualities – remains the chief criterion for evaluating them in terms of social relevance. In other words, a product whose economic performance is judged inferior to its social and environmental performance is not always perceived as relevant. PB: There is two comas here. This attitude is evolving in some very specific cases, such as when society identifies high-risk practices, tobacco being one example.

    - At the global level, a lack of transparency and pluralism in deliberative or decision-making mechanisms within institutions such as the World Trade Organization are often among the arguments used to make the case that sustainable development lacks the means to subsist.

  o The second school of thought maintains that the concept of sustainable development is relevant in the existing world economic system and defends the idea of "moral capitalism" (S.B. Young 2004). The case is made that existing economic models are compatible with a system of responsible production and consumption:

    - While private interests are generally seen as inimical to the general interest, some authors and actors argue that contributing to the general interest tends to generate private benefits (J. Andreoni 1988 ; H. Höllander 1990 ; WBCSD 2001).

    - The social relevance of private interests is not challenged by the sustainable development project but is associated with the notion of service to the community.

    - Social pressure on economic actors seeking to preserve their legitimacy in society encourages them to incorporate general-interest goals into their activities.

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The motivations and commitments of economic actors

▪ Many domestic and multinational companies now devote a significant part of their efforts to sustainable development. This is accounted for in various ways:

  o Utilitarian initiatives
    ▪ A utilitarian interpretation of sustainable development initiatives sees them as being principally intended to serve companies' economic and commercial interests in a social setting that is highly sensitive to their values. In corporate communication, sustainable development thus becomes a "marketing tool" like any other, the main aim being to increase market share by appealing to the "responsible consumer" niche (M. Friedman 1970; M.T. Jones 1996; R. Cox 2006) or to diversify product ranges. It should be remembered, though, that not all "sustainable development" initiatives are systematically publicized.

  o Social integration strategies
    ▪ A second interpretation, which places companies' intentions in a markedly less critical light, is that economic actors are now having to respond to new branding imperatives by showing a commitment to sustainable development (J. Himmelstein 1997; E. Champion: 2003). These initiatives are thus seen as a response to the social pressure on businesses, whose fundamental objective is to secure and consolidate a legitimate place in society. They are a manifestation, it is argued, of a more cooperative attitude towards the public authorities, who are liable to bring in restrictive regulations, but also towards civil society actors (associations, NGOs, pressure groups).

  o The need for self-regulation
    ▪ Some authors (J. Brabet 2003; C. Gendron, A. Lapointe & M-F. Turcotte 2004) view corporate sustainable development initiatives as examples of the kind of self-regulation that is needed in the economic sphere in the absence of institutions with real authority at the level of the globalized world economy.

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b) Defining the theory, illustrating the practice

The terms of the debate can be defined more accurately when considered in the light of practice. Concrete examples exist and can be used to analyse the long-term results and benefits of integrating sustainable development principles into both the public policy domain and economic and commercial activities. They also provide insights into the problems that might be posed by this new method of "calculation".

The social role of business

While the public authorities are undertaking more and more sustainable development initiatives, society at large has been aware for many years now of the influence that business has on natural resource use, technological development, modes of production and consumption, and lifestyles. This influence implies major responsibilities for these actors in their development, management, marketing and communication activities, especially in sectors that produce a major social and environmental impact (energy, cars, textiles, food). For example, the development of any sustainable product/service needs to meet new evaluation standards and take into account the environmental, social and economic effects it will produce over its whole life cycle: the impact of manufacturing in terms of natural and human resources, the specific characteristics of the product/service (polluting? reusable? recyclable? etc.), methods of use, and whether it encourages rational consumption.

In this context, governments and civil societies recognize the importance of concretely supporting and helping companies to engage on the path towards sustainable development.

Some businesses have been quick to introduce environmental management and rationalization procedures into their activities. This was the case in the food industry in the late 1980s following complaints about tuna fishing methods and their dramatic consequences for dolphin populations (M.F. Teisl, B. Roc & R.L. Hicks 2002). Likewise, it was in response to the breadth of concerns expressed about the production of polystyrene and the destruction of the ozone layer in the early 1990s that *McDonald's* took the initiative of using new materials in the manufacture of its packaging (B. Gifford 1991; S. Hume 1991; M.J. Polonsky 1994).

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Public and private actors: responding to the challenges

Social and political incentives apart, public-sector and business actors have progressively identified the issues of legitimacy and performance associated with the environmental and social conditions of their work. Failure to consider these conditions involves risks that are now the subject of constant attention:

- For public-sector actors, overlooking sustainable development issues can have major political and social consequences. The obligation to lead by example requires institutions to adopt sustainable development principles in their projects and operating methods while encouraging citizens and users to take individual responsibility for the environment and society at large. It has also become crucial for these actors to support companies' engagement and progress.

- For businesses, the consequences in terms of legitimacy and financial performance can be substantial as well. In the long run, companies whose activities result in destruction of the environment or the social fabric expose themselves to social and commercial risks that can no longer be ignored. This is the case, for example, when the depletion or degradation of natural resources exploited by a business results in additional production costs or, in some cases, major changes in production methods (M. Tsoutsoura 2004).

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Analysing good and bad practices

- In the public domain, examples of "good" practice include numerous policies to raise public awareness of the need for waste sorting and recycling and energy-saving measures.

- In business, the development of more environmentally friendly packaging or products can be profitable for companies and for society as a whole.

- Attention also needs to be paid to practices that have been questioned and criticized. In the public domain, certain environmental disasters resulting from management or communication failures provide interesting material for analysis: the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and its very severe consequences for human health, the environment and the socio-economic fabric of many regions.

- What is often perceived as "bad" practices can also have severe consequences for economic actors: the financial penalties imposed on *Coca-Cola* in India following campaigns against the firm by the inhabitants of Kerala and the criticized environmental consequences of its activity in that region.

BOX 1: CASE STUDIES "GOOD AND BAD" PRACTICES

"Saving energy. Act now, the heat is on!" – France / Source: UNEP / Futerra
This campaign, run by ADEME (French Environment and Energy Management Agency) in 2004-2005, sought to raise citizen awareness of the environmental cost of energy consumption (global warming) and the financial cost of individual over-consumption. A large-scale publicity campaign together with a partnership policy to encourage local and national operations spawned more than 2,000 initiatives and strengthened the network of actors working with this issue.

"Cleanest Town Competition" – South Africa / Source: UNEP / Futerra
Organized by the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, this campaign is based on a strategy that reflects the transversal nature of sustainable development: the environment (waste management, environmental improvement), social aspects (better quality of life, an enhanced role for citizens and communities) and the economy (the local tourism economy, creation of new markets).

AISE Washright / Source: UNEP / Utopies
Run by *AISE* (International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products), an organization that has 900 member companies representing 90% of the European market for maintenance products, this campaign aimed to encourage responsible use of washing powder by European consumers. The environmental issues were approached from a number of angles: packaging, water pollution, energy saving. 75% of Europeans were aware of the campaign and 81% of these claimed to have followed its recommendations (according to AISE research).

Nestlé / Source: UNEP / Utopies
In the 1970s, a number of agribusiness multinationals, Nestlé foremost among them, tried to strengthen their position in the powdered milk market, especially in developing countries. In this context, the company's promotional practices were strongly critized, as hygiene conditions and water quality in many developing countries make powdered formula milk consumption dangerous for babies.

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c) Integrating sustainable development into communications and marketing

The many facets of communication

The success of sustainable development with public opinion and decision-makers has had major implications for social communication in its different forms, from public communication activities intended to reach citizens/users to marketing tools developed by businesses for consumers.

- *Sustainable development and public communication*

  o Sustainable development seeks to lay down principles for better management of the communities. It therefore needs to be treated as a genuine political project whose first priority is the informed support and active participation of citizens.

  o Turning principles into practice requires communication and mediation efforts driven by the public authorities: informing, raising awareness, influencing perceptions and behaviour, and relaying and legitimizing the implementation of public policies are all among the objectives for the communication efforts of institutional actors (R. Debray 1993; C. Ollivier-Yaniv 2000).

  o Although there is still a meaningful distinction between institutional and business communication in terms of actors and aims, methodological borrowings are numerous. Marketing made its appearance in public communication in the 1980s and now has a far-reaching influence on awareness and mobilization campaigns.

- *Sustainable development and corporate communication*

  o Businesses also communicate in many different ways. Administrative, managerial and information and communication sciences are all disciplines that can be mobilized for the purposes of analysis and learning. Marketing, which is both a discipline and a set of practices, is nevertheless rooted very firmly in the fundamental logic of the company as organized in a market economy. What the term denotes, in fact, are all the development and management operations carried out to identify, anticipate and satisfy the expectations of consumers in order to meet the profit targets set by a company.

    - In the language of marketing professionals, the "marketing mix" refers to the development operations organized around a product/service from concept to sale: design, price, promotion and availability.

    - What is basically meant by "marketing" in the present context, however, is the "promotional" (i.e. communicational) aspect of this discipline and not the full range of ingredients in the "marketing mix", even though they are all necessarily involved (and interdependent) in sustainable development.

    - In a broad sense, marketing can encompass all the commercial and corporate communication measures taken by companies: advertising, sales, public relations, brand image, corporate communication.

COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

When an effective sustainable development policy is introduced and applied within a company, the strategies that ensue may vary greatly in terms of communication and marketing. Companies that are committed and responsible can introduce initiatives that reflect this in order to increase their credibility and legitimacy with consumers.

- Engage in sustainable development activities and communicate this:
  o Some businesses have made sustainable development a core part of their identity and the products they develop. This is the case with pioneers in the field such as *Natura* (1969), *Patagonia* (1972), *The Body Shop* (1976) and, more recently, *American Apparel* (1998). These companies' communications revolve entirely around sustainable development and its main fields (the environment, social justice, human rights, etc.).
  o A company's contribution to sustainable development can also be expressed by more selective operations: the adoption of new technologies or production processes, or the development of "green" products. These initiatives can be turned into points of differentiation and competitiveness in corporate communication strategies.

- Not all businesses that take measures to reduce the environmental or social impact of their activities choose to communicate them:
  o A. Polonski (1994) cites, for example, the case of *Coca-Cola*, whose major investments in recycling procedures and more environmentally friendly packaging have not been the subject of communication to the public.
  o Walt Disney World also implemented a major waste management programme but has not made this a selling point when promoting its tourism activities (P. Murphy 1985).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE MARKETING MIX (MO = Marketing mix)

The marketing mix

The term "marketing mix" denotes the various development and promotion operations used to determine the commercial attributes of a product/service with a view to attaining the best possible performance. The marketing mix is often summed up by the four or seven P's: "product", "price", "place", "promotion", "people", "processes" and "physical evidence" (The SIGMA Project). In other words:

- "Product": product conception and management (design, concept testing, launch).
- "Price": the pricing of a product or service plays a fundamental role in the marketing mix, since it needs to match consumer perceptions.
- "Place": an appropriate and effective distribution strategy to ensure availability.
- "Promotion": a communication strategy organized around a product (advertising, merchandising, packaging, etc.).

Three other dimensions can be included in the "marketing mix":

- "People": having the right staff and training in place so that a product/service can be promoted as effectively as possible.
- "Processes": introducing sound procedures so that customers are provided with a high standard of service.
- "Physical evidence": developing visual symbols that embody and convey the image of the brand or product wherever this is most appropriate.

Integrating sustainable development into every level of the marketing strategy
- Product: what are the social and environmental impacts of the product over its whole life cycle (production, use, waste)?
- Price: what is the production cost of the product? Is the social cost of production shared out fairly?
- Place: are the methods used to transport and distribute the product environmentally appropriate?
- Promotion: is the sales message based on fact and is information transparent? Does the message encourage responsible consumption and behaviour?
- People: is staff trained in-house? Does the company ensure equal treatment for its employees? Does it protect them against discrimination?
- Processes: do production processes and management systems make the best use of the natural and human resources mobilized?
- Physical evidence: do the communication tools developed to give the product or brand a physical and visual presence tend to generate unjustifiable amounts of waste?

CASE STUDIES

Some pioneers:
- American Apparel (apparel – United States) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Natura (cosmetics – Latin America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

Case studies to go further:
- Innocent Drink (food – United Kingdom) – Source: UNEP
- Patagonia (apparel – United States) – Source: UNEP
- The Body Shop (cosmetics – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

Few public campaigns:
- Austria (fair trade) – Source: UNEP / Futerra
- Canada (environment – climate) – Source: UNEP / Futerra
- Ireland (education – sustainable development) – Source: UNEP / Futerra
- United Kingdom (environment – transports) – Source: UNEP

Few corporate campaigns :
- Danone Stonyfield Farm (food – North America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Grupo de Açucar (retail – Brazil) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Migros (retail – Switzerland) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Toyota (cars – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

SUSTAINABILITY CAMPAIGNS
UNEP ONLINE DATABASE

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has launched in June 2006 the ***Creative Gallery on Sustainability Communications***. First of its kind, this database includes around 1,000 campaigns produced by companies, public authorities and NGOs from all over the world, in other words from all stakeholders interested by the promotion of sustainability issues.

The ***Creative Gallery on Sustainability Communications*** is the result of a thorough selection, which started with the viewing of over 40,000 ads. The campaigns highlighted in this Gallery address sustainability issues through various themes, tones, types of media and strategies. Some reflect companies' public commitment towards social and environmental issues. Others feature awareness campaigns from public authorities. Some aim to favour the purchase of green products and services; others strive to change citizens' or consumers' attitudes.

This free online database of ads - available on UNEP website - gathers relevant material to analyze sustainability communications in the framework of marketing, advertising and communication research or studies.

The ***Creative Gallery on Sustainability Communications*** has been compiled by UNEP, in co-operation with Adforum and Advertising Community Together, with financial support from the French Agency for Environment and Energy Management (ADEME).

⇨ **UNEP Creative Gallery: www.unep.fr/sustain/advertising/ads.htm**

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What do the marketing and communication sectors have to do with sustainable development?

▪ The position they hold and the influence they wield over society give them an undeniable responsibility. The biggest advertising investments are in sectors that represent a large portion of the individual ecological footprint: food, transport, energy. There is always the danger that the professionals who promote products or services in these production and consumption sectors may send out messages that lead to behaviour with substantial adverse consequences for the environment and society. Conversely, they can inspire and orient positive changes in behaviour.

▪ Marketing and communication professionals sometimes find themselves promoting new products that have a strong environmental impact (SUVs, mobile phones), with the risk that they may encourage people to over-consume (mass marketing) or may promote products which consumption is recognized as dangerous for individuals (junk food, tobacco, alcohol, etc.).

▪ Obviously, professionals in the sector also have responsibilities towards clients (businesses and institutions) that have chosen to adapt to the new social demands formulated by citizens and consumers, the public authorities and, indeed, employees and investors as well. The values attached to the idea of sustainable development are now deeply rooted in social and regulatory attitudes, and professionals need to help their clients realize this and implement their initiatives in a rational way.

New rules of communication?

When it comes to integrating sustainable development issues into the fields of marketing and communication, a number of questions arise about the practices of the professionals working in these different sectors. Once again, the debate format has the merit of stimulating thought and criticism, which will be all the more necessary later when concrete situations come to be analysed:
▪ Is the communication of sustainable development possible and desirable if there are no concrete actions to justify it?
▪ What rules of communication does the subject of responsible consumption call for? How can people be encouraged to behave responsibly? Warnings? Transparency? Information on the social and environmental properties of a product or service? Access to information?
▪ How can the suitability of a communication initiative or message built around sustainable development be evaluated? Checking of arguments and statements? Analysis of the message?

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2 - Production and consumption in a sustainable society

a) The socio-historical context: individuals, citizens and consumers facing social and environmental risks

The second part of this module deals with the salient features of the historical context in which the concept of sustainable development arose. A knowledge of these makes it easier to grasp the issues involved in the key concepts of "corporate social responsibility" and "responsible consumption". The aim here is to identify the forces at work in the emergence of a society of individuals and actors who gradually came to ascribe a civic dimension to producer and consumer behaviour.

Sustainable development in a "world risk society" (U. Beck)

Clearly, the sustainable development society is also the "world risk society" described by U. Beck (2001): a society produced by the fundamental transformations which occurred in the second half of the twentieth century (globalization and increasing trade, scientific, economic, political and cultural production and communication networks, technological progress, the development of the mass media, international social movements, etc.), transforming the representations of modernity. Although the risks are not always unprecedented, they are leading to introspection in industrial society as it becomes aware of the danger it poses to itself.

Environmental risk has a central place in these transformations because it is a direct expression of the doubts which now surround the idea of progress, although it has existed at the heart of Western society since at least the eighteenth century (A. Taguieff 2001; D. Bourg & J-M. Besnier (dir.) 2000). The idea of progress rests upon representations of humanity, the future and nature that are deeply rooted in the collective consciousness. To the idea of a humanity that is ineluctably perfectible, of a future that is necessarily better than the present and of nature as something that is at once inexhaustible and controllable, the "risk society" opposes a humanity that could become worse than it is, an uncertain future, and nature as a dangerous and unpredictable force. Some authors immediately placed this phenomenon in the era of post-modernism (J.F. Lyotard 1979), while others, conversely, see it as the final expression of modernity (A. Giddens 1990).

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Some context

▪ *Nineteenth century:* industrial revolution, development of scientific knowledge of nature, first "crises" of modernity. The subject of protecting nature is introduced by scientists and intellectuals.

▪ *Twentieth century:* while natural disasters caused by poor management of natural resources occurred during the first half of the twentieth century, the birth of nuclear technology and the traumas of 1945 (Hiroshima, Nagasaki) undoubtedly played a crucial role in the emergence of a society concerned about its destructive power – the power to destroy all forms of life on earth – and the risks this entails. Political ecology takes off after the Second World War.

o **The 1960s: disillusions?**
   ▪ Nuclear technology, environmental disasters (wrecking of the Torrey Canyon in 1967, Santa Barbara oil slick in 1969), visible consequences of a society of plenty, the spread of poverty;
   ▪ Development of anti-war and anti-capitalist social movements, liberalization movements, reformism;
   ▪ Political ecology becomes a public force at national level – with "catastrophism" and the issue of survival – and also in international relations.

o **The 1970s: the environment and the consumer society**
   ▪ Explosive development of the consumer society, paralleled by the creation of consumer associations and new movements for public health;
   ▪ Criticism of the ideology of growth (*Limits to Growth* published by the Club of Rome in 1971);
   ▪ First tentative steps of non-polluting industry and first uses of nature in advertising;
   ▪ Economic crisis (oil shocks of 1973 and 1979), criticism of the dominant development model and the decline of the welfare State;
   ▪ North/South debate setting development against the environment (Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972).

o **The 1980s: visible risks**
   ▪ Intensive mediatization of environmental issues and of the actors of international civil society (NGOs, humanitarian organizations);
   ▪ Series of environmental disasters: discovery of the "hole in the ozone layer" in 1985, Chernobyl in 1986;
   ▪ Birth of the "sustainable development" concept in the World Conservation Strategy issued by IUCN in 1980 and then in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 (*Our Common Future*).

o **The 1990s and 2000s: a new model?**
   ▪ Popularization of environmental issues by public policies, civil society activities and the efforts of some businesses. In 1990, the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day attracted 100 million participants around the world (J. Ottman1993);
   ▪ Design of new development models and indicators: creation of the Human Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme;
   ▪ Rio Conference in 1992 and establishment of sustainable development principles on the international scene, adoption of *Agenda 21*;
   ▪ Explosion of sustainable development and related subjects in communications and advertising.

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Governments and business

▪ **Government actions**

- o Creation of environment ministries in many governments from 1972 onwards, following the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.
- o Environmental treaties and international conferences under the auspices of the United Nations, debates on key notions such as the "precautionary principle", "polluter pays" and "corporate social responsibility".
- o Development of public policies for the environment in individual countries, particularly from 1992 onwards.

▪ **The position of business**

In the late twentieth century, globalization occurred in parallel with the decline of the welfare State and the framework created by the public authorities for economic activities. The difficulties of introducing international (and indeed national) systems of regulation and legislation resulted in new thinking about voluntary initiatives:
- o Businesses are increasingly autonomous and need to think about ways of regulating themselves (J.F. Keefe 2002).
- o The economic power of businesses is becoming synonymous with social responsibility and moral duty: according to OECD, 51 of the world's 100 leading economic powers (in terms of GDP) are American multinationals (Tsoutsoura 2004).
- o Business and advertising professionals are arguing that companies, as major actors in society, ought to be investing in the life of the community (*The Body Shop*, Oliviero Toscani – former communication director of *Benetton*).
- o The challenge for businesses: to preserve their reputation and market position. Business expenditure on social marketing was 125 million dollars in 1990 but 828 million in 2002 (C.B. Bhattacharya, Shuili Du & Sankar Sen 2005).

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b) An integrated conception of the economic and social spheres: from private interests to the public good

As the relationship between States, civil society and businesses has been reshaped, the specificity of the economic realm, i.e., its independence of the social and natural world, has tended to be called into question. The very concept of sustainable development places businesses in a position where they have to demonstrate their legitimacy and protect their place in society.

Economic models and sustainable development

Some authors argue that applying sustainable development principles to the business world profoundly challenges classical and neo-classical economic ideas which, by relying on the hypothesis of the "natural harmony of interests" (A. Smith and the theory of the "invisible hand", 1776), ultimately isolate private interests from the collective interest (Gendron C., Lapointe A. & M-F. Turcotte 2004). When sustainable development is the goal, companies can no longer be content to pursue their own interests but are expected to contribute actively to the general interest. Stakeholder theory, which developed in the 1980s (R.E. Freeman 1984), thus proposes a kind of extension of the idea of shareholders: a company's economic and financial responsibility is coupled with a socio-political responsibility which the company expresses by entering into voluntary dialogue and cooperation with a whole variety of stakeholders (citizens, NGOs, the public authorities) affected by its activities.

A number of models tend to question aspects of the dominant model used to reaffirm the autonomy of the economic sphere (J. Brabet 2003), seeing it instead as closely linked to social, political and environmental realities:

- A model based on voluntarism asks companies and economic actors to show responsibility by voluntarily committing themselves to responsible investment, ethical business and sustainable consumption. The idea of "moral capitalism" also belongs in this framework.
- A model based on the principle of "collective organization" relies on both participatory democracy and the law in determining how economic activities are to be regulated in the interests of sustainable development. The role of the State and citizens is emphasized here, as is the political dimension of the economy.
- An anti-establishment model questions the legitimacy and social fitness of liberalism, i.e., the independence of economic actors from citizens and the public authorities. The legitimacy of the capitalist model is challenged.

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Reintegrating the economic sphere with the social and natural world

Integrating sustainable development principles into producer and consumer behaviour entails an acceptance that businesses and consumers (in their capacity as economic agents) have a responsibility for, and an active role to play in, the realization of the common good. What was once the exclusive preserve of the private domain – goods and services production, consumption and trade – is now seen as closely tied to social, political and environmental considerations. Although natural resources are still treated as "externalities" (natural objects are excluded from production costs because they are not considered to be economic objects), the subject is widely debated among economists.

In this context, companies can scarcely act as autonomous entities detached from society. They accordingly need to rethink the concepts of competitiveness and profitability that are at the heart of their activities (S.B. Young 2004).

Reintegrating the economy into the social world is also a task for consumers, who express their civic commitment in their purchasing and consumption decisions.

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c) Some key concepts: "corporate social responsibility" and "responsible consumption"

The concepts of "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) and "responsible consumption" hold a central place in the ethical and pragmatic outlook of sustainable development. They have been the subject of numerous publications and analyses by scientific researchers, institutional actors (European Commission) and economic actors (WBCSD) alike. A comparative review of these works yields the broad outlines of CSR but also reveals a multiplicity of definitions involving what are sometimes contradictory conceptions of the role of business in society.

Corporate social responsibility: a common definition

- What the idea of corporate social responsibility primarily expresses is a recognition that economic actors are responsible towards society as a whole, not least where the environment is concerned.
- The expression is used to describe business initiatives and policies aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of production, marketing and consumption activities on the environment, the social fabric and individuals. It can also be applied to measures taken by businesses to contribute actively to sustainable development beyond their own particular field.
- Business initiatives that follow a sustainable development logic cannot be included in the CSR definition unless they are genuinely voluntary in nature, i.e., unless they go further than legally mandated requirements and restraints.
- The notion of CSR also denotes the capacity of companies for engaging in dialogue with stakeholders affected by their field of activity.

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Divergent interpretations

Although CSR has now won general recognition from political, social and economic actors, to the point where it has become the "conventional wisdom" in business circles (A. Stark 1993), there is still strong disagreement about what in practice the idea actually refers to. It concerns the existence, allocation or appropriation of responsibilities: whether the rules governing company activities are voluntary or binding, whether they are universal (i.e., whether rules are the same for all businesses irrespective of their attributes and the sectors they operate in) or, conversely, can be adapted to circumstances, what the regulatory priorities are (information, worker protection, the environment), and what company evaluation and reporting methods should be used.

What is ultimately at stake here is the whole relationship between the public authorities, citizens and business:

- Many activist NGOs (such as Greenpeace in the case of the environment) are asking the public authorities to subject businesses to regulatory frameworks that confer a legal dimension on the notion of responsibility for the sake of political legitimacy, democracy and the interests of citizens. Some authors likewise argue that the law, with its universality, provides the most effective means of changing business practices (R. Cox 2006).

- Conversely, other actors – such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), a grouping of 160 international companies whose senior executives claim to view sustainable development as an opportunity for companies and citizens – can be very virulent in their criticism of governments' restrictive initiatives. The latter introduce regulations that are restrictive or costly for businesses and are seen as real obstacles to economic and social development. Business is sometimes put forward as a potential alternative to the welfare State when it comes to improving quality of life: "The WBCSD defined Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life" (WBCSD 2001).

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP/CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Definitions of CSR vary depending on the motivations behind company initiatives.

o   Corporate citizenship: a disinterested commitment

In some cases, social responsibility is presented as the manifestation of a disinterested commitment, i.e., a commitment that is independent of the activities and economic objectives of the business. In this case, the driving force is not private interests but a form of moral and civic duty turning upon a comprehensive social and environmental responsibility. McWilliams and Siegel (2000) thus define CSR as consisting of all "actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interest of the firm and that which is required by law."

o   Corporate responsibility: a pragmatic commitment

Social responsibility can also be considered to exist when a business integrates specific environmental and social concerns into its commercial activities and core objectives, i.e., profits and development. Thus, the European Commission has defined CSR as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (European Commission 2001). Specific management systems can be used to integrate these concerns into every level of the production chain.
This conception of CSR combines a defence of the objectives of financial and commercial success with respect for ethical values, individuals and their communities, and the environment (Business for Social Responsibility - **http://www.bsdglobal.com**).

CASE STUDIES

A few examples of sensitization campaigns not related to the company's sector:
- Adia (employment – France) – Source: Utopies
- Dove (cosmetics – International) – Source: Utopies

- Case studies to go further :
    o Leclerc (retail – France) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
    o Patagonia (apparel – United States) – Source: UNEP
    o The Body Shop (cosmetics – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

A few examples of campaigns related to the company's / brand sector of production
- Danone Stonyfield Farm (food – North America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Natura (cosmetics – Latin America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Toyota (cars – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- Volkswagen (cars – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

- Case studies to go further
    o General Electrics (technologies – International) – Source: UNEP

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Responsible consumption?

The idea of "responsible consumption", meanwhile, refers to a particular form of civic awareness and rationality in consumer behaviour. This rationality consists in adjusting behaviour in the light of its potential social and environmental impact.

Here again, positions vary in terms of the severity of the more or less explicit criticisms levelled at the irrational character of over-consumption: while some argue for "degrowth" (M. Bernard (dir.) 2003) and a return to a needs-based approach, others envisage a considered reduction in consumption (stressing specific sectors such as energy or transport) or a different kind of consumption that gives priority to quality over quantity (WBCSD 2001).

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3 - Sustainable development and its social consequences for communication

a) The mediators of sustainable development: institutions, civil society, business

Institutions, civil society representatives, businesses and the media in general are all in a position to draw society's attention to issues of public concern (P. Favre 1992). This makes them "mediators" whose operating principles, status and objectives need to be clearly identified. Thus, in the field of sustainable development:

- Public institutions act as mediators of sustainable development issues, particularly when these are part of a particular political agenda, when they result from a dysfunction, or when these institutions are alerted to them by other actors (citizens, NGOs, businesses).

- Civil society actors play a fundamental role in the public sphere between politics and citizens, and may take measures to raise awareness and exert influence.

- Businesses can encourage responsible behaviour by consumers, forge partnerships with the stakeholders affected by their activities or provide a warning function by releasing accurate quantitative information on consumption practices (energy, green products, etc.).

- Lastly, the media in general and journalists in particular also play a crucial role: they largely control the selection and release of information (environmental disasters, scandals linked to major companies, responsible initiatives, public policies), act as opinion formers, and control the access of political parties, NGOs and businesses to the mediatized public sphere.

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b) The social demand for communication: a criterion of legitimacy and performance

▪ Many actors are playing a role as mediators of sustainable development in a society which is now deeply marked by an attitude of alienation and mistrust towards traditional centres of power (politicians, journalists, businesses) but where information and communication have become important criteria of legitimacy and credibility. This tension, leading to a feeling of mistrust or incomprehension combined with a strong demand for information, partly accounts for the development of strategic communication as a profession.

▪ The democratization of information and communication channels and the development of technologies (the Internet in particular) have meant increased exposure and risk for all political, social and economic actors, with the beneficial effect that they have been forced to show greater transparency and make their actions more consistent with their stated aims. As John Peloza (2005) puts it: "avoiding negative behavior has become even more important with greater media scrutiny and coverage, advances in communications technology and the use of rapid and widespread communications vehicles such as the Internet by activist groups such as Greenpeace."

▪ The right to communication has been asserted on numerous occasions, particularly by civil society actors as they increasingly seek to level the playing field with advertisers: they have been fighting for several years for the right to purchase advertising space and publicize controversial messages/campaigns.

▪ The centrality of communication and the multiplication of the tools for it should not lead us, however, to ignore the social reality of current practices: the "myth of the communication society" (E. Neveu 2001) tends to mask the diversity of these practices and the inequality of resources, and to reinforce a social belief in the power of words that overlooks the socio-political and cultural conditions under which they are produced and received.

c) The professionalization of sustainability communications

This is the background, then, for the boom in sustainability communications. These have been an object of interest for university research in several disciplines, and especially for marketing and the information and communication sciences, and numerous articles have been written about the subject in scientific journals. Specialist reviews and journals are also beginning to appear.

At the same time, a fully professionalized sector is developing:
- Sustainable development and communication are jointly giving birth to specific skills and functions in the information and communication departments of public institutions, in company marketing teams and in traditional advertising, communication and public relations agencies.
- Communications consultancies specializing in sustainable development have been appearing in Europe and the United States since the late 1980s.

Ressources: search for sustainability communications agencies in the CD-ROM (weblinks)

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Module II

The economic and social context for sustainability communications

1. CSR and communication : regulation, controls and voluntary initiatives

a) Definitions: legalistic and voluntaristic conceptions of CSR

A variety of different systems of standards have been developed to delimit "corporate social responsibility" (CSR). Between legal constraints and self-regulation, companies have to respond to social and political demands without jeopardizing their competitiveness.
The constraints placed on companies by CSR have a large – and strategic – influence on the competition environment they operate in, as they seek to position themselves in ways that will allow them to build on "legitimate comparative advantages". (WBCSD 2001).

The CSR debate is crystallizing around the idea of constraint. The "legalistic" position, defended by environmental NGOs in particular, is based on the idea that the shift towards more socially responsible behaviour must be legally enforced. The "voluntaristic" conception of CSR, on the other hand, emphasizes the idea of "self-regulation".
There are a variety of oversight and certification procedures involving a greater or lesser degree of constraint and enjoying differing levels of independence and credibility.

A large body of research (P. Utting 2005) has found that there is ultimately a strong correlation between the introduction of parliamentary bills to create legally binding constraints and the voluntary initiatives of companies. In other words, these initiatives often seem to be driven by the need to forestall the application of a law that is at the drafting stage or by the desire to show legislators that businesses are capable of self-regulating their activities.

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Voluntarism and self-regulation

- According to the voluntaristic conception of CSR, businesses are capable of self-regulation to deal with the environmental aspects (the environmental impact of production in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, waste, encouragement to over-consume, etc.) and social challenges (human rights, working conditions, respect for local economies, etc.) of sustainable development.

- Clearly, voluntary initiatives by businesses are sometimes a way of challenging the relevance or legitimacy of political and legal measures. Voluntarism is presented as an alternative to regulation (J. Brabet 2003; K. Harrison 2001).
    - The position of the WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development) on this issue is radical. Following a free-market logic, according to which the State should not be intervening in the workings of the economy, the WBCSD attacks legalistic action by governments: "Governments that make it hard for business to do business and that try to take the place of business in meeting people's needs keep their people poor" (WBCSD 2001).

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The legalistic approach and "corporate accountability"

- The legalistic argument, conversely, is that the law is not just the most effective but also the most legitimate instrument for guiding CSR in practice.

- The notion of "corporate accountability", introduced by Friends of the Earth in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and supported by numerous environmental NGOs, expresses this demand by invoking the obligation of businesses to account for their actions, a duty of transparency, and a need for legal oversight and penalties for those that flout sustainable development principles (P. Utting 2005). Other civil society actors have also taken measures in support of this approach, both in individual countries and internationally. For example, the "Right to Know" campaign in the United States, run by a number of unions and NGOs, demanded the introduction of a law to force American or foreign companies with a presence in the American financial market to provide information on their foreign subsidiaries and their main shareholders (P. Utting 2005).

- Drafting CSR-specific legislation leads to various problems, however, because the CSR concept involves many subjective aspects: "respect" for the environment, "equity", "transparency", etc. With production taking place in such a variety of contexts and sectors, under what conditions can a product be called "green"? In what precise framework will a business be truly equitable?

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"Articulated regulation"

- Legislation plays a key role in company behaviour where sustainability is concerned; for example, it is often a necessary condition for the development of new green products. This is what is known as a "regulatory push" (J. Brabet 2003), because companies tend subsequently to deepen their initiatives and commit themselves further: "Studies show that voluntary initiatives are almost always motivated by actual or prospective legislation" (C. Gendron & M. F. Turcotte 2003).
  - A survey of marketing professionals from some twenty companies in the United Kingdom has shown that legislative pressure plays a central role: 65% of the professionals questioned cited it as one of the main reasons for launching green products (P. Shoreman, V. Wong & W. Turner 1995).

- Some authors believe that the international proliferation of CSR initiatives is the manifestation of a regulatory trend that is only just beginning: "Far from signalling a break with the national regulatory dynamic, international CSR initiatives are harbingers of a worldwide framework of prescriptive regulation" (C. Gendron, A. Lapointe, & M.-F. Turcotte 2004).

- The future of CSR seems to lie with a combination of legal constraints and voluntary initiatives. P. Utting thus speaks of "articulated regulation" transcending the traditional dichotomy between legalism and voluntarism (P. Utting 2005).

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b) Legal, social or economic constraints and voluntary initiatives: actors and tools

The different constraints or pressures exerted on the activities of businesses to encourage them to display social responsibility can be distinguished by the actors applying them and the tools they have available. They include legal constraints that are part of the regulatory frameworks put in place by governments, social constraints applied by civil society actors and NGOs (chiefly by means of public communication), economic constraints generated by society's demand for sustainability and, lastly, constraints accepted voluntarily by businesses themselves.

Legal constraints: the judicial tools of CSR

Judicial tools designed to enforce CSR, either at the country level or internationally, are there primarily to protect citizens. They allow governments to create systems of control aimed, for example, at reducing the production and consumption of hazardous products and ensuring that consumers are provided with a minimum level of information on product composition, production or environmental impact.

- Legal constraints can be seen as part of an ongoing effort to raise corporate responsibility standards, but examples are quite limited sofar.
  - o At the national level, there is the case of France and the NRE (New Economic Regulations) law of 15 May 2001 which establishes an obligation for companies listed on the stock market to include in their annual reports information "on how the company takes the social and environmental consequences of its activities into account" (article 16). Although the law does not specify what form the publication of this information may take, sustainable development reports have proliferated and are now produced by many unlisted companies as well.
  - o Internationally, the Montreal Protocol, which came into force on 1 January 1989, has the purpose of gradually eliminating numerous ozone-depleting substances from production and consumption chains.

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Social constraints: pressure from civil society

While the evolution of social and environmental values or representations itself constitutes a particular context for action, it is mainly civil society actors who apply active social pressure to make businesses behave responsibly. These actors are organized as follows (Utopies):

- Environmental NGOs are very active in the area of CSR and can exert very strong pressure on businesses, particularly when these are highly visible or play a leadership role in their respective sectors. Leading NGOs include Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the Sierra Club in the United States.
- Consumer associations also play an important role, examples being Consumers International (271 members in 123 countries) and the European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC), which has 40 members in Europe.
- Other non-governmental organizations specializing in human rights and fundamental freedoms also concern themselves with the activities of businesses (working conditions). Examples are the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the group formed to promote the "Labour behind the Label" campaign in the United Kingdom.
- Citizens can also exercise collective pressure on businesses through class actions, i.e., legal proceedings undertaken by groups of people who have suffered individual harm because of the actions of a single perpetrator, in this case a corporation. It is mainly in the United States that class actions have taken place, but they are becoming increasingly common in Europe (Sweden, Norway) and may take indirect forms (France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands) when there is no specific provision for them in national law.

Businesses may be exposed to these social pressures in different ways, but the basic tools are monitoring, judicial measures and public communications, usually urging a consumer boycott.

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Economic constraints

Innovations introduced by leading companies as part of a CSR policy tend to impose new standards on their competitors. Furthermore, reputation is now perceived by financial analysts as a major component of company value. Ultimately, then, the social and environmental performance of companies is also the product of economic constraints.

- The role of leaders: some studies have shown that the pressure exerted on businesses by rivals developing a CSR policy encourages them to invest in social causes, particularly when those rivals are market leaders. This copycat behaviour shows that a commitment to CSR has become a force for competitiveness.

- The rise of responsible investment:
  o Numerous investments are now guided by ethical criteria. The Social Investment Forum reports, for example, that in the United States more than 2 billion dollars were invested in portfolios linked to the environment and social responsibility in 1999 (http://www.bsdglobal.com). Pension funds may also be managed in accordance with these criteria, something that places internal pressure on corporations.
  o Financial investment has also become a specific form of intervention for civil society actors: by buying shares in companies that neglect the ethical dimension of their business, pressure groups provide themselves with the means to influence boards of directors in their capacity as shareholders.

- In this context, non-financial rating agencies have developed. Although interest in these agencies' activities is recent and still limited, their existence is significant, as are the principle of rating businesses by their compliance with legal provisions and the use of sectoral codes of conduct, not least in respect of communication (stereotypes and discrimination, violence, abuse of public trust and credulity, etc.).

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Collective voluntary constraints

Where CSR is concerned, the main systems of constraints still operate on a collective voluntary basis. Companies participate in these arrangements without compulsion, often in partnership with international public institutions and civil society actors.

The main tools, norms and standards developed on a voluntary basis are:

- **Global Reporting Initiative (*http://www.globalreporting.org*):** numerous stakeholders joined forces to create this international initiative, which provides a common framework for voluntary reporting of companies' financial, social and environmental practices. A series of standards has been drawn up by the GRI (*Sustainability Reporting Guidelines*).

- **The Global Compact (http://www.unglobalcompact.org):** an initiative launched by the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in 2000. By signing up to the Global Compact, businesses undertake to comply with 10 sustainable development principles: support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights, not to be complicit in human rights abuses, uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, eliminate all forms of forced and compulsory labour, abolish effectively child labour, eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges, undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility, encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies, work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery.

- **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (http://www.oecd.org/daf/investment/guidelines):** these recommendations, which are not legally binding, are addressed by signatory governments to multinational enterprises. They cover the main dimensions of corporate social responsibility, such as human resources management, respect for human rights, the environment, information, anti-corruption efforts, etc.

- **International Organization for Standardization (ISO) – ISO 14001 (http://www.iso.org/iso/en/iso9000-14000/index.html):** ISO is an international NGO that draws up standards for company activities and provides a certification system. The ISO 14001 series provides standards for companies' environmental management. The ISO 14020 series, meanwhile, deals more specifically with information on the environmental properties of products (labelling) and the ISO 14063 series concerns corporate communication on environmental performance. Contrary to what is often assumed, ISO 14001 certification does not necessarily require compliance with environmental laws and regulations (C. Gendron, A. Lapointe & M-F. Turcotte 2004).

- **Social Accountability International – SA8000 standard (http://www.cepaa.org):** this non-profit organization is dedicated to defending human rights. The SA8000 standard concerns ethical working conditions (child labour, forced labour, hygiene and safety, freedom to unionize, discrimination, disciplinary practices, working time, pay, management system, etc.). This standard also covers communication of the business practices concerned by its application.

- **International Chamber of Commerce – Business Charter for Sustainable Development (http://www.iccwbo.org/home/environment/charter.asp):** this worldwide organization of businesses (founded in 1919) defends the globalized market economy and corporate self-regulation. The Business Charter for Sustainable Development lays down 16 principles of good conduct for environmental management.

c) Specific constraints for communication and marketing: ethical and operational principles

Legal constraints on communication, marketing or advertising are still few and far between. They concern fundamental aspects of citizen protection in the field of communication: misleading or abusive advertising, the encouragement of dangerous practices, health and discrimination. Voluntary initiatives to promote responsible communication and advertising have also appeared alongside legal controls. Here again, the social pressure exerted by civil society has played a very important role.

Limited legal constraints

Existing national and international regulations for marketing and advertising are there mainly to ensure honesty and transparency and protect the safety of citizens/consumers.

- Regulations dealing with misleading or deceitful advertising
  o In France, for example, the Consumer Code forbids advertising containing "false or misleading information concerning […] composition and substantial qualities, the results that can be expected from products' use, and the qualities or capabilities of the manufacturer or provider […]" (see Article L121-1 of the French Consumption Code).

- Regulations dealing with the use of "green" claims in advertising
  o In the United States, a number of states have introduced legislation to control environmental marketing activities (N. Kangun & M. Polonsky 1995). The United States Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has also published recommendations for the use of green marketing claims ("Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims", FTC 1991 and 1992).
  o In Australia there is the publication "Environmental Claims in Marketing – A Guideline" produced by the Australian Trade Practices Commission (TPC) in 1992 (M.J. Polonsky 1994; TPC 1992).
  o In the United Kingdom there is a code of conduct for green marketing claims published by the National Consumer Council in 1998.

- Regulations in the food sector
  Special (and constantly evolving) rules have been devised for the food sector and the health issues associated with it. The idea is that marketing claims should comply with the regulations governing certain product categories ("organic" products, for example) or should accurately reflect the real nutritional qualities of the food concerned.
  o In May 2006, the European Parliament adopted regulations on nutrition and health claims. Claims like "fat-free" or "high-fibre" will be monitored and authorized in accordance with the actual composition of products (amounts of salt, fat and sugar) or their nutritional profile.

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Voluntary initiatives in the field of advertising

In addition, environmental regulations, codes of conduct, norms and standards adopted on a voluntary basis sometimes lay down ethical and operational principles for communication and marketing:

- This is the case, in particular, with the ISO 14020 standard for information on the environmental properties of products and the ISO 14063 standard for company reporting.
- The International Chamber of Commerce has also drawn up a series of codes dealing specifically with advertising and marketing, including the International Code of Advertising Practice (1997) and the Code of Environmental Advertising (1991).

One can also mention the important role played by many professional associations from the communications and advertising sectors, notably at the international level. In Europe for example:

- The European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) (http://www.easa-alliance.org), a non-profit organization based in Brussels that brings together national self-regulatory organizations as well as organizations representing the advertising industry in Europe (15 European federations are in membership of EASA).
- The European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA) (http://www.eaca.be), also based in Brussels, represents many advertising, media and communications agencies in Europe and takes position in regards of sustainable development as related to these sectors.

There are bodies and associations whose responsibility it is to promote or administer systems of advertising self-regulation in the interests of sustainable development:

- In France, the Bureau de Vérification de la Publicité (a national self-regulation body) issued a specific recommendation entitled "Publicité et développement durable" ("Advertising and sustainable development") (11 December 2003).
  - o This recommendation was particularly concerned with advertising that encouraged over-consumption: "Advertising should not provide encouragement, directly or indirectly, for excessive consumption or the wasting of energy and natural resources. It should not suggest or endorse manifestly irresponsible or reckless behaviour", and again, "the advertising message sent out must not play down the consequences of consuming certain products or services that are likely to affect the environment".
  - o It also points out that any CSR initiative must be voluntary to qualify as such, stating: "an advertiser cannot take exclusive credit for particular actions when current regulations make them mandatory for all".
- Besides the BVP in France, the Union des Annonceurs (http://www.uda.fr) shows its own involvement through sensitization initiatives towards communicating companies in favour of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. The Union des Annonceurs has published, end of year 2004, a document about « Sustainable development and companies' communications »
- In UK, the Committee of Advertising Practice (l http://www.cap.org.uk) or IPA (http://www.ipa.co.uk) that represents 258 agencies from the advertising, media and marketing sectors.
- In US, the National Advertising Review Council (http://www.narcpartners.org) and the Better Business Bureau (http://www.bbb.org).

Lastly, important advertising and communications groups or agencies also position themselves in regards of sustainable development. Among them for example:

- Havas (http://www.havas.fr) 6th communications group in the world (Euro RSCG Worldwide, Arnold Worldwide Partners, Media Planning Group), present in 77 countries.
- Publicis Group (http://www.publicisgoup.com) 4th communication group and 2nd media group in the world, with 40 000 people working in 104 countries.
- TBWA (http://www.tbwa.com) – a group that counts 291 agencies in 77 countries – has created a specific agency dedicated to non profit communications : TBWA Non-Profit (http://www.nonprofit.tbwa-corporate.com)
- WPP (http://www.wpp.com) is one of the most important communications group in the world, with 91 000 people working in over 2000 offices and 106 different countries.

Powerful social pressure

The social pressure exerted by civil society plays a fundamental role in enforcing sustainability principles in communication, marketing and advertising. Indeed, communication in all its forms is one of the practices most closely scrutinized by its members.

Actors concerned with corporate social responsibility pay constant attention to corporate communication activities. The following typology can be offered: (Utopies):

- Organizations with an anti-advertising agenda: anti-advertising movements and networks now have a large public presence, especially in France and Canada. They often take the shape of informal networks running out of resources but knowing how to deploy modern communication and mobilization technologies (websites, online petitions). The mission of these networks is to assert a right to an advertising-free environment, while they also claim a right to buy advertising space to disseminate controversial messages. They defend values such as the right to sustainable consumption and respect for women (Adbusters for example) (link to http://www.adbusters.org).

- Specialist NGOs are also very active in monitoring and challenging marketing messages produced by businesses whose production or communication practices they consider reprehensible.

- Environmental NGOs (Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, WWF, Sierra Club) are often highly structured and institutionalized organizations with long histories. They have large budgets and their activities often have a significant impact. Their actions towards advertising remains limited, however, as they can pursue a twofold strategy of challenge and dialogue.

- NGOs specializing in different fields, particularly human rights, also conduct wide-ranging communication campaigns to expose the manipulation of citizens or consumers by certain advertising campaigns.

- Local associations and ad-hoc partnerships are active in exposing inconsistencies between companies' advertising and behaviour. In France, the "Agir pour l'Environnement" grouping, for example, brought together anti-advertising groups and environmental NGOs for a specific campaign.

- Certain intellectuals and activists, advertising executives and journalists have also criticized abusive marketing or advertising practices, examples being N. Klein with her book *No Logo* (2000) and O. Toscani, former communications director of *Benetton*.

Less frequently, public institutions themselves mount campaigns to expose irresponsible practices by some businesses: In 2005 the Swedish Ministry of Social Affairs launched a campaign against sexism in the media with two video clips showing situations degrading to women and criticizing directly Vivendi Universal ("Why do all clips have to look like that? Ask the Chairman of Vivendi-Universal"). As happened with the Adbusters anti-advertisement campaigns, none of the channels would agree to show these video clips (Utopies).

These organizations and actors represent specific positions concerning the place of communications and advertising in society: the right to an advertising-free environment, the right to buy advertising space to disseminate controversial messages, the right of media access for the public, opposition to the promotion of non-sustainable forms of consumption (tobacco, food, cars), respect for women.

Practices and positions

This summary is broadly based on the classification proposed by the Utopies agency, which set out by analysing the codes of the International Chamber of Commerce and national laws dealing with communication, marketing and advertising. All the issues referred to in this summary have been the subject of regular complaints or demands by civil society.

- Thruth and honesty
  - Truthfulness and misleading claims;
  - Information on the risks associated with product use (safety, health);
  - Greenwashing.

- Impacts on society
  - Impact on the environment;
  - Impact on consumption growth;
  - Representation of women and respect for individuals (stereotypes).

- Advertising within society
  - Hidden advertising;
  - The right to buy advertising space to disseminate controversial messages.

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⇨ **See the bibliography on Corporate Social Responsibility and on Communications and Sustainable Development**

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2. The paradoxical aspirations of citizen-consumers: words versus actions

a) Shared environmental and social values: what people say about sustainable development

▪ Since the late 1980s, a whole raft of studies have sought to measure the state of opinion on environmental issues and, more recently, sustainable development and CSR.
Responsible consumption has also become a major issue in opinion surveys and market research. Substantial amounts are now being invested in this, reflecting the desire of businesses, and also of public actors, to understand the profile of responsible consumers. Another aim is to identify the potential triggers that might cause more people to come around to the principles of sustainable development and incorporate them into their behaviour.

▪ Studies seem to show that certain specific values and expectations are very widely held by the public and that this holds true at the international level, to the extent that these subjects are turning into fully fledged political issues: 88% of European citizens now believe that decision-makers should take environmental issues into account when planning public policies (European Commission, Eurobarometer 2005).

▪ Although these studies all tend to highlight a growing collective awareness of the environment and mass consumption, they systematically fail to explain the mismatch between what people say about the need for responsibility and the way they actually behave collectively and as individuals.

Sustainable development and public opinion

Since the late 1980s, the environment has been a matter of growing personal concern everywhere in the world. This has been accompanied by the spread of knowledge and ideas that are now omnipresent in the public sphere.
▪ According to a study conducted by Ethicity and Carat Media Marketing (2005), 66.7% of the French population claim to know the expression "sustainable development" and about one in two claims to act habitually on sustainability principles.

Certain subjects now take centre stage in surveys: climate warming and energy. These are now familiar to people and arouse strong concerns:
▪ In two international studies conducted by GlobeScan, an average of 90% of respondents regarded climate change as a serious problem (30 countries – 2006), while a majority considered that the way the world produced and consumed energy threatened the environment and the climate, destabilized the world economy and generated conflicts (19 countries – 2006).
▪ 66% of Americans think climate change has major consequences and a majority believe that the United States should reduce its greenhouse gas emissions (New York Times Poll 2006). This is also the case with two out of every three people in India (The Indian Polling Organization 2005). In Japan, climate change worries 84.4% of the population (Sei-Kasu-ha 2005).

▪ Surveys reveal a marked degree of pessimism in respondents' perceptions of the environmental situation in their own countries.
  o In the 2004 "Voice of People" study, conducted by Gallup International in 51 countries, only 20% of those questioned took a positive view of the environmental security situation.
  o In the United States, recent political developments seem to have combined with environmental events (hurricane Katrina) to create a strong feeling of pessimism, particularly where environmental security is concerned: 67% of Americans think the environmental quality of their country is worsening, as compared to 57% in 2001 (New York Times Poll 2006), 60% believe that the world environment is in a worse state now than 10 years ago, and 55% think it will be worse 10 years hence than it is now.

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What people say about responsible consumption

A number of studies conducted by polling organizations and university teams show that a definite position is developing in relation to over-consumption and materialistic ways of living, which are now associated with negative values, especially as regards their dramatic impact on the environment (R. Belk, T. Devinney & G. Eckhardt 2005). Particularly in the West, consumption tends to be deemed excessive and an aspiration towards greater individual and collective responsibility is being voiced more frequently.

Many people now feel that responsible consumption is a personal concern (one in every two French people, for example – Ethicity/Carat), the most widely accepted measures being day-to-day practices and purchasing behaviour:

- The Eurobarometer 2005 of the European Commission shows that European citizens are ready to alter their waste management and energy use behaviour ("sorting waste for recycling" 72% and "reducing energy consumption" 39%). When it comes to purchasing behaviour, almost a third would consider buying larger volumes or more concentrated products or avoiding over-packaged products to reduce waste (32%), while almost the same number would consider buying environmentally friendly products even if that meant paying a little extra (31%).

Indeed, the idea of paying more for ethical products seems to be gaining greater and greater acceptance, even if this intention is conditional on numerous factors associated with the main determinants of consumer behaviour.

- In Great Britain, 61% say they are ready to pay a little more for environmentally friendly products or services (ICM 2006). Although quality remains the principal purchasing criterion for 75% of respondents, followed by customer service (71%) and product safety (70%), ethical concerns also hold an important place (management integrity 66%; transparency 65%; environment 51%; responsible marketing 35%; good causes 23%) (AccountAbility - NCC 2006).
- In 2003, one in every two French respondents was prepared to pay up to 5% more for an "ethical" product (Credoc 2003).

While social and political leaders (media, government, business, NGOs, stakeholders, unions) are often seen as the best placed to encourage businesses to behave in more responsible ways, consumer behaviour also seems to be perceived as an instrument of power and action.

- In Russia, for example, 66% of the population believe that ordinary citizens have a role to play in protecting the environment (The Public Opinion Foundation 2005).
- In the United Kingdom, 54% think that they as consumers can influence the behaviour of companies (AccountAbility – NCC 2006) and only 17% feel powerless (The Co-operative Bank 2005).
- Boycotts have become a normal practice and one that brings the expression of citizen opinion to the heart of consumer behaviour.
  - In the United Kingdom, for example, 40% would be prepared to boycott a socially irresponsible business and 56% to buy the products or services of its competitors (AccountAbility – NCC 2006).

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Business and sustainable development

Unquestionably, citizens are more aware now than ever before of the social responsibility of businesses. Opinions on corporate social commitments are often marked by mistrust and scepticism, however.

- 80% of those questioned in an international study conducted by MORI in 2002 thought that businesses had a moral obligation towards society, but only 18% believed that they were concerned about the social and environmental impact of their activities.
- 71% of Americans believe that large corporations do not discharge their environmental duty (Harris Poll 2005).

A number of studies, both at the national level (Ethicity / Carat Media Marketing 2005) and internationally (APCO Worldwide 2004), have shown that a majority of respondents see responsible initiatives by businesses as a response to the social pressure on them rather than a spontaneous engagement. Nonetheless, respect for the environment and social engagement are not perceived as necessarily incompatible with the profit motive (70% of Americans think that improving the environment is not incompatible with economic growth - Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll 2006).

Consumers claim to be highly alerted to the way businesses behave towards society and the environment. Thus, it does seem that CSR can become a genuine purchasing criterion:

- 74% of those questioned for an international study (MORI 2003) stated that having more information on the social, environmental and ethical behaviour of companies would influence their purchasing decisions.
- In France, similarly, 38% claim to take companies' behaviour as "citizens" into account when buying a product (Credoc 2003).
- In the United Kingdom, 70% of the population claim to be very interested in the methods companies employ to express their social responsibility. The figure is 90% in Mexico and the Philippines and 78% in Brazil (AccountAbility – NCC 2006).

Consumer awareness of social responsibility initiatives focuses on certain production sectors in particular:

- In France, the product categories for which it is important for businesses to show civic commitment are food (47%), clothing (17%), pharmaceuticals (11%), energy (6%) and hygiene products (4%). These responses are dictated by the personal preoccupations of respondents and do not always coincide with the real impact of sectors on the environment: energy is mentioned by only 6% of respondents (Credoc 2003).

INTERNATIONAL ELITES AND CSR COMMUNICATION

In 2004, the American research institute APCO Worldwide conducted a study on the opinions and perceptions of international elites in relation to CSR communication. The survey was conducted in 10 countries among the most active and informed segment of the population, a group that was strongly concerned by public policies and civic participation (10% of the total population).

o **General conclusions**
  - According to this study, elites contain the individuals most likely to be sensitized to CSR issues. They are reactive to CSR communication but also "proactive" because they seek out information.
  - 75% deem a business to be socially responsible if its initiatives go beyond what the law requires.
  - Those questioned claimed that CSR communication had a direct impact on their buying behaviour.
  - CSR communication is judged positively and found particularly credible when an independent third party is associated with it.
  - CSR communication is far better received when it is not part of a response to social pressure from civil society but is perceived as both voluntary and spontaneous.

o **Some important figures**
  - 75% of respondents claim to have bought products or services in response to positive information about a company's social responsibility. Positive information seems to have more of an impact on behaviour than negative information.
  - 60% of respondents nonetheless claim to have boycotted products or services in response to negative information about the social responsibility of businesses.
  - Respondents confess to lacking information on CSR, as only 9% of them think they know "a lot" about CSR, while 56% think they know "some", 31% "not much" and 3% "nothing at all".

b) Putting responsible consumption principles to the test of behaviour: limited practices, a restricted market

The perceptions expressed by individuals about sustainable development and their own consumption patterns are often contradicted by the data and information available on actual behaviour (purchasing, usage, recycling, waste, etc.).
Many studies, and analyses of the results achieved in sustainability markets, show that ethical positions are decoupled from actual behaviour. The positions people hold do not translate systematically into actions.

Specifically, ethical or responsible consumerism may be defined as "personal consumption where choice has been informed by a particular ethical issue - be it human rights, social justice, the environment or animal welfare" (The Co-operative Bank 2005). The motivations at work in these consumption choices actually vary a great deal, but they always include a feeling of working for the benefit of the wider community.

Good practice and market development

While the figures for socially responsible markets provide us with information on the evolving state of consumer behaviour, it is very difficult to observe or measure the day-to-day habits of individuals: water, electricity, car use, etc. The data available mainly derive from people's own declarations about their behaviour.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to say that the evolution of ideas and representations concerning responsible consumption has no bearing on any economic or social reality. The fact is that the emergence of ethical concerns does seem to have had a real impact on the actual behaviour of citizens and consumers in several specific cases. Thus, as Nyborg *et al.* (2003) demonstrate, markets for ivory (R. Heltberg 2001), tuna (M.F. Teisl *et al.* 2002), organic produce (W. Moon *et al.* 2002) and responsible investment (J. Cullis *et al.* 1992) have had to cope with (or, conversely, have benefited from) the emergence of new consumer choices in which ethical motivations play a crucial role.

▪ While the market for green or socially responsible products still represents only about 2% of the total, it has experienced exponential and very significant growth in certain sectors. In the United Kingdom, the growth rate of the overall green products market is 22% since 1999 (15% in 2004).

▪ Many companies that have built their identity, development and communications around the theme of responsible production and consumption have been extremely successful in different sectors (food, clothing, cosmetics).

SOME PIONEERS OF THE RESPONSIBLE ECONOMY

o **Full case studies**
  ▪ *American Apparel* (apparel – United States) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  ▪ *Natura* (cosmetics – Latin America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  ▪ *Migros* (retail – Switzerland) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

o **Case study to go further**
  ▪ *The Body Shop* (cosmetics – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  ▪ *Patagonia (apparel* – United States) – Source: UNEP
  ▪ *Innocent Drink (*food – United Kingdom) – Source: UNEP

SUSTAINABILITY MARKETS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (MO = FIGURES IN UK)

The Cooperative Bank's annual report "The Ethical Consumerism Report 2005" provides a summary of developments in United Kingdom sustainability markets and shows that although only a small share of the total, certain sectors are experiencing very significant growth.

o **The main figures**
  ▪ Ethical investments exceeded 10 billion pounds for the first time in 2005. They have increased by 22% over the last six years.
  ▪ Consumer spending aimed at combating climate change has reached 3.4 billion pounds.
  ▪ Consumer spending on fair trade and organic produce has reached 4 billion pounds for the first time.

o **Conclusions by sector**

  ▪ *Climate change:* of the 25.8 billion pounds devoted to ethical spending in 2004, 3.4 billion (or 13%) went on actions directly aimed at combating the effects of climate change.

  ▪ *Clothing/fashion:* although this sector has suffered particularly from negative publicity, "ethical" clothing (organic cotton, labels guaranteeing decent working conditions) has performed well, with a 30% rise in sales.

  ▪ *Food*
    - In 2004, food accounted for 16% of total spending on ethical products and services.
    - Although organic products account for only 1.7% of the total food market, sales increased by 10% in 2004.
    - Over half of all food products for babies sold in 2004 were organic (Organic Market Report (OMR), Nov. 2005).

  ▪ *Fair trade*
    - There are now over 1,000 fair trade products available in the United Kingdom, mainly in the following categories: chocolate, honey, bananas and other fruits, fruit juice, sugar, wine, flowers, coffee and tea.
    - Sales of fair trade tea and coffee rose by 42% in 2004. Sales of fair trade coffee account for 15% of the total and this market alone is worth 100 million pounds a year.
    - Sales in the other product categories rose by an average of 60%.

  ▪ *Energy:* sales of energy-saving household appliances rose by 24% between 2003 and 2004 and now account for more than half the overall market. This development is due to compliance with European labelling regulations (energy consumption has to be shown for domestic appliances).

  ▪ *Ecological cleaning products:* sales rose by 18% in 2004.

  ▪ *Transport:* although expenditure on reducing gas emissions per vehicle fell by 12% in 2004, sales of hybrid vehicles increased fourfold over 2003.

  ▪ *Tourism:* 90% of British respondents believe that travellers have a responsibility towards the local environment and populations. The turnover of responsible travel agents increased by 22% in 2004.

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⇨ **See the bibliography on Behaviours and consumption and on Communications and Sustainable development**

A contradictory and still very constricted market

For all the professions of principle and despite progress in sustainability markets in numerous fields, consistently responsible consumption is still the preserve of a very small minority.
Given that the total sustainability market still averages only 2% of the overall market, optimism can sometimes seem overdone.
- Green products still account for only 1% to 4% of the market.
- Average spending on fair trade products by the French, for example, is only 1.13 euros a year.

Inconsistency between principles and behaviour: some examples
- Most Americans want the United States to work with other countries to improve the global environment, but are not prepared to pay more for petrol to reduce global warming.
- In many countries, the great majority of the population claim to oppose animal testing in the cosmetics sector. However, sales of cosmetics bearing the "Humane Cosmetics Standard" (HCS) label are struggling. Animal testing is expected to be banned in 2013 throughout the European Union.
- In the United States, there have been initiatives to promote the use of "green" energies. In this case, studies have shown from 52% to 95% of American households claiming to be prepared to pay more for electricity generated by clean technologies such as wind turbines or solar panels (K. Nyborg *et al.* 2003; B. Farhar 2001; B. Byrnes *et al.* 1999; R. Wiser *et al.* 2001). After these products were launched on the market in 1998, only 1% of the households that might have adopted them actually invested in renewable electricity, at an average cost of 6 dollars a month (K. Nyborg *et al.* 2003; B. Roe *et al.* 2001; R. Wiser *et al.* 2001).
- Under pressure from NGOs, *Starbucks* began to market fair trade coffee in 2001, but customer demand ultimately proved weak, even in Europe, where there is more awareness of this issue than in the United States (R. Belk *et al.* 2005; P. A. Argenti 2004).

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Responsible consumption in action: the profile of responsible consumers

Particular attention has been paid to the way responsible consumption works in practice, and to the peculiarities of the categories of consumers most likely to pursue it. Opinion surveys aim to compile a profile of responsible consumers, known as "alternative consumers" or "green consumers". The following summary is based on work done by a variety of sustainability specialists and actors, as well as research institutes.

Responsible consumers: a restricted niche of consumers who are activists or are aware of sustainable development issues and prepared to follow through on their principles.

- These consumers are sincere in their intentions and behaviour and have a constantly developing commitment to more responsible lifestyles.

- They are "optimistic realists" (Utopies), in that they want society to carry on developing but in a different, sustainable way.

- They want to learn; they seek out information, read product labelling and, reflecting a fairly general trend, take a detached attitude towards advertising and the mass media.
  - These consumers still expect products to provide traditional practical and symbolic benefits; they are not prepared to make major sacrifices in their buying decisions.

- They also consider that they are ill-informed about the major environmental issues and may feel incompetent to evaluate scientific information about the impact of a product on the environment.

- They tend to judge their own practices severely in terms of their environmental impact, but they often overestimate the number of green products they use or the number of measures they take each day to protect the environment.
  - They may prove to be "over-consumers" of certain products, on which they spend more than the average: food, travel, household equipment and cars.

- Responsible consumers do not necessarily expect corporate behaviour to be wholly beyond reproach but they are sensitive to substantive initiatives that reflect a real determination to improve. They nonetheless express a degree of mistrust towards companies which vaunt their social or environmental commitment unless this is accompanied by independent verification procedures (involvement of a legitimate third party).

- The most reactive group: young adults and women are the most sensitive to green products. These people tend to be urban and active, with higher education. The most committed green consumers have substantial purchasing power.

According to polls (MORI 2005), between 5% and 10% of consumers are highly committed ("deep green"). However, people desirous of making ethical choices when they have the opportunity to do so account for between 40% and 50% of consumers, a proportion that is far from negligible and questions the "niche" hypothesis (Acona Limited 2006).

TYPOLOGY OF GREEN CONSUMERS

The Roper polling organization in the United States has suggested a typology that classifies consumers by their awareness of environmental issues and the subject of responsible consumption. This typology has been used on many occasions since, even if it has certainly evolved now:

- "True blues": these are the 10% of the population with strong environmental convictions and behaviour to match. They are highly active politically and socially, a majority are women, and a third hold positions of responsibility.
- "Greenbacks": these consumers represent just 5% of the population and are not politically active, but they want to support green products and are ready to pay up to 22% more for them.
- "Sprouts": these are 15% of the population and do not think individuals can play a significant role in protecting the environment. They are ill-informed about environmental problems, but 45% of them regularly recycle their bottles/cans. These attitudes owe more to compliance with local regulations than to real commitment.
- "Basic browns": these consumers, representing 37% of the population, feel fairly unconcerned about the environment. They do not regard environmental problems as really important and express their indifference openly. They have the lowest income and education levels.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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From responsible consumption to boycott

Responsible consumption can be reflected in different behaviour choices. In its "positive" form it consists in purchasing products or services perceived as consistent with sustainability principles (recycled paper, non-polluting washing powders, fair trade coffee, etc.).

Responsible consumption can also be "negative", however. In other words, it may be expressed through voluntary non-consumption, a "boycott" that seeks to penalize products or services considered to have been produced or marketed in a manner contrary to sustainability principles.

The popularity of boycotts:
A number of international studies have shown that majorities in many countries have considered changing brands for reasons connected with CSR (Utopies):
- Over 80% in Australia, 75% in the United States, 54% in Germany, 66% in Singapore, 68% in the United Kingdom, 72% in Spain, 42% in France and 43% in Italy.
- According to the 2005 Cooperative Bank report, 28% of British consumers boycotted at least one product for ethical reasons in the course of 2004.

SOME EXAMPLES OF HISTORIC BOYCOTTS

o The earliest cases date from the 1970s and 1980s, the leading example being the boycott of products and services from South Africa. The anti-apartheid movement called for a boycott of businesses that collaborated with the South African regime, which failed to respect the fundamental rights of the black population. Boycott campaigns were also mounted against multinationals that had commercial relations with the regime, the most significant example undoubtedly being *Barclays Bank*, which ultimately ended its activities in South Africa.

o Another landmark boycott was the one mounted against the food giant *Nestlé*, accused of promoting its powdered baby milk in developing countries even though drinking water access problems in some regions made this dangerous for children (read the case study**)**.

o Products containing genetically modified organisms have also been the object of boycott campaigns emphasizing their potential dangers to human health and the environment.

o More recently, *Nike* has been subjected to sustained boycott campaigns supported by numerous consumer associations and NGOs all over the world. The issue in this case are the working conditions of employees in *Nike* factories sited in South-East Asia and elsewhere (read the case study**)**.

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See the bibliography on Behaviours and consumption (link to PDF behaviours and consumption)

c) Understanding the paradox: the determinants of consumption and responsible attitudes

When it comes to social and environmental responsibility, there is a contradiction between what consumers say and do. To understand this paradoxical situation, in which strong statements of values exist side by side with practices that fail to reflect them, it is essential to examine the factors that play a determining role in social behaviour, especially in the field of consumption. Numerous studies dealing with this issue have helped to undermine the theory of rational choice, which tended to reduce individual motivations to a rational calculation of interests, without taking account of the socio-economic, cultural and symbolic factors that are inseparable from behaviour.

▪ The factors that may be regarded as determinants of consumer behaviour can be classified into at least three categories: socio-economic and cultural determinants; the determinants of the consumer/product relationship; the determinants of the consumer/brand or company relationship. These determinants, which are closely intertwined, form the conditions of reception for messages aimed by businesses at consumers. The consumer typologies proposed by research institutes or communication consultancies can also be analysed using these determinants.

▪ Only a detailed consideration of these different factors can begin to elucidate the hierarchy that organizes them in a particular situation (population category, product category, sector in which a company operates).

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL DETERMINANTS

Analyses of responsible consumption and the typologies involved in it often cite the following principle: traditional socio-economic and occupational variables are not germane to the analysis of responsible consumption behaviour.
"In conventional marketing, demographics are often a key determinant of intent to buy specific products. But in green marketing, what seems to determine willingness to purchase environmentally conscious products – more than demographics or even levels of concern for a specific environmental issue – are consumers' feelings of being able to act on these issues, or empowerment" (J.A. Ottman 1993).
It does seem germane, however, to consider the social determinants of this feeling of capability and power, which probably varies by the socio-economic and cultural profile of the individual. Certain surveys tend to show that awareness of corporate social responsibility issues can vary by socio-occupational profile. Thus, a study by Crédoc in 2003 (France) identified some dominant concerns for at least four socio-occupational classes of individuals:
o Middle managers and employees, ages 25-39, baccalaureate/higher education certificate: "ensure decent working conditions for employees" and "do not use child labour".
o Self-employed, retired, villages of less than 2,000 inhabitants, ages 40-59, 60-69, BEPC level (the BEPC is an exam taken at 16): "make products in France".
o Students, under 25s: "donate part of company turnover to help the third world".
o Workers, unqualified: "donate part of company turnover to medical research".

The idea that socio-economic and occupational determinants do not influence the "responsibility" of people's behaviour may derive from a confusion between objective reality – environmental problems potentially concern all individuals without distinction (although this is debatable) – and subjective representations that still structure the social and cultural outlook of individuals.

STUDIES AND METHODOLOGIES

There are at least two explanations for the inability of opinion studies to comprehend the profound divergence between stated positions and actual behaviour. The first is the failure to take a number of determinants into account, while the second has more to do with the problems raised by the methodologies these studies use.

It can be useful to give consideration to the techniques used in conducting opinion surveys or market research (quantitative and qualitative methodologies) and to the nature of the data they give access to, since these raise numerous problems of interpretation. In many cases, a qualitative and projective approach seems best suited to the subject of responsible consumption; this can bypass "socially acceptable" responses and provide a deeper knowledge of people's actual representations and behaviour. There are a large number of studies dealing with this issue.

Economic, social and cultural determinants

There is a dearth of sociological studies dealing with stated attitudes and behaviour in relation to responsible consumption and CSR. It is wholly likely, though, that the social environment and identity of individuals play a fundamental role in their behaviour, if only by determining the knowledge available to them for making choices.

- Example: in France, people are far more likely to be aware of the expression "sustainable development" if they live in conurbations of more than 100,000 inhabitants (75.5%), work in intermediate occupations (79.8%), have two or more years of higher education (83%) or postgraduate studies (91.2%) or belong to the higher socio-occupational categories (94.1%) (France, Ethicity/Carat Media Marketing 2005).

In this context, and depending on the profile, responsible behaviour is motivated by particular perceptions concerning the individual (and also collective) benefits it brings.

- For example: in France, 57.7% of the population would buy environmentally friendly products because they are healthier (individual benefit). But more than 38% would buy fair trade products because they represent a guarantee that the business is ethically run or because the distributor of the product supports initiatives in poor countries (collective benefit) (Credoc 2003).

- Identification and reciprocity
  - Responsible consumption behaviour could be motivated by a desire for social recognition and appreciation (K. A. Brekke *et al* 2003).
  - Beliefs about collective practices could have a profound influence on the way individuals engage with social responsibility. One might speak here of social mimesis: if individuals recycle, it is because they believe recycling to be a widespread practice in their community (P.W. Schultz 2002).
  - Individuals could also decide to make a social effort when they believe that their actions are reciprocated, i.e., that others are making a similar effort (G. E. Bolton and G. Ockenfels 2000; K. Nyborg *et al.* 2003).

- The power of example
  - Certain analyses of morally motivated behaviour connect this to phenomena of identification with the collective good (K. A. Brekke *et al.* 2003): "moral motivation is defined as behaviour that (in the judgement of the individual) would optimize collective welfare if everyone adopted it" (K. Nyborg *et al.* 2003). Behaviour intended to benefit the environment may therefore not be explained solely by a desire for social recognition (A. Bruvoll *et al.* 2002; K. Nyborg *et al.* 2003)..

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Cultural factors

Our representations of the world and the environment are influenced at every turn by cultural factors. This must hold true, therefore, for the way we regard our consumption patterns and the responsibilities these entail for us. Developing an effective marketing/communication strategy must therefore involve an effort to understand cultural specificities (R. Jones 1999).

- The marketing of genetically modified (GM) products in the United States and Europe has given rise to very different reactions on both sides of the Atlantic. European suspicions of GM products may perhaps be partly explained by cultural factors (R. Jones 1999). The largest European supermarket chains (*Marks and Spencer*, *Carrefour*, *Esselunga* in Italy, *Delhaize* in Belgium, *Superquinn* in Ireland) have identified a major commercial risk in these adverse reactions and have joined forces to demand transparency from their suppliers in relation to GM products.

- Research into responsible consumption patterns also sometimes seeks to understand the role of cultural factors in the behaviour of individuals.
  - R. Belk *et al.* (2005) suggest, for example, that the differences between cultures are most clearly expressed in the arguments used by individuals to justify the contradictions between the anti-materialist values they espouse and their actual conduct. Although the values and the contradictions are similar from one culture to another, the arguments used to justify them are different: thus, Americans believe that they deserve to consume more because they are intelligent and work hard; Romanians because the communist regime deprived them of everything for years; Turks feel the need to consume more to meet their children's and families' needs; West Europeans believe they are not materialistic because they display good taste and spend their money on high-quality products. In other words, each culture may have its own rational and morally acceptable justification for "over-consumption".

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The determinants of the consumer/product relationship

Consumption patterns are also motivated by a search for primary benefits in the form of the price, availability, quality, practicality or symbolic status of products/services as individuals perceive them.

- **Price**: whatever they might say, few consumers are willing to buy green products if this means spending more. A slightly higher price might be accepted, however, if the product has some added value (symbolic or material).
- **Quality**: the idea that green products are less effective than traditional ones is very widespread. Because consumers are even more unyielding on product quality than on price, quality assurances (performance, appearance, comfort, durability, etc.) are essential.
- **Practicality**: here again, consumers' margin of tolerance is very limited.
- **Availability**: few consumers would spontaneously go looking for products in specialized shops. Limited availability in major retail outlets is one of the main obstacles to buying green products (according to surveys).
- **Symbolic values**: each product category is associated with symbolic values that are profoundly linked to the sociocultural environment of individuals. These values go to make up people's self-image and, in certain circumstances, may be the main criterion for consumption choices.

INFORMATION AND GREEN PRODUCTS
The information available to consumers is also a major determinant of their approach to traditional products and green products. To understand the importance of organic cotton, information is obviously needed about the environmental impact of "traditional" cotton, which is perceived as a natural fibre (Utopies).

Determinants of the consumer/company (or brand) relationship

Consumer loyalty to a brand or company is largely based on trust (L.L. Berry 1995; D. Sirdeshmukh *et al.* 2002; C.B. Bhattacharya *et al.* 2005). To understand consumer behaviour, therefore, it seems essential to analyse beliefs and representations concerning the image or credibility of companies, particularly in a context of growing mistrust towards economic actors.

▪ ***The perceived sincerity of a company***

Consumers evaluate the sincerity of companies that claim to be socially and/or environmentally engaged (M. J.Barone *et al.* 2000; T. J. Brown & P. A. Dacin 1997; E. Creyer & W. T. Ross 1997; S. Sankar & C.B Bhattacharya 2001). This subjective evaluation seems to have a direct impact on behaviour: consumers tend to adopt a punitive attitude towards companies whose social commitment they believe to be insincere (C. Simmons & K. Becker-Olsen 2003).

It may be worth attempting to understand how people come to see a company as sincere in its social or environmental commitments. Ronald Hill & Karen L. Becker-Olsen (2005) suggest that three interdependent conditions of sincerity can be distinguished:

o **Consistency** between the company's engagement or initiative and its image, identity, product lines, etc.: such consistency is associated with clear market positioning and a feeling of transparency, which tends to encourage people to buy. Conversely, a lack of consistency obscures both the company's positioning and the reasons for its initiatives, and this can lead to consumer scepticism and rejection.

o A company's **motivations** for engaging in responsible initiatives: consumers tend to take a negative view (which extends to buying decisions) of companies whose responsible initiatives they perceive as being chiefly motivated by the quest for profit. Conversely, an initiative perceived as disinterested can generate positive attitudes. This is a fundamental issue: some studies maintain that consumers spontaneously seek to understand the reasons underlying the marketing/communication measures taken by businesses, while others affirm that they judge the responsible initiatives of companies as being motivated primarily by their private interests.

o **Timing:** responsible initiatives by companies are often a reaction to particular events (natural disasters, boycotts, pressure from NGOs) - to crisis situations, in other words. When they are a reaction to a natural disaster, these initiatives are viewed positively because they show "altruistic" behaviour by the company. When the company is directly concerned by the crisis situation, on the other hand (boycott, pressure from NGOs), these initiatives may be regarded with a degree of scepticism: doubt is cast over the sincerity and motivations of the company, along with its credibility and legitimacy. Proactive initiatives tend to generate more positive beliefs, attitudes and intentions.

▪ ***Taking the lead from business***

Although many consumers say they are prepared to incorporate ethical considerations into their buying decisions and consumption behavior generally, they expect businesses to accompany them in this. "This suggests that rather than consumers pulling business forward in terms of ethical behavior, it may be the other way around. It is interesting to contrast this finding – that consumers are waiting to follow the ethical example of business before they alter their own behavior" (R. Belk, T. Devinney & G. Eckhardt 2005).
o 33% of Europeans think that any efforts they might make to protect the environment will be useless unless major polluters (industries, companies) follow suit (European Commission Eurobarometer 2005).

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3. Challenges and opportunities: the issues for communication and marketing

a) New approaches to "effective" communication: relation marketing and theories of reception

Some authors see sustainable development marketing (or "sustainable marketing") as an emerging new paradigm (D.A. Fuller 1999). The approaches and methodologies implemented in both marketing and communication have in fact evolved with social practices and representations. They can also interact to provide a theoretical and methodological background capable of reflecting the complexity of today's social relationships and representations.

Relation marketing versus transaction marketing

A distinction is now made between traditional "transaction" marketing and what has come to be known as "relation marketing", an approach that distances itself from the behaviourist assumptions which have long prevailed in these fields and that is accordingly more targeted, being based on an understanding of the social, economic and cultural context of communication.

▪ Relation marketing has been developed since the 1990s to provide an approach to consumers that is at once more individualized (by contrast with mass marketing) and more comprehensive in respect of the place they occupy in society. Its analysis of the commercial dynamic thus includes ideas of relational complexity, networks and symbolic transactions: "the relationship matters more than the product" (B.Cova 1995).

▪ What sets this approach apart, whether in a "B2C" (business to consumer) or "B2B" (business to business) setting, are its quest for long-term performance and stability, the principle of mutual benefits and recognition between companies and customers, and the integration of these values into management arrangements (P. Hetzel 2004). Relation marketing is therefore not just about communication strategies, but concerns the organizational configuration of businesses. Some authors (M. Christopher, A. Payne & D. Ballantyne 1991) therefore question the relevance and validity of the traditional "marketing mix" (the "four P's") and argue that it needs to be supplemented by analysis of the socio-economic power relationships, cultural factors and opinions that come into play in consumer behaviour.

▪ Thus, marketing research, and practice too, are tending to adopt a transversal approach and engage in a cross-disciplinary dialogue that eschews a strictly mechanistic view of economic transactions: "the 'relation factor' has led to a profound and significant shift in the research programmes of certain researchers in the marketing community, who are now giving greater importance to the systematic study of the phenomena they deal with and looking for theoretical support in related disciplines such as linguistics (particularly semiotics, to understand how meaning emerges), sociology, anthropology and economics" (P. Hetzel 2004).

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Reception theories

Changing attitudes in marketing, not least as a result of communicational approaches, may be compared in a way with developments in reception theory since the early twentieth century, when it set out to describe and analyse the influence of communication and the mass media on individuals and their behaviour.

- Moving from what was still a mechanistic conception of the effects of strategic communication (be this political or commercial) based on ideas of propaganda and manipulation (H. D. Lasswell 1927; S. Tchakhotine 1939) to different theories about "indirect effects" (P.F. Lazarsfeld & E. Katz 1955), to "interpretive communities" and to more recent ideas about the ethnography of reception, these approaches have developed contradictory conceptions of the individual in a debate that shows no signs of ending (S. Proulx & D. Bélanger 2003).

- However, it is the network and interaction concepts that, working through "indirect effects" theories, have really shaken the thesis concerning the "direct effects" of mass communication on the behaviour of individuals (the "hypodermic needle" theory) that predominated until the 1960s, according to which socially isolated and vulnerable individuals took in messages in a passive, automatic way.

- Thus, P. Lazarsfeld's works (School of Columbia) on the Second World War and his concept of a "two-step flow of communication" first introduced the idea that social "filters" protected individuals from the powerful direct influence of the mass media. This theory posits, in fact, that message selection and interpersonal networks (we now speak of networks of social relationships in a broad sense) are interposed between mass communication and individuals through the action of opinion formers. In the 1960s and 1970s, the "active audience" theory (E. Katz, J.G. Blumber & M. Gurevitch 1974) would become important, with its claim that individuals themselves made selective use of the media as their own psychological needs dictated. Under the influence of "cultural studies" in the United States, the sociocultural groupings to which people belonged took the place of psychological factors as the determinant in the media selection and exposure process and the subsequent interpretation of messages, and the term "interpretive communities" began to be used.

- Subsequently, a flurry of works used competing theories to describe and analyse the "indirect effects" of the mass media. Although conflicting theories still abound, pitting contradictory conceptions of the individual and the determinants of individual behaviour (choice, rationality, determinism) against one another, the idea that communication has only "limited effects" on audiences is now dominant. The thinking behind this is that the interpretation of messages and their effects on individuals are the outcome of a multitude of factors (membership of a social class, a cultural community or networks, personal expectations and motivations, etc.). And indeed, it is precisely because the interpretation of messages is differentiated – rooted in social and cultural factors yet individual at the same time – that marketing is tending to emphasize the "relationship", particularly in its communicational aspect.

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b) The "business case": challenges and opportunities for companies

Marketing and communication approaches develop through contact with the practices and expectations of economic actors. CSR principles and the question of how to communicate them represent a challenge for businesses – responding to pressures from political or social actors in the areas of sustainability and communication, attuning themselves to consumer concerns and expectations – but also an opportunity, as they can potentially increase the financial worth of companies very significantly. The "business case" for sustainability is now constantly voiced by major companies around the world and by the organizations that represent them.

The challenges of sustainable development for businesses

- ▪ *Reputation*

  The value of a business depends not only on its commercial performance, but also on its reputation. Globally, it is estimated that 35% of a company's financial value is now determined by reputation (J.F. Keefe 2002). In a report devoted to CSR issues, Arthur D. Little cites a study according to which the proportion of a company's value deriving from its intangible assets rose from 17% in 1981 to 71% in 1998 (A.D. Little).
  - o Numerous studies have also shown that consumers attach great importance to company reputations. Reputation is liable to influence their behaviour, whether positively or negatively, in all sorts of cases.
    - ▪ According to the 2005 Cooperative Bank report ("Ethical Consumerism"), for example, 62% of British respondents claim to have chosen a product or service at least once a year, and 58% claim to have decided against buying a product or service at least once a year, on the basis of a company's reputation for social responsibility or lack of it.

  - o Protecting or enhancing reputation has thus become a corporate priority. In this context, it represents a real competitive advantage while at the same time protecting those on whom a company's prospects of long-term survival depend. As John Peloza (2005) suggests, many economic decision-makers develop their CSR initiatives from this standpoint: "[…] in addition to action as a source of new competitive advantage these investments also serve to protect existing competitive advantage through the reputation mechanism."

  - o Reputation thus provides an "insurance policy" (J. Peloza 2005; J. Klein & H. Dawar 2004) against adverse events and the consequences of the crises that can sometimes strike firms. An insurance policy, but not a remedy, since CSR initiatives that constitute just one response to a crisis situation can backfire badly.

  - o The benefits of reputation also come into play when a CSR policy enables an enterprise to maintain good relations with its stakeholders. When they are based on trust, these relationships offset the risks (of boycott, for example). What is more, they seem to play a positive role in companies' economic and social results: for example, "a study of companies over an 11-year period by two Harvard professors concluded that "stakeholder-balanced" companies show four times the sales growth and eight times the employment growth of companies that focus solely on shareholders" (Arthur D. Little).

- ▪ *Meeting expectations: creativity and quality*

  Of course, there is also the challenge posed by shifts in consumer representations and expectations concerning the environment and social responsibility, for all their apparent passivity. This is a major commercial issue, and one that will become further-reaching as the main constraints on ethical consumption disappear. Thus, J. Ottman points out that, in certain sectors, green products are already perceived as being of better quality than traditional ones.

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The benefits of sustainable development for business

The benefits of a CSR policy and appropriate communication are manifold: strategic, economic, social and policial, they underpin the activities of many companies.

▪ *Differentiation and market positioning benefits*

The strategic benefits of CSR and its communication are analysed in terms of differentiation and protection of a company's market position.
The success of firms that were pioneers in sustainable development is based on an important differentiation factor: their very identity, and that of their products/services, rests wholly on sustainability values and principles.

o While such companies are still only a small minority, sustainability is tending to become a necessity for many, a genuine competitive advantage on which the maintenance of a firm's market position may depend:
"We may be seeing the beginning of a new virtuous circle in which the only brands capable of innovating are going to seek to differentiate themselves in the eyes of consumers and are going to try to do this by devoting a growing share of their development and marketing efforts to the environment and sustainable development. Not only out of philanthropy, not only out of a concern for social responsibility (which has been the case for a long time now) but because this is increasingly what consumers want and so brands will have a reason to develop…" (Marc Alias, Director of External Relations, *Procter & Gamble*, in Ethicity / Carat Media Marketing report 2005).

▪ *Economic and financial benefits*

Numerous academics posit the existence of a link between companies' social initiatives and their financial performance (J. B. McGuire *et al.* 1988; M. L. Pava & J. Krause 1996; M. Tsoutsoura 2004). This link is supposed to be manifested at several levels: commercial results, investment, financial value, the development of new markets, and lower operating costs.

o Commercial results
Companies whose identity and products/services rely on sustainability values often achieve very significant commercial successes:
▪ *Natura* became the market leader for cosmetics in South America with a 19% market share and a sales increase of 32% between 2002 and 2004.
▪ In the case of *American Apparel*, turnover increased by 900% between 2000 et 2004 (as against a decline of 12.9% in the United States clothing market and increases of only 40% for Gap and 76% for H&M, the market leaders).

o Investment
Although they still account for only a small share of the market by comparison with traditional investments, socially responsible investments are becoming more and more substantial. A study conducted by Business in the Community shows that a third of all financial analysts now believe environmental issues are affecting the value of their investments (Arthur D. Little).
▪ The performance of specific financial indexes such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), a stock-exchange index that ranks the leading companies in sustainable development, compared to the traditional ones, such as the Dow Jones Global Index (DJGI), illustrates this phenomenon: "During the five years before August 2001 the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) clearly outperformed the Dow Jones Global Index (DJGI). While the DJSI had an annualized return of 15.8% the DJGI increased by 12.5% in that period" (WBCSD 2001).

o Long-term value
Envisaging sustainable development as a financial opportunity also means taking a different, long-term approach to value, particularly as regards capital, and this demands a steady progression through numerous production and sales cycles.

o New markets
Social demand for sustainable development may cause new markets to emerge and stimulate industrial innovations (recycling, waste management, processing of reusable raw materials, transport, etc.).

- o Lower operating costs
  Contrary to received opinion, these practices often lead to major savings in companies' operating costs. A.D. Little cites, for example, the case of a recycled paper manufacturer in the United States which, by increasing the fibre recovery rate, was able to save on the equivalent of 20,000 tonnes of paper waste and achieve the lowest production costs in the market.

While numerous studies have sought to show a firm link between CSR and financial performance, others reject the idea (M. Friedman 1970) on the grounds that there are too many variables at work for this to be established.

- ▪ *Social and political benefits*

  Corporate sustainability initiatives improve a company's image in ways that have a positive internal effect. It seems not only that responsible companies are better placed to attract and retain high-quality human resources, but also that morale is better and productivity consequently higher as well.
  - o In many sectors (especially energy, transport and food), CSR initiatives yield benefits of a more political nature, as they provide a way of forestalling restrictive regulations.

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c) Information and participation: challenges and opportunities for public institutions

Using communication to help achieve sustainability objectives in the field of consumption is also both a challenge and an opportunity for public institutions. What sustainable development sets out to do is lay down the principles for better collective management of the communities, and the first requirement is the informed support and participation of citizens. With the active engagement of the public authorities, this entails communication and mediation efforts by institutions capable of embodying the different aspects of this project and acting as tools for its realization. Informing, sensitizing, influencing perceptions and behaviour, mobilizing, relaying and legitimizing the implementation of public policies are all necessary objectives of institutional communication and sustainable development.

The challenge of mobilization

- *Education*
  For public institutions, the first challenge is undoubtedly to educate citizens and make them aware of sustainability issues. Measures for this purpose include the creation of didactic communication tools and dialogue with education professionals.

  o **Full case studies**
    - **Algeria "The Environment Train" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
    - **Ireland "Sustainable Development in Schools" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
    - **United Kingdom « Responsible institution » – Source: UNEP / Futerra**

- *Community involvement and potential*
  Another way of conveying sustainability issues is to design tools and communication methods based on the principles of citizen participation and consultation.

  o **Full case studies**
    - **Poland "Forum ECO-Media" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
    - **South Africa "The Cleanest Town Competition" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
    - **Vietnam « Campaign against pesticides » – Source: UNEP / Futerra**

- *Partnerships*
  By definition, sustainable development entails the creation of partnerships that enable social or environmental issues to be addressed from a transversal and pluralist standpoint. Another aim of communication measures based on a partnership policy is to implement decentralized forms of communication (or proximity communication) for a subject often seen as too abstract.

  o **Full case studies**
    - **Sweden "Campaign on Climate Change" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
    - **France "Energy Savings. Hurry up, it's getting warmer!" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**

The opportunities: solidarity and responsibility
Public sustainability communications are also an opportunity for institutions, allowing them to create new forms of solidarity (fair trade for example) and responsibility (consumption), or to support public policies that introduce elements of coercion into their programme (road safety).

- **Full case studies**
  o **Austria "Campaign on Fair Trade" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
  o **New Zealand "The Big Clean-Up" – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
  o **Spain « Behaviours and sustainable development » – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
  o **Brazil « Health and environment » – Source: UNEP / Futerra**
  o **Costa Rica « Environment and agriculture » – Source: UNEP / Futerra**

- **Case study to go further**
  o **UK "Big Wheel"** (link to the case study Big wheel) **– Source: UNEP**

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Module III

Sustainability communications in practice

1. Differentiated practices and issues for communicating sustainability

a) Product communication and sustainability: "green marketing" objectives and tools

To begin with, it is interesting to note that the sectors with the largest ecological footprint (transport, food, energy) are also among the ones that communicate the most.

- Sensitive sectors – particularly the petrochemical and automobile industries – invest a great deal in advertising. In certain sectors, furthermore, just one or a handful of companies sometimes account for more than half of all advertising. Thus, a study that analysed advertisements published in Newsweek from 1997 to 2005 found that Shell accounted for over 60% of petrochemical sector advertisements and Opel and Toyota for over 50% of automobile sector advertisements (Utopies).
- The share of advertisements dealing with corporate social responsibility issues remains small and seems to be rising slowly, with progress most visible in the United States (Utopies).

The forms and methods used for sustainability communication are manifold, as are the goals pursued and the tools employed by companies or public institutions in this field. In the case of company communications, at least four areas of practice can be distinguished, differing mainly in terms of strategic objectives: corporate communication (development of a company/brand image or reputation) intended to convey a responsible or civic image of the company, green marketing (product communication), social marketing (encouraging consumers to behave responsibly) and responsible marketing (codes of conduct for communication).
While these distinctions have the advantage of providing an organized overview of practices, the boundaries are often blurred: any company deciding to launch and promote a green product will also be hoping that its reputation will benefit.

Again, this is not the only possible classification. According to R. Cox (2006), businesses establish their public presence in the following three ways: "(1) the practice of green marketing, or the construction of an environmental identity for corporate products, images and behaviors; (2) industry advocacy campaigns aimed at influencing environmental legislation, agency rules, and public opinion, and (3) tactics to discredit or intimidate environmental critics." (R. Cox 2006).

Context and definition

- "Green marketing" encompasses all communication operations undertaken to promote a product on the basis of its environmental properties, or of its social qualities: it is about "selling products on an ethical platform" (Utopies). The commercial dimension and the reference to values, giving consumers the feeling that they are acting in a civic, responsible manner by making the purchase, are the distinctive features of green marketing.
In practice, ethical arguments can be included at any stage in the development of a marketing concept - the platform upon which a product is positioned, the "insight" (formulation of a problem or specific expectation to which the product is designed to respond), the practical or symbolic benefits of the product and the description of its intrinsic properties to show that it really can live up to expectations and to endow it with credibility ("reason to believe").

- This definition restricts green marketing to its communicational and promotional dimension. Some authors dislike the way it is so often perceived as a procedure that consists simply in coming up with clever formulas and seductive arguments (J.M. Polonsky 1994; Fuller 1996). In a broader sense, green marketing can refer to all development and marketing operations that are upstream of communication and provide the justification for it. Its use is not confined to consumer products, but extends to services and industrial production as well, for example in a B2B (Business to Business) environment. Thus, "green or environmental marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" (Polonsky 1994).
By extension, green marketing also encompasses commercial activities designed to be socially and economically effective in meeting sustainability requirements.

GREEN MARKETING AND PRICE

Green products are often some of the most expensive, irrespective of the category to which they belong. For example, "organic" products cost between 13% and 30% more than traditional foods. In the case of "fair trade" products, the price can be double.

This constraint gives rise to a variety of strategic choices, and major retailers adopt different attitudes towards the pricing of products that qualify as "organic" or "fair trade":

o *Sainsbury* (United Kingdom) and many distributors refuse to promote organic products on price, because production costs are objectively higher.

o Conversely, other companies are trying to encourage consumers to break through the price barrier: *Ahold's Albert Heijn* (Netherlands) offers permanent reductions of 5% to 35% on a selection of 25 organic food products. In France, *Auchan* has held down the group margins on fair trade products to 25%.

For all their attractiveness and potential, launches of green products sometimes end in commercial failure, largely as a result of the price barrier:

o *Volkswagen's* 3L Lupo model has experienced major commercial difficulties despite its technological performance (lowest CO2 rate on the market).

o The financial performance of the *Toyota* Prius, the world's top-selling hybrid car, has been very modest so far despite its popularity.

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Practices: green marketing and communication

▪ In its communicational aspect, green marketing involves the development of messages based on ethical arguments that express the material or symbolic qualities of a product. These arguments encompass the way the product is manufactured, its intrinsic properties ("phosphate-free") and the environmental benefits that using it brings ("recyclable", lower CO2 emissions). The qualities of green or responsible products thus vary:

  o A more environmentally friendly alternative to standard products.

  o Safety guarantees for consumers, particularly in the case of food (*Stonyfield Farm* and its "organic" products) and cosmetics (*Natura* with its environmentally friendly products and support for indigenous communities).

  o A specific, day-to-day commitment to responsible behaviour on the part of the consumer: responsible car use, for example (*Toyota, Volkswagen*).

  o Adherence to values or support for a cause (*Grupo de Açúcar* for fair trade, *American Apparel* for respect for individuals in the workplace and for the environment).

▪ Some campaigns are ambiguous, however, when they ostensibly set out to raise public awareness while having as their main object the promotion of a product or brand. This is not green marketing as such, because the product or brand does not present any appropriate environmental or social characteristics, but commercial objectives are explicitly associated with ethical arguments:

  o Thus, the international campaign "Real beauty" mounted by *Dove* attacked advertising stereotypes embodying a dangerous and unhealthy feminine ideal, whilst promoting personal care products and cosmetics that were without any special environmental or social properties.

  o Similarly, a car advertising campaign mounted by *KIA Motors* in the United Kingdom, "For long trips, use the Sedona. For short ones, use your loaf", encouraged consumers to use unmotorized forms of transport whilst promoting the Sedona model, which has no special environmental qualities.

▪ The main tools for green marketing are advertising, packaging and in-store communication:

  o *Natura*, the market leader for cosmetics in South America, conducts major advertising campaigns on the subjects of nature and tradition.

  o *Stonyfield Farm* (*Danone*), the leader in the United States yoghurt market, communicates its commitment on its packaging by means of slogans such as "Get to the source" or "Think more, use less".

  o The "Caras do Brazil" in-store campaign mounted by the Brazilian distributor *Grupo de Açúcar* to promote local production succeeded in promoting 69 small-scale producers through the sale of 60,000 products.

ECOLABELLING AND CERTIFICATION

The use of responsible labelling or certification methods is common in green marketing. Whether based on international systems (ISO), sectoral standards (Forest Stewardship Council) or internal programmes created by companies themselves, they can greatly enhance corporate credibility if they are overseen by independent bodies. Nonetheless, a distinction needs to be drawn between official ecolabels developed and assigned by independent bodies or institutions and companies' own ecolabelling. The right to use the former is granted on the basis of transparent assessment scales developed for different sectors and product groups. Conversely, in-house labels are developed by companies using criteria decided upon by them alone and apply only to their own activities. On the whole, ecolabels awarded by an outside body are more reliable for consumers than companies' own ecolabels. However, they can sometimes create confusion in consumers' minds as a result of proliferation (too many labels kill the label).

Green products	Over the last twenty years, many countries, especially in Europe, have developed national certification systems and labelling on the basis of sectoral standards. The European Union launched its own label in 1992. For each type of product, standards are developed in cooperation with producers, environmental NGOs and consumer associations. **The European Ecolabel** certifies that a product is more environmentally friendly than alternatives intended for the same purpose, whilst being equally functional and effective. **The European Union Energy Label**: this label has to be displayed on certain types of household electrical appliances to show their energy consumption. **The Blue Angel** (Der blauer Engel): German ecolabel created in 1977. **Environmental Choice**: an Environment Canada ecolabelling programme created in 1988. **NF-Environnement**: French ecolabel created in 1991. **The Nordic Swan**: created in 1991 and now used in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark.
Organic farming	Voluntary standards developed by farming associations in countries with third-party certification systems since the 1970s. "Organic" claims are now regulated in over 60 countries by a certification system based on official standards. **European organic label**: guarantees compliance with the requirements of European organic farming regulations.
Fair trade (mainly in agriculture)	Fair trade has developed in much the same way, with voluntary standards and systems of certification by product category being created by NGOs at the national level. In 2002 they adopted a common framework. Some governments are now planning to establish an official standard. **Fair Trade Certified™ standards**: they aim to assure farmers and stockbreeders in developing countries of a fair price for their products, direct dealings with buyers and access to credit, and to encourage sustainable production methods, for example by banning forced child labour.
Sustainable and responsible agriculture	Inspired by the success of organic products and fair trade, businesses, NGOs and/or governmental organizations with responsibilities in this area have developed a number of less stringent standards and labels to certify products that are produced more responsibly/sustainably than alternatives but still cater to a cost-conscious volume market. **The Rainforest Alliance label**: used by Kraft Foods for coffee and Chiquita for bananas. **The Food Alliance (United States) and Ahold's Utz Kapeh Foundation** for coffee.
Sustainable wood and paper	**The Forest Stewardship Council**, created jointly in 1993 by the WWF, NGOs and businesses, has developed an independent certification system. Its label is awarded to wood and wood derivatives from forests that are managed "sustainably" in a way that respects local populations, the environment and natural resources. Specific labels were subsequently developed by industry associations such as the **Pan-European Forest Certification (PEFC)** programme, created in 1998. This initiative was followed up in 1999 when 12 countries created the Pan-European Forest Certification Council (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, subsequently joined by Latvia, Denmark, Italy, Canada and the United States), which evaluates national certification schemes (21 recognized to date).
Sustainable fisheries	Following the same approach, the **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)** was created in 1997 by the WWF and Unilever before becoming independent in 1999. Subsequently, some distributors (Carrefour, Coop in Switzerland) developed their own standards and labels without independent certification.

CASE STUDIES

- **American Apparel** (apparel – United States) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Danone Stonyfield Farm** (food – North America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Grupo de Açucar** (retail – Brazil) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Natura** (cosmetics – Latin America) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Toyota** (cars – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Volkswagen** (cars – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

- **Etudes de cas à approfondir**

    o **Kia Motors** (cars – United Kingdom) – Source : UNEP / Utopies
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b) Corporate communication and social and responsible marketing: objectives and tools

Corporate communication

Corporate communication includes all communication operations undertaken to enhance the status of a business or organization and not, directly, its products or services. Within the context of CSR, the aim is to construct and convey the image of a responsible and/or civic-minded enterprise.
The communication measures that may be taken for this purpose are very varied and largely depend on the audience being addressed (public opinion, consumers, wage-earners, shareholders, legislators, etc.).

Two types of approach can be distinguished:
- A "cause branding" approach: one-off marketing/communication operation associated with a "good cause"
- A CSR communication approach: long-term communication strategy focusing on the social and environmental practices of the company or on dialogue with stakeholders.

Sectors with a major environmental impact sometimes choose to invest heavily in corporate communication to bolster their respectability and increase consumer trust. Examples include the petrochemical industry (*BP*'s "Beyond Petroleum", *Total*'s "Our energy is your energy").

CASE STUDIES

- **Carrefour** (retail – France) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Mc Donald's** (fast food – International) – Source: Utopies

- Case studies to go further
    - **BP** (Oil industry – International) – Source: UNEP
    - **Nike** (apparel – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
    - **Total** (oil industry – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

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Social marketing

- ***Definition***
  Social marketing encompasses all communication operations undertaken to encourage consumers to behave responsibly or sustainably.
  Companies adopt an educative or even didactic approach, displaying their own commitment as they appeal to consumers' civic conscience. Thus, social marketing can also be envisaged as a form of corporate communication. Depending on whose viewpoint is consulted, this educative approach either supplements or aims to replace awareness-raising measures by the public authorities.

  It is the inherently uncommercial character of social marketing that sets it apart. Communication measures of this kind aim to promote not a product but responsible behaviour and practices. They sometimes set out to help consumers understand products and grasp the environmental or social consequences of consuming them. Thus, Spain's third-largest distribution chain, *Eroski*, has set up "consumer schools".

  In social marketing, communication activities may also be designed to gain consumer support for a corporate policy: "These campaigns often seek to encourage consumers to behave responsibly and are usually the work of companies which, having incorporated social responsibility into the products or services they supply, require a matching commitment from their customers for their actions to be really effective" (Utopies).

Social marketing and communication

Social marketing campaigns are akin to information and awareness campaigns. They play a crucial role in the way companies manage and develop their image or reputation in terms of legitimacy and respectability. They are undertaken especially in the sectors that are most closely involved with the major issues, namely health (tobacco, alcohol, and also food, now that the subjects of "healthy eating" and obesity have come to prominence), the environment, where messages centre on the depletion of natural resources and global warming (water, energy, cars), or over consumption and its incompatibility with sustainable development (major retailers). The proliferation of campaigns of this type in the sectors most heavily involved with these issues has given them a higher profile in civil society. They are sometimes targeted by protest campaigns (employing subvertising, for example) whose purpose is to expose cases of greenwashing or to undermine the credibility of CSR initiatives by companies whose main activities are deemed to run counter to sustainability.

- Most of such campaigns are used by companies to alert public opinion to issues of general interest that they consider important in their markets.There are many examples of campaigns that have been well received by the public and civil society while also achieving concrete results:

  o *The Body Shop* has conducted a number of international campaigns on subjects directly concerning the cosmetics sector: against animal testing in the mid-1990s, against female stereotypes, and in favour of fair trade and recycling since 1997.

  o The European "Washright" campaign conducted by *AISE* (International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products) sought to promote environmentally friendly use of washing powder and seems to have had a positive impact on behaviour. According to a study carried out by *AISE*, the campaign reduced energy consumption per washing machine by more than 5% in Europe.

  o Awareness campaigns are not always intended only for the public at large. They may also be directed at businesses themselves. Thus, the campaign conducted by *ADIA* in France (temporary work), "Judge by skills, not appearances" ("Ne vous fiez pas aux apparences, fiez-vous aux compétences"), was meant to alert both public opinion and business to the problem of workplace discrimination.

  o Major distributors sometimes mount awareness campaigns: one example since the early 2000s is *Leclerc* (France), whose shock campaign on the impact of plastic bags in 2003, with the slogan "Plastic bags have a price" ("Les sacs plastiques ont un prix"), was followed in October 2005 by the adoption of an amendment banning non-biodegradable plastic bags or packaging from 1 January 2010.

- Social marketing campaigns can also set out to shift perceptions and behaviour in areas unconnected to the company's activity.
  o *The Body Shop* has run campaigns on the subjects of human rights and AIDS.
  o In the United States, *Patagonia*, a clothing company, ran an information campaign on the environmental programmes of the presidential candidates in 2004. Another aim of the campaign was to encourage people to register to vote, and 2,500 registration applications were downloaded from the web site.

- Some information or awareness campaigns are ambiguous in their strategic objectives. Such ambiguity results from inconsistency between the nature of the message conveyed and the overall (commercial) development policy followed by the company.
  o The campaign "Let's stop consuming more and consume better" ("Arrêtons de consommer plus pour consommer mieux") run by *Carrefour* (France) in 2004 was the subject of much criticism. Given the company's commercial policy, the message was perceived as provocative and inconsistent. Furthermore, the second part of the campaign centred on the subject of low prices, and failed to make any connection between this and the issue of responsible consumption.

- On occasion, awareness campaigns are violently attacked when their sincerity is called into question. Such campaigns are often a response to a crisis situation in which the company has become directly embroiled because of its activities or indeed its communication strategy. Perceived as manipulation or "camouflage" operations, they are subjected to veritable campaigns of criticism:
  o One example is the campaign conducted by *BAT* (*British American Tobacco*) in the United States and Europe (from 2001) to discourage young people from smoking. Public health organizations demanded that the campaign be withdrawn because a study published in *The American Journal of Public Health* had argued that it ultimately made young people more likely to smoke by conveying a better image of tobacco manufacturers.
  o In 2003, a full-scale media campaign was organized against *Cadbury* and its "Get active" operations (United Kingdom), which associated chocolate bars with the virtues of sporting activity. Pressure groups (doctors, educators, specialized agencies, consumer associations) mobilized to attack this campaign which, they argued, encouraged children to consume chocolate by concealing the risks associated with this. Following this crisis, the governmental Food Standards Agency (FSA) came down in favour of stricter regulation and the campaign was withdrawn.

SOCIAL MARKETING TOOLS

Use of the mass media (television, radio, print publications) is very common in social marketing operations, as are poster campaigns.
More novel communication tools have also been developed to reflect corporate objectives and target audiences:
  o Interactive and educational methods are often mobilized: in the form of workshops in the case of the campaign by the Spanish distributor *Eroski*, for example, and educational material (*BAT, Dove, AISE*).
  o Internet use has also become very widespread, with campaigns being carried either on the company web site or on a dedicated site (*Dove, Danone, Leclerc, Carrefour, Kia Motors, Patagonia*, etc.).
  o Some very unusual communication aids have been employed, one example being the *Body Shop* doll, based on the measurements of an average woman, which was created as part of the company's campaign against female stereotypes: "There are 3 billion women who don't look like supermodels and only 8 who do".

Communication campaigns of this type are often conducted in partnership with outside organizations which lend their support and credibility to campaign messages. For example, the 2004 campaign by *Danone* in France on healthy eating for children was run in partnership with the Ministry of Health, and the *Leclerc* campaign on the environmental impact of plastic bags was supported by the French Agency for Environment and Energy Management (ADEME) (France 2003).

CASE STUDIES

- **ADIA** (employment – France) – Source: Utopies
- **AGBAR** (environment – Spain) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **AISE** (detergents – Europe) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Carrefour** (retail – France) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Orange** (communications – France) – Source: Utopies
- **Veolia** (environment – France) – Source: Utopies

- **Etudes de cas à approfondir**
  - **BAT** (tobacco – United States) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - **Cadbury** (food – United Kingdom) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - **Danone** (food – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - **Dove** (personal care – International) – Source: Utopies
  - **Leclerc** (retail – France) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
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Responsible marketing

The term "responsible marketing" refers to all operations undertaken to develop and promote corporate responsibility in the area of communication. The aim is to "prevent marketing excesses" (Utopies) by putting specific management systems or codes of conduct in place. Another objective is to give substance to this commitment by publishing information on companies' communication/marketing policies and on their social and environmental activities.

Many companies have equipped themselves with specific marketing principles, but policies are not followed up systematically and results are rarely published.

- The subject of communication management covers all policies and procedures put in place by a company in order to conduct its marketing, communication and advertising activities in a responsible fashion. Responsible communication management operates at several levels: the formulation of a specific policy or adherence to existing standards (International Chamber of Commerce, ISO), application of this policy within the company (internal communication, training), follow-up and publication of the results. Communication management has become an important issue, especially for health-related sectors.

- Most companies in the alcohol sector have equipped themselves with a code of conduct to govern their marketing activities. For example, *SABMiller* has published an "Alcohol Manifesto" which includes a Code of Commercial Communication applicable in all the countries where *SABMiller* operates. It covers all communication/marketing activities, including sponsorship. The *Carlsberg* group has also developed a code of conduct of this type. In neither case has there been any publication of results to show how these responsible communication codes are performing.

- In the food sector, mention may be made of the *Danone* group, which has put in place a procedure for validating its nutritional and health claims as part of its "Danone Way" programme.

RESPONSIBLE MARKETING TOOLS

Responsible marketing relies chiefly on the development of specific codes of conduct and the procedures for implementing them. The main tools are internal communication or training and their purpose is to ensure that these codes of conduct are applied within the company:

- *Vodafone* (provider of telephony and data transmission services for individuals and companies, 155 million consumers in 26 countries) drew up a code of conduct in 2002 to guide group activities, including marketing. A specific marketing code, covering advertising, direct marketing and points of sale, was put in place after the company had carried out internal consultations and – a less common practice – canvassed the views of certain NGOs. This code was distributed to subsidiaries and communicated to advertising agencies.
  - o A responsible marketing guide was distributed to employees and retail staff in May 2005.
  - o A responsible marketing checklist is supposed to help marketing teams and agencies identify possible problems when advertising campaigns are being prepared.
  - o Training programmes for marketing, sustainability and legal departments are held at subsidiaries.
  - o Since 2005, review teams have been responsible for monitoring the application of these standards at each subsidiary.
  - o Vodafone tracks indicators to evaluate the performance of its policy: the number of complaints registered by national advertising regulators at all its subsidiaries, and deployment of the code, with local opinion surveys.
- *SABMiller* has distributed an in-house guide entitled "The Responsible Way" on its policy for preventing alcohol abuse. Training workshops are held using examples of suitable and unsuitable advertising to acquaint employees with the Commercial Communication Code and ensure they are able to apply it properly.
- *Carlsberg* has developed a pedagogic guide with illustrations and practical advice to help marketing executives apply the code.

Responsible marketing also refers to initiatives taken by businesses to display their commitment to responsible communication and transparency. Thus, all reporting activities (annual report, sustainability report, institutional sites) can be seen as forming part of this, including the "reporting of communication". Overall, the most exposed sectors invest heavily in the reporting of communication to give credibility and legitimacy to the information they release.

CASE STUDIES

- **Carlsberg** (alcohol – International) – Source: Utopies
- **Mc Donald's** (fast food – International) – Source: Utopies
- **Rémy Cointreau** (alcohol – International) – Source: Utopies
- **SAB Miller** (alcohol – International) – Source: Utopies
- **Vodafone** (communications – International) (link to PDF– Source: Utopies

- **Case studies to go further**
  - o **Danone** (food – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

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c) Education and participatory democracy: communication tools and objectives for public institutions

The sustainability communication practices and tools employed by the public sector are just as numerous. How these tools are developed and mobilized depends on the objectives and strategies that institutions establish.

In 2005, the United Nations Environment Programme, in cooperation with Futerra agency, published *Communicating Sustainability – How to produce effective public campaigns* (http://www.uneptie.org/pc/sustain/advertising/events_specifics/Communicating_Sustainability_EN.htm). Among other things, this guide provides a number of case studies illustrating public communication practices as applied to sustainable development, some examples of which are given below.

Education and participatory democracy are often prominent issues in communication practices:
- The French campaign "Energy savings. Hurry up, its getting warmer!" ("Economies d'énergie. Faisons vite, ça chauffe!"), run by ADEME between 2004 and 2006, has relied on a policy of partnerships, rolling measures and proximity in conjunction with a large-scale media operation (television, radio, press). A multitude of more localized actions have brought the campaign message directly to the public: for example, 300,000 individual CLIMAcT tests (which assess energy consumption in terms of environmental impact) were distributed in cinemas when the film *The Day after Tomorrow* came out (directed by Roland Emmerich in 2004, this movie shows the consequences of a violent world climate on nature and humanity).
- The Swedish climate campaign (2002-2003) also combined national and local measures, media campaigns and partnerships, in an approach that favoured decentralized forms of communication.
- This type of campaign is not the sole preserve of governmental institutions with a national reach, as was shown by "The Big Clean-up", an initiative run by Auckland Regional Council in New Zealand from 2002 to 2005. Aimed at all households in the region, it exploited the complementarity between a massive poster campaign and more individual measures inspired by direct marketing.

Micro-campaigns aim at very specific general-interest targets and goals:
- The campaign conducted since 1994 among rice growers in Vietnam's Mekong Delta by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has undoubtedly owed its success to its careful targeting. A preliminary study meant that the campaign message could be tailored directly to the concerns of this population. A number of radio series were broadcast, using scripts tailored to the work and information needs of rice growers and with the participation of provincial governments in relaying the campaign. The end result was a 50% reduction in pesticide use.

Another aim of awareness campaigns is the application of little-understood rules in a specific context:
- One example is the campaign run in 2003 by the Hungarian Ministry of the Environment (in partnership with the WWF and the Rex Animal Welfare Foundation) to alert the public to the illegality and environmental dangers of importing protected species or products derived from them (CITES international convention). The way this campaign was rolled out meant it could reach Hungarians travelling abroad: an exhibition in the transit lounge of the national airport, a poster campaign on access roads leading to the airport, distribution of brochures in travel agencies and vaccination centres.

CASE STUDIES

- **Canada** (environment and climate change) – Source: UNEP / Fute rra
- **France** – ADEME (energy and climate change) – Source: UNEP / Futerra
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2. The risks associated with sustainability communications

a) The conditions of "risk"

Certain practices are not only inconsistent with corporate social responsibility and sustainable development but involve legal and reputation risks, and may even create social or environmental hazards.

- **Abusive or incomplete communication**: inadequate information and misleading claims are now heavily condemned by society. The actors that monitor developments in this field consistently challenge abusive or incomplete communication practices: environmental NGOs, consumer associations, anti-advertising movements, investors and shareholders too. The information withheld usually concerns environmental or health risks that the production and consumption of certain products might entail. Communication is also considered abusive when companies use ethical arguments that are not justified by any freely chosen policy on their part (greenwashing) or when they employ degrading images of women and minorities.
- **Commercial communication aimed at minors** (or "dangerous targeting"), particularly in sectors that concern the health of individuals.
- **Promotion of unsustainable forms of consumption** (overconsumption) that are dangerous to the environment or health.

Risk exposure factors

Besides practices that run counter to the fundamental principles of responsible communication, a number of factors come into play in determining the risk run by companies when they choose to communicate on sustainable development. The proliferation of these factors has led to a need for transparent, rational and rigorous communication strategies:

- **Power and prominence**: multinational enterprises and major groups are the most exposed to the vigilance of civil society. Their leadership status and visibility can be said to carry with them a duty and a constraint requiring them to set an example: "The higher the profile of a company or brand, the greater the scrutiny of its activities and the higher the potential for it to become a target for pressure group action." (Arthur D. Little).

- **Commitments**: companies that make public commitments – say, by engaging with an institution (joining the Global Compact, for example) or undertaking specific communication activities (public relations, advertising, sustainability report, etc.) – also need to accept that their statements will be checked and evaluated.

- **Sensitive sectors**: sectors that directly impinge upon the well-being of individuals and societies (food, pharmaceuticals, tobacco, alcohol) or that have a large ecological footprint (energy, cars, textiles) are more exposed to the risks associated with sustainability communications.

- **Socio-political context**: where public debate exists – nuclear, GMOs, Kyoto Protocol – the companies concerned are placed under a spotlight and brought face to face with their responsibilities towards the general interest. In this context, companies whose lobbying activities are inconsistent with their public communications risk losing credibility (R. Cox 2006).

- **Inappropriate communication strategy**: certain elements in the establishment of a sustainability communication strategy can lead to setbacks. For example:
  - Mobilization of green or social arguments that are unjustified or irrelevant to the products concerned, exaggeration of social or environmental benefits, creation of labelling of the company's own design that is not certified by an independent body.
  - Targeting that is not carefully planned or is too restricted (niche), lack of follow-up or inappropriate campaign evaluation methods.

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b) The nature of the risks: penalties, reputation, "rebound effect"

Legal risk

Legal risk consists in the penalties to which companies expose themselves by conducting communication and marketing operations that are abusive, misleading or even but rarely hazardous in nature. While such penalties are still infrequent, their consequences can be very substantial: withdrawal of the campaign, fines for misleading advertising, and prison terms in the worst cases.
- In the United States, and increasingly in Europe, the growth of class actions is posing major financial and reputation risks for businesses.

Reputation risk

Reputation risk is undoubtedly the greatest constraint on companies. At once a safeguard and a major check on sustainability communication, it imposes new constraints (F. Fatoux 2005) and creates the need for a rational, transparent approach. The risk is that the public will become disillusioned with the company and its brands, perhaps ultimately leading to a boycott. Reputation risk can have long-term consequences, not only in terms of commercial results but also financially (a lower share price for instance).

Campaigns of condemnation mounted in response to corporate communication/advertising operations often highlight some inconsistency between the ethical commitment claimed in these operations and the reality of the company's business. In these circumstances, subvertising is a common practice that aims to undermine the company's credibility, bring its real motivations to light and harm its reputation:
- The international campaign mounted by *BP* – "Beyond Petroleum" – between 2000 and 2005 aimed to construct the image of a green company that cared about the impact of its activity on global warming. It aroused intense criticism from environmental NGOs, which attacked (among other things) the cost of the campaign – more than *BP* invests in renewable energies. The matter was taken up by the press (NY Times, BBC), the *BP* web site was subvertised and the company was selected for "greenwashing awards".
- In 2003, *Ford* spent 18 million pounds sterling promoting its 4X4 models whilst actively lobbying against any form of legislation (regulations, ecotax) according to NGOs. A campaign of condemnation ("Talk about a heavy drinker!") was organized by a group of NGOs (Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth) against *Ford* and its promotion of 4X4s whose CO2 emissions were 4 times as great as those of traditional vehicles.

Reputation risk is not confined to instances of abusive communication or greenwashing. Some crisis situations are brought about by the existence of a social conflict which crystallizes around a campaign. J. Peloza (2005) cites, for example, the case of several American companies hit by a severe boycott campaign in the early 1990s after becoming caught up in the abortion debate. These companies had angered pro-life activists by giving their support to Planned Parenthood, and then offended pro-choice activists by giving way to this pressure and withdrawing their support from the organization.

There is also a risk associated with the advance of scientific knowledge about the environment: for example, the aerosol industry replaced CFCs (gases which destroy the ozone layer) with HFCs, which were later identified as greenhouse gases (Polonsky 1994). Communicating on technological innovations can therefore be risky at times, as their consequences for the environment are not always identified immediately.

In the framework of an analysis of communications dedicated to sustainable development and more specifically to corporate social responsibility, communications and sometimes campaigns of condemnation initiated within civil society need to be explored as well in terms of strategy, objectives and legitimacy. The objective of such an analysis must remain the critical understanding of all forms of communications. This question represents a subject of discussion on its own.

Social risks

The constant risk associated with sustainability communication is that of social or economic ineffectiveness. It can also happen, though, that an initiative or campaign proves counter-productive and engenders behaviour that actually runs counter to the original goals. This is what is generally known as the "rebound

effect": for example, the use of low-energy light bulbs provides an excuse to leave lights on more often, promoting public transport encourages people to take the bus instead of walking, etc.

Three attitudes towards crises

Faced with crises resulting from a CSR issue or a communication initiative, companies do not all react in the same way: some defend themselves, others seek to persuade or invest (S. Fairbrass 1999):
- A defensive attitude consists in denying the relevance of the criticisms made against the company. In the powdered infant milk crisis, *Nestlé* initially ran advertising campaigns to defend its position. *Nike* also adopted a defensive attitude when proceedings were taken against it for deceitful advertising. This approach is considered outmoded, in the field of marketing as elsewhere.
- An attitude of persuasion consists in carrying out operations to "repair" (R. Cox 2006) the company's image after a crisis: having initially adopted a defensive attitude, *Nike* then worked to improve its public image.

A proactive attitude consists in the company undertaking initiatives and investing to improve its practices.

CASE STUDIES

- **Case studies to go further**
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    - **EDF** (energies – France) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
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c) The special case of "greenwashing"

The term "greenwashing" is a portmanteau word, now grown familiar, that describes communication operations designed to display social or environmental commitment "despite the absence of actions to match this communication" (Utopies). "Greenwashing" is perceived as an attempt to minimize or conceal the social or environmental consequences of the main activities of the companies engaging in this practice. In short, the term is used when a firm tries to construct a responsible image in an artificial or abusive way by instrumentalizing ethical arguments and principles.

Specifically, greenwashing refers to opaque and illegitimate communication practices in the form of misleading or deceitful advertising, the concealment of practices that are contrary to international rules and standards, the flaunting by the firm of good practices that are often minor in comparison with its main activities, or the instrumentalization of a legitimate third party.

- The concept of "bluewashing" has been constructed on the same model. The term derives from the colour of the United Nations flag and is used to describe companies that have signed up to the Global Compact but do not respect the CSR principles that compliance with it entails. *Shell*, *Nike* and *Nestlé* are often cited.
- Active promotion of voluntary approaches for the purpose of forestalling legal measures is sometimes termed "deep greenwashing".

Not only is there no lack of ethical arguments to condemn greenwashing practices; they are also incompatible with economic theories according to which market equilibrium depends on the circulation of information. By conveying a misleading image of a company or brand, "greenwashing" disrupts the flow of information that individuals use to make rational choices and thus tends to undermine market equilibrium.

The risk of losing ground or being attacked for greenwashing can be particularly high, especially in the sectors that have the greatest environmental or social impact (polluting industries, energy, cars, etc.) and for powerful companies and brands that have a ubiquitous public presence.

NGOS AND CRITICISM OF GREENWASHING

Certain environmental and activist organizations have developed tools to evaluate corporate communications when these are based on ethical arguments or claim a commitment to responsible behaviour:
- Greenpeace has developed a greenwashing detection kit that uses a number of evaluation criteria: core business "unsustainable" but not acknowledged as such, publicization of good practices and concealment of unresolved problems, lack of investment in environmentally friendly technologies, lobbying for voluntary initiatives and against regulation.
- The "Greenwash awards" of Corpwatch in the United States have been awarded to a number of companies (for example *Ford*, *Shell, General Motors*) whose communications or advertising have been deemed misleading, especially when judged against their overall approach and lobbying activities.

CASE STUDIES

Some campaigns attacked by NGOs

- **BP** (oil industry – International) – Source: UNEP
- **Nike** (apparel – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Total** (oil industry – International) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
- **Veolia** (environment – International) – Source: Utopies

BIBLIOGRAPHY

⇨ **See the bibliography on Communications and Sustainable Development and on Corporate Social Responsibility**

3. Risk management: the methodological tools developed by professionals

a) The minimum conditions for "effective" communication in the view of professionals

Analysis of these tools and methodologies shows what, for professionals, constitute the determinants of effective communication from both a marketing and a social point of view.

Sincerity and transparency

For communications to be at once legitimate and relevant, respect for the fundamental requirements of sincerity and transparency is crucial. It is of a piece with respect for legal standards (applying to advertising, for example) and for voluntary standards when the communicating company has undertaken to apply these. The idea, then, is to avoid any instrumentalization of sustainability-related ethical arguments and positions in marketing and communication; and indeed, such instrumentalization is often punished severely by citizen-consumers or by organized civil society. Communication operations that propel their authors into crisis are rarely productive.

Consistency

Effective communication also rests on a principle of consistency. This means a company undertaking initiatives that match the reality of its business and the image it conveys.
Consistency also encompasses the idea of commitment, which implies a proactive rather than reactive approach to sustainability issues. Communication is more likely to be effective when it anticipates and proposes than when it merely responds to a crisis situation which threatens the interests of the company.
Ultimately, there has to be a thread of consistency tying together all the company's positions, wherever or however expressed (internal training, public relations, lobbying, advertising, etc.).

Analysis

Upstream, knowledge of target audiences' perceptions and behaviour usually provides a solid basis for communication operations. It allows a company, for example, to identify any obstacles to the adoption of a green product in the form of negative preconceptions of the category it belongs to (price, quality) or its position in a sector whose symbolic status rests on values that prevail over social or environmental benefits. This analysis also makes it possible to determine the degree of legitimacy ascribed to the communicating organization (company or public institution) in relation to a given set of issues and a specific practice (advertising, social marketing, green marketing, etc.).

Credibility

The credibility of a communication or marketing action is constructed at several levels:
- An integrated sustainability strategy at the operational level that matches the messages sent out by the business or institution.
- Partnerships with legitimate and independent organizations (NGOs, international organizations).
- Use of labels awarded by independent bodies or reference to specific codes of conduct, particularly in a green marketing context.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

⇨ **See the bibliography on Communications and Sustainable Development**

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b) Strategic guidelines for sustainability communication

These guidelines are a synthesis of different tools proposed by authors, institutional actors (UNEP, European Commission, International Institute for Sustainable Development), businesses (WBCSD) or groupings (Sigma Project) and by sustainability and communication consultancies (SustainAbility, Futerra, Utopies).

Goals, risks and opportunities

▪ *Set realistic goals, identify risks and opportunities*
Opinion studies and marketing audits provide a way of getting to know audiences and "targets" and of understanding perceptions and behaviour and the symbolic status of an issue, a sector or a product. In the case of green marketing, it is also necessary to understand market levers and segmentation, i.e., the social, economic, political, cultural and technological tendencies that structure the market.

Message

▪ *Construct a message that is attuned to sustainability*

- o **Avoiding gloom-mongering and angelism**
  - ▪ Register: keep it simple and reassuring
    - Inform and educate, concentrating on facts and simple ideas and avoiding jargon;
    - Be clear about the social or environmental issues involved in the subject of the communication;
    - Provide evidence (charts, illustrations).

  - ▪ Motivation: question and encourage
    - Favour personal messages in marketing and advertising;
    - Show the benefits and outcomes, both individual and collective;
    - Emphasize what will be lost by not acting;
    - Balance shock messages with concrete advice.

- o **Credible positions**
  - ▪ Company image: be realistic and active
    - Stay humble and do not arouse unrealistic expectations;
    - Admit to mistakes and show how the company or its products can improve;
    - Be proactive and innovative.

  - ▪ Visibly engage in dialogue:
    - Establish partnerships with specialist NGOs, other companies, institutions or research groups;
    - In the context of public relations: develop community programmes that involve the company and its sector of activity, involve scientists and experts in discussions with the media and not just communication specialists, prepare and manage information.

- o Make more information available (website, sustainability report, etc.).

▪ *Scenography*
  - o Avoid idealized images of nature;
  - o Create surprises and confound expectations, while providing a concrete response: shock and out-of-context images, humorous tone, etc.

Green marketing

- *The special case of green marketing*

    o **Product reassurance**
        - Deal with sensitive points/obstacles;
        - Provide reassurance on traditional buying criteria (safety, quality, price, convenience, etc.) and product performance;
        - Mention any new instructions/changes in product use on packaging or in advertising/say when there has been no change;
        - Offer links to independent comparative studies;
        - To forestall fears about the effectiveness of the product, offer samples or introduce launch/promotional offers.

    o **Explain and provide solutions**
        - Provide a response to one or more issues associated with the sector or category when offering products or services;
        - Justify any additional cost.

    o **Associate sustainability values with those of the sector or category**
        - Environment/technology ("Save the planet, faster", *Toyota*)
        - Social justice/anti-Nike ("Fuck the brands that are fucking the people", *American Apparel*)
        - Environment/nature and well-being (*Natura*)

TO BE CONSULTED IN THE CD -ROM
⇨ **Preparation of a communication plan**
⇨ **Check-list**

⇨ **See the bibliography on Communications and Sustainable Development**

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c) *Professional expertise and methodologies*

A field for skills and expertise

The needs of sustainability communication have led to the emergence of a constantly evolving field of professional skills and practices. This field is progressively developing into a competitive sector, even though the number of agencies and consultants specializing in sustainability communications is still quite limited, even at the international level.

In companies, institutions or advertising agencies, different functions or positions may be associated with the various aspects of sustainability communication, be they fully-fledged departments ("sustainability department" in companies) or specializations (in the corporate teams of advertising agencies, for instance).

We are also seeing the creation of working and study groups in which business people, marketing chiefs and communication and sustainability experts meet to share their experiences and decide the context or strategic direction of sustainability communication for companies. Networks and tools designed to enhance sustainability-inspired communication, marketing or publicity are also seeing the light of day, in the form either of groupings or partnerships such as ACT Responsible or, as J.O. Ottman (1993) observes, of award systems such as the *Special Edison Award for Environmental Achievement* organized by the American Marketing Association (won notably by *Patagonia*, *3M*, *Procter and Gamble*, *Natural Cotton Colours*, *Tom's of Maine*).

- **Tools**

Working from both a normative and a commercial perspective, sustainability experts develop and publish tools or methodologies designed to assist companies or institutions in their communication efforts. These strategic tools or methodologies sometimes have a major impact and become reference points for a time. A distinction can be drawn here between the methodologies developed by communication agencies, institutions (UNEP, European Commission), international business partnerships (World Business Council for Sustainable Development) or civil society (International Institute for Sustainable Development).

THE UNEP ADVERTISING AND COMMUNICATION FORUM

(http://www.uneptie.org/pc/sustain/advertising/advertising.htm)

The Advertising and Communication Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) originated from a strong political will: at the Commission on Sustainable Development Rio+5 Earth Summit, in 1997, governments recommended "to encourage business, the media, advertising and marketing sectors to help shape sustainable consumption patterns".

The UNEP Advertising and Communication Forum aims to:
- 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.

SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION/MARKETING GUIDES

- **UNEP & Utopies** (2006) *Talk the Walk - Advancing Sustainable Lifestyles through Marketing & Communications*
- **UNEP & Futerra** (2005) *Communicating Sustainability - How to produce effective public campaigns*
- **CSR Europe & AccountAbility** (2002) *Impacts of Reporting - Company Tool-Kit for Making Corporate Reporting Successful*
- **WBCSD** (2002) *Sustainable development reporting : Striking the balance*
- **European Commission** Directorate-General Health & Consumer Protection (2000) *Lignes directrices relatives à l'utilisation et à l'évaluation des déclarations environnementales*
- **European Commission** Directorate-General for Entreprise, *A guide to communicating about CSR*
- **The Sigma Project** (AccountAbility, BSI, Forum for the Future) (1999) *SIGMA Sustainability Marketing Guide*

Module IV

Marketing/communication applications and exercises

1. Research: do actions and communications match?

It is not always easy to check the validity of companies' claims about sustainability or social and environmental responsibility. It is important, nonetheless, to analyse not only the tools and methods mobilized by companies to communicate their activities or image, but also to scrutinize these tools and methods in the light of what the company actually does. There are a variety of verification procedures for assessing consistency between words and actions, some of them put in place by companies themselves, others relying on the work of the media or civil society.

The object of the exercise, then, is to take a specific communication, marketing or advertising campaign and investigate it to gauge the degree of consistency and coherence between the message delivered – the self-image that the company wishes to project through this message – and the company's actual policy in terms of activities and development (social responsibility, environmental value of a product, etc.). Research of this type also provides material for considering the concept of greenwashing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CASE STUDIES

The communication campaign to be researched may be chosen either by the teacher or by the students. Use can also be made of the case studies available on the CD-Rom, for example:

- "Pioneering" enterprises:
  - *American Apparel* (working conditions) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - *Natura* (production methods that respect the environment and local communities) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - *The Body Shop* (production methods that respect the environment and human rights) – Source: UNEP / Utopies

- Crisis situations: repeat the analysis:
  - *Nike* (respect for human rights abroad) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - *Veolia* (respect for the environment) – Source: Utopies

- Companies applying a responsible communication management system:
  - *Carlsberg* or *SABMiller* (controls on advertising messages, protection of minors and vulnerable individuals) – Source: Utopies
  - *Danone* (controls on nutritional and health claims) – Source: UNEP / Utopies
  - *McDonald's* (nutritional information) – Source: Utopies

Analysis

- *Analysing the corporate context*
  - Identify the activities and general philosophy of the company;
  - Its approach and initiatives in the field of sustainability;
  - Its stakeholders and any controversies and organized opposition;
  - The social and environmental responsibility issues involved in its sector and activities, particularly those that come up in relation to the campaign being studied.

- *Analysing the campaign in general*
  - Identify the goals of the campaign (advertising, green marketing, corporate communication, etc.) in context;
  - Analyse the message conveyed by the language and execution of the campaign (text, visuals, scenography, etc.) in order to identify the practices the company is seeking to highlight by means of this message, the values conveyed, and the contribution these values make to building or enhancing its image;
  - Identify the direct and indirect target audiences of the campaign; analyse the methods used to conduct it (advertising, media campaign, distribution, etc.).

Validation

- The next step will be to analyse the campaign message to check the accuracy of its claims, but also its relevance:
  - Does the campaign comply with sectoral or national/international advertising, marketing or communication codes? Is there evidence to support the claims in its message? What types of evidence and what information is the company making public, and through what communication channels? Has the company put internal control procedures in place for its communication activities, and how does it ensure these procedures are transparent?
  - Are the values mobilized in the campaign representative of the company's overall development policy, or do they rather tend to obscure the major social and environmental responsibility issues that concern it? Do the message, ideas and values match the company's communication policy in other contexts (B2B, public relations, lobbying, etc.)? How can the relationship between the company's communication investments and sustainability investments be assessed?

- Critical analysis: does the campaign present any social interest? What are its limits?

RESEARCH TOOLS

- Contextual research: obtain data on the company's sector and the sustainability issues that concern it; consult national and international advertising and communication codes that might be applicable to the company; study controversies that have arisen around the campaign and the arguments put forward by its detractors (NGOs, institutions, media), if any.
  - Internet: websites (company, regulatory institutions, sectoral codes and regulations, NGOs);
  - Sustainability reports, financial reports;
  - Press dossier: print and audio-visual media archives;
  - Interviews: question campaign actors and opponents.

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2. Changing a corporate image and communicating sustainability

Some communication or advertising campaigns have the objective of developing or even transforming an organization's brand image. Brand image is at the heart of any organization's communication operations and activities, but for businesses it is often critical. It is conveyed by symbols (logos, design, architecture) and messages whose purpose is to embody the organization and its "philosophy" and to represent its identity and the values to which it asks consumers or citizens to subscribe. Brand image is also vulnerable to subvertising and provides a major focal point for social criticism (see the site http://www.adbusters.com).

Image changes can have a number of objectives:
- To express a shift in an organization's policy or approach, or diversification of its activities;
- To improve positioning (in the marketplace, in representations, etc.);
- To improve public perceptions of the organization; to "repair" negative perceptions or respond to criticisms.

While this subject is of particular importance to the analysis and understanding of business communication, it is also relevant for public organizations and civil society actors: NGOs and institutions too develop a "brand image" which underpins specific forms of participation in the public realm and whose evolution is of major interest.

Communication campaigns that highlight an organization's commitment to sustainability may therefore be designed to embody and convey an image change. Undertaken as part of a corporate communication approach, they always have a more or less strategic impact on brand image. Accordingly, it is interesting to consider specific campaigns of this type and the issues they involve for companies or organizations.

The arguments used to support a change in brand image can likewise be varied: new activities or new types of commitment, integration of environmental/social measures in production processes, development of a range of green products, etc.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CASE STUDIES

The communication campaign to be researched may be chosen either by the teacher or by the students. Use can also be made of the case studies available on the CD-Rom, for example:

- *BP* or *Total* (corporate campaign to construct a responsible corporate image in relation to the development of renewable energies);
- *Philips* ("Ecovision" programme and campaign for the development of green products and technologies);
- *GE* ("Ecoimagination" campaign and programme, part of the "Imagination at work" brand repositioning);
- *Toyota* (advertising campaigns for the Toyota Prius model from a brand repositioning angle);
- *Veolia* (the "Demand that progress preserve life" - "Exigeons du progrès qu'il préserve la vie" - campaign, brand repositioning, *Vivendi Environnement* becomes *Veolia Environnement*).

Analysing brand image and its social value

- Conduct a group analysis/discussion of the concept of brand image. What role does brand image play for an organization? In what way does brand image form part of a company's value? How does it influence consumer behaviour? Do certain sectors rely more heavily on brand image than others? Which companies? Why? Why are certain brands so pervasive? Because of visibility? Values? The respect they are held in? What criticisms are made of brands and the images they convey (see, for example, N. Klein's book *No Logo*, 2000)?

Analysis

▪ *Analysing the corporate context*
  ○ Identify the activities and general philosophy of the company, its approach and initiatives in the field of sustainability, its stakeholders and any controversies and organized opposition, the social and environmental responsibility issues involved in its sector and activities, particularly those that come up in relation to the campaign being studied.

▪ *Analysing image change*
  ○ Review the context in which the company or organization took the decision to alter its image: issues and objectives.
  ○ Analyse the original positioning of the brand and its identity symbols (text, visuals, logos, communication methods, target audience, etc.), using semiological analysis where appropriate.
  ○ Carry out a comparative analysis of the symbols for the new image. What has changed? Are the differences major or minor? What are the new values? Is the change relevant? In relation to the starting objectives?
    ▪ Identify the nature of the changes. The way the company is described? Visual identity (new logo, for example)? New communication methods/tools and target audiences?

RESEARCH TOOLS

▪ Contextual research: obtain data on the company's sector and the sustainability issues that concern it; study controversies that have arisen around the campaign and the arguments put forward by its detractors (NGOs, institutions, media), if any.
  ○ Internet: web sites (the company, media, NGOs);
  ○ Record of sustainable development reports over a number of years;
  ○ Database: UNEP Creative Gallery (http://www.unep.fr/pc/sustain/advertising/ads.htm);
  ○ Press dossier: print and audio-visual media archives;
  ○ Interviews: question campaign actors and opponents.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Students can also be asked to work on a fictitious image change that might be justified by the sustainability activities of an existing company or organization. After reviewing the identity of this organization or company (history, image, values, etc.), they should develop a strategy for repositioning the organization's brand or changing its image in the light of the context, a particular sustainability aspect to be emphasized, the message to be conveyed and the methods for publicizing this image in the public realm (media, advertising, Internet, etc.). The strategy will address a number of points. Name change? New signature? New visual identity (logo, style guide, architecture, etc.)? New public presence?

3. A comparative analysis of communication strategies

Creating a body of campaign studies

For a comparative approach, it is first necessary to create a body of case studies and communication media. A record of several campaigns (advertising, marketing, communication) will be created, using visuals (posters, press, brochures, etc.) or spots (TV, radio) and following consistent criteria:
- Subject-matter of campaigns (environment, human rights, etc.);
- Genre (corporate communication, green marketing, social marketing) and type of communication (television advertising, public relations, brochures, posters, Internet, etc.);
- Business sector (cars, petrochemical industry, clothing, etc.).

This record can be created from the case studies provided on the CD-Rom and/or from databases available on the Internet (UNEP Creative Gallery, link to http://www.unep.fr/pc/sustain/advertising/ads.htm).

Analysis

- ***Analysing the context of the companies or organizations studied***
  - Identify the activities and general philosophy of the company, its approach and initiatives in the field of sustainability, its stakeholders and any controversies and organized opposition, the social and environmental responsibility issues involved in its sector and activities, particularly those that come up in relation to the campaign being studied.

- ***Analysing campaigns***
  - Analyse the message conveyed by the language and execution of the campaign (text, visuals, scenography, etc.) in order to identify the practices the company is seeking to highlight by means of this message, the values conveyed, and the contribution these values make to building or enhancing its image.
  - Identify the direct and indirect target audiences of the campaign; analyse the methods used to conduct it (advertising, media campaign, distribution, etc.).

Tools and methodology

To facilitate comparative analysis, it is advisable to decide on a methodological procedure for each of the case studies. This methodological procedure may take the form of an information sheet for each case study containing the data essential for collective and comparative analysis:
- General information on the company:
  - Name of the company or organization;
  - Type of business/sector;
  - Main target market or audience of the company/organization;
  - Key symbols and messages used by the company/organization in its general communications;
- Information on the campaign, drawn from the material collected (poster, brochure, spot, etc.):
  - Target audience for the material and message;
  - Main information provided, opinions expressed (implicitly and explicitly), key words, visuals, symbols and values mobilized in the message, tone of the campaign and intended impact on target audience;
  - Consistency and harmony between the different elements used to execute the campaign (photos, illustrations, colours, typographies, etc.);
  - Consistency with corporate objectives? Any unintended effects?
- Evaluation of the campaign in terms of relevance and results.

Examples of "losing strategies" or communication failures could be included here, particularly campaigns that lead to situations of crisis.

Also worth analysing is the way the methodologies developed by sustainability communication actors and professionals are applied in campaigns, and with what results.

4. Using sustainability campaigns to create performance indicators

This exercise consists in compiling a body of case studies on corporate or public campaigns, concentrating on particular subject areas chosen by the students or teacher, and then using comparative analysis to create sustainability communication performance indicators.

The criteria used to create performance indicators may include the context in which campaigns are conducted, their actual results in terms of impact, and communication criteria:

- Context
  - Consistency of campaigns with the image and activities of the company/organization; legitimacy and accuracy of claims; consistency of the campaign with major sustainability issues and constraints in the sector concerned; campaign evaluation methods and mechanisms.

- Impact in relation to the original objectives
  - Financial and commercial impact of the campaign and evaluation methods:
    - Sales, investment.
  - Reputation/popularity impact of the campaign and evaluation methods:
    - Visibility of the campaign, perceptions, stakeholder reactions, any criticisms and counter-campaigns.
  - Impact of the campaign on behaviour and evaluation methods:
    - Changes in the perceptions and attitudes of the target population, new consumption patterns.

- Communication
  - Communication media and tools and type of exposure chosen in view of the target population for the campaign.
  - Message conveyed by the language and execution of the campaign (text, visuals, scenography, tone); practices or ideas highlighted.

These indicators can then be used to propose a classification and perhaps a grading of case studies.

RESEARCH TOOLS

- Contextual research: obtain data on the company's sector and the sustainability issues that concern it; study controversies that have arisen around the campaign and the arguments put forward by its detractors (NGOs, institutions, media), if any.
  - Any information made available by the company on its campaign and the results (website, financial reports, sustainability reports, interviews).
  - Campaign commentary and analysis by other actors: media, NGOs, communication professionals.

5. Simulation: preparing a communication strategy

Analysis and comprehension of the issues involved in sustainability communication can be enhanced by simulation exercises. Students can use role-playing, for example, to represent all the actors involved in developing a communication strategy in very different circumstances (advertising campaign for a company, institutional communication operation, awareness campaign for a public institution, crisis communication or public relations campaign, etc.). The interest of this type of exercise for the students is that it reveals the professional skills which structure the communication, marketing or advertising sector, but also the issues and interests that engage them when dealing with the problems of sustainability.

These exercises can be conducted on different scales (whole class or small groups, in one or more sessions).

Material to be prepared

- Each group creates a portrait of an imaginary company or organization (identity of the company/organization, historical background, particularly from the standpoint of sustainability and communication, business sector, products, customer or user base) and the goals it is setting itself (conducting a corporate campaign to highlight the corporate responsibility of the company, selling a product, encouraging citizens to behave responsibly, etc.).

Distribution of roles

- For a company
  - Marketing/communication executives of the company (marketing director, product manager, communication manager): for commercial issues and opportunities.
  - Corporate sustainability executives: for production and also corporate issues.
  - The communication or advertising agency (project directors or consultants, strategic planning, art director or designer): for communication proposals and strategy.
  - Market research/marketing institute (director of quantitative or qualitative research, research director): for evaluation of the communication strategy (pre or post campaign testing).

- For an institution/organization
  - Institutional actors (communication and information director, institutional communication director, press attaché, perhaps a ministerial adviser): for a campaign to back up a public policy, for example.
  - The communication or advertising agency (project directors or consultants, strategic planning, art director or designer): for communication proposals and strategy.
  - Market research/marketing institute (director of quantitative or qualitative research, research director): for evaluation of the communication strategy (pre or post campaign testing).

Carrying out the simulation

The students should consider the roles they are going to play, which they will have to defend throughout the simulation, along with the issues and interests associated with them. The exercise will consist in organizing each of the stages in the process whereby a communication strategy is put in place:

- Marketing, communication and sustainability teams of companies/institutional actors: drafting of terms of reference (context and goals of the company or organization, campaign ideas) for the communication agency.

- Communication or advertising agency: preparation of a campaign proposal (materials, message, visuals, tone of the campaign, media plan, etc.).

- Discussion of the proposed campaign and decision-making: collective agreement on a communication plan (target, medium, message, visuals, distribution, appraisal).

- Research consultancy: proposal for quantitative or qualitative research around the campaign (context, goals, proposed methodology).

The final stage consists in implementing and then presenting the campaign (a poster, a brochure, a television or radio spot, for example). The main issues, objectives or obstacles involved in the exercise can be identified by group discussion.

If the simulation exercise involves several groups of students, a competition can be organized for the most appropriate campaign.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING THE SESSIONS

- One session
  - The exercise can consist in holding a discussion on the subject of strategic communication based on a fictitious example, first distributing the roles among the students.
  - The students will work on each of the stages described for the production of a communication campaign, then give a critical presentation of their results at a session wholly dedicated to the simulation (one or more groups).

- Multiple sessions
  - Each stage of the exercise will have a session to itself, for example:
    - Session 1: presentation of the company and the issues to be addressed (terms of reference).
    - Session 2: presentation of the communication agency proposal and discussion of the strategy to be adopted.
    - Session 3: presentation of a quantitative or qualitative research proposal (opinion or marketing).
    - Session 4: final presentation of the campaign conducted and campaign appraisal perspectives.

About UNEP

UNEP is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system

UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

Sound environmental management for sustainable development

UNEP is an advocate, educator, catalyst and facilitator, promoting the wise use of the planet's natural assets for sustainable development.

 UNEP works with many partners : United Nations entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, business, industry, the media and civil society.

What UNEP does:
- Assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends
- Developing international agreements and national environment instruments
- Strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment
- Integrating economic development and environmental protection
- Facilitating the transfer of knowledge and technology for sustainable development
- Encouraging new partnerships and mind-sets within civil society and the private sector

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