

Summary

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Eco-label goes AV – Examples and potential for Audiovisual Communication of Eco-labels (Masterthesis „TV and film production“, Danube University Krems, Austria), 2012

„Ecolabel goes AV“ is the result of a comprehensive, well-scoped research into the opportunities and possibilities of how to deal with the dry and complex topic „Eco-labelling“ in film and TV production. Through both interviews with filmmakers, TV, NGOs and Eco-labelling managers and a 2-year online-evaluation program of films a large quantity and variety of ideas arose. In the end 600 examples of films and TV-shows dealing with Ecolabels and about 150 with similar topics (sustainable lifestyle and production, greenwashing, etc.) had been collected. Out of this approximately 100 were analysed and considered by approaching the topic from different perspectives and varied strategies, with a sample of variant genres, types of film and media mixes or campaigns. Together with the filmmakers and NGOs interviewed a huge variety of further ways to deal with the topic has been developed.

The main conclusions of the study are:

- Many of the fair trade labels, few of retailer-own bio-labels and very few of the national Eco-labels show perfectly how film can be used for advertising, providing know-how, reporting on promotion events and building trust by testimonials.
- Only few of the national multi-product group Ecolabels include film for web and TV into their media mix in order to raise the recognition level in their country, e.g. Denmark and France.
- Often NGOs are very creative and effective in counter-balancing the commercial advertising and consumerism-propaganda of mass media by their counter-campaigns, anti-virals, action videos, discovery films or general persiflage. Together with consumer organisations they are trying also to establish a form of ‚umbrella communication‘ of which Eco-labelling is a part.
- Producers, moreso, seem to often have a problem integrating Eco-labels in their advertising but seem more open to the idea of promoting eco-certified products. As such there are only a few examples of ads showing national eco-labels but more ads where they use their own green claims or their own eco-logos. There are at least several promotional films in the field detailing eco-certified tourist accommodation services.
- TV journalists seem to be overwhelmed with the dry and complex topic of Eco-labelling. As such they are facing a dilemma: either avoid the issue or walk directly into a minefield of negative sensationalism, superficiality, generalisation or non-reflective court reporting.

The fact is that the public lacks basic information on eco-labelling and what the consequences of their behaviour and their specific buying decisions are. Both sides need to contribute their share: It is the Eco-label bodies' duty to develop and understand their competency in using film as a promotional technique and to establish dialogue with TV and filmmakers; it is the journalists' duty to reveal unacceptable forms of production and to show alternative ways of a sustainable lifestyles, including basic knowledge on Eco-labelling.

As a film producer you may choose a dramatically, engaged approach like in the German documentary 'child labor' or produce 'edutainment' as in the BBC doku-soap 'Ethical Man', use comical TV-ads, absorbing reports, virals or general persiflage. But, however you approach the topic and whatever genre you choose, always observe the highest theatrical commandment: „Thou shalt not bore!“