

Scris de Emma Beckmann
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You started your Green Brands Survey in 2006. How has the consumers' perception evolved yearly from 2006 to 2010?

Since the beginning of the survey, we've seen the growth of green, and how it's taken hold in many countries. At the beginning there was low knowledge of green and sustainability issues and brands. Gradually, there's been more acknowledgement of it, as well as efforts by consumers to be more green, and use products that help them do that.

When the study first began in the US in 2006, 58% of Americans indicated they did not care about green. Four years later, the tide has changed, and 75% of consumers in the US believe it is somewhat or very important for a company to be green. Since introducing other countries into the survey over the years, we have seen a global recognition of green issues by consumers, many of which have the desire to be green and purchase greener products.

What media do consumers usually use in order to learn about green brands?

In seven out of eight countries, consumers indicated television had the greatest impact on their likelihood to purchase green products and services.

In most countries, consumers also depend on word of mouth (recommendations from friends or family), as well as the internet for news on green. Some differences are that China is the only country to rely more on the internet than any other media and social network sites were relied on by 20% of respondents in India and China.

□ „Silent CSR” and the amount of money a company should invest in communicating its CSR programs □ become more and more debated issues in Romania. □ What role does communication play in determining the consumers to perceive brands as green brands?

There was a time when communication was an afterthought to building a green initiative. Now communication is a critical part of the strategy from the beginning; in order to get the credit from shareholder, partners, and consumers, brands must be upfront with their commitment. However, brands should beware of overstating their green commitment, for fear of being called green washed.

You said that brands should be aware not to overstate their green commitment. □ What percent of the money invested in CSR do you think it should go to communicating the CSR programs?

Because brands differ from category to category and country to country, there isn't one set formula or percentage to determine the investments that should be made toward green or sustainability.

Many consumers use social media, but in Romania companies are usually reluctant in

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communication their CSR programs on social media, mainly because of the companies' confidential policy. How important would this element be in communicating to the consumers?

This is a difficult question to answer, as Romania was not one of the countries surveyed. However, we know that social media often helps to build the communities around brands that are needed to propel their messages forward. We believe it's an important factor, as long as it's weaved into the broader strategy of the communications.

Do you have any example of company that used social media successfully to communicate its CSR programs?

Some brands that have done well at communicating their CSR programs via social networking sites include P&G, Dove, and Coca Cola.

Emma Beckmann is Senior Client Director, Landor Associates, Hamburg. Emma has over 17 years of branding experience with Landor and is a senior member of the Management Team.

In March 1997 she moved to Hamburg to help set up the office, responsible over the years for clients such as: Hoechst, BöhlerThyssen, EMTEC Magnetics (BASF), DaimlerChrysler, DASA, Astrium, MTU, Bosch, SinnLeffers, Salamander Shoes, Royal Numico and RWE, Erste Group, BASF, Austrian Airlines, as well as more recently re-branding programmes in Ukraine & Romania.

Emma is currently responsible for leading the corporate branding team in the Hamburg office and growing our business raising our profile in CEE through our close cooperation with Seed Consultants.

*Interview by Rebeca Pop, Forum for International Communications
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