



egtabites

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... innovative ideas!



The power of advertising for the greater good

This week's *idea worth sharing* closes the series on a positive note, before the egtabites go on a summer break: Goodvertising seeks to make a difference in the advertising world. egta carried out an interview with the man behind this praiseworthy initiative, Thomas Kolster.

egta: Can you explain the concept and idea behind *Goodvertising* and how it challenges the current world of advertising? Why should advertising serve higher goals rather than focus only on brand building?



T.K.: In the past few decades, advertising has dominated and interrupted every part of our lives, but people are beginning to question the value of that relationship. People want brands to deliver real value and solve some of society's biggest problems. **Goodvertising is a book about the world-bettering power of creativity in advertising.** It's developed into a project that showcases the brands and agencies that dare to search for new, more meaningful ways forward. It's time to repair the strained relationship. Goodvertising has effectively become a movement for hammering some common sense into brands. There's no higher accomplishment for brands than to make a real difference in people's lives. You're climbing the **brand ladder from being functional or aspirational to being purposeful; it's brand heaven.** The very pinnacle of the brand hierarchy of needs. Goodvertising is about building brands that last.

egta: Can you give some examples of major brands that are giving sustainability a high priority?

T.K.: There are quite a few out there I respect. Unilever deserves kudos for daring to take some serious steps towards sustainability despite a varied brand portfolio. And their efforts matter, they've just published that their sustainable brands grow twice as fast as their conventional brands and deliver half the company's growth. The billion dollar Brazilian cosmetic giant Natura is also worth mentioning. They're living their values and are presently the biggest company in the world to become a B-Corp (a B-Corp provides a framework and certification for companies wishing to benefit society as well as their shareholders.). BMW is catching up on the future of mobility and investing heavily in its BMWi program. Competition has moved on from the traditional battlefield to encompass sustainability, almost following the mantra: whatever you can do, I can do greener. Just take a look at the electric car company Tesla's stellar growth.



The sporting giants Puma and Nike are engaged in an innovation battle, trying to outperform each other in minimising their resource usage while delivering outstanding performance products at the same time. It's a war on doing rather than saying from Puma's InCycle collection, which shows the environmental costs in dollars on price-tags, to Nike's ground-breaking FlyKnit shoes, rethinking how a shoe is made and using as little material as possible.

egta: Are there ways that broadcasters can help them meet their sustainability objectives?

T.K.: Yes, definitely, but it unfortunately **seems that the traditional media industry has chosen to take a backseat**. Some of the world's biggest brands -and even archrivals like Pepsi and Coca-Cola - have joined forces to create a media platform focused on telling positive sustainability news called Collectively. The initiative shows how eager big brands are to engage consumers around sustainability.

Broadcasters and media houses have a responsibility for content; this might begin to matter more and more to big brands. Increasingly we will see brands that don't want to air their products next to alcohol commercials or ads featuring anorexic-looking-girls, but this is only the beginning. The increased focus on health and environment might push brands to avoid media that promote fatty or sugary foods. **It's about time broadcasters take matters into their own hands**, before they are hit by regulation as we have seen in France, where food adverts have to carry a warning if they contain too much salt, sugar or fat.

An example: The Guardian takes their responsibility seriously and is not afraid to take a stance. From last year to this year they've increased their coverage of sustainability related content by more than 25%, which is the equivalent of an estimated 100 million page views. The Guardian does its part in terms of recycled paper and environmentally friendlier media production, but that's only going to take them so far: their biggest impact on society comes from what they cover in their media: the brain impact. And they decided to make it matter!

Another example: Across Europe, TV-stations invited homeless people to be weather reporters during the winter to remind the public of the horrible living conditions homeless people have to withstand. They also invited donations to the Days of Hope Charity.

egta: Besides Goodvertising, you launched the platform WhereGoodGrows last year, which shares experience in the area of responsible solutions and initiatives. Why should companies share their know-how with their competitors?

T.K.: When I was researching my book Goodvertising (Thames & Hudson, 2012) **I couldn't help being impressed by the campaigns' level of creativity, but even more so with the real difference** that a lot of these campaigns made for important causes like water scarcity, poverty, resource efficiency, HIV, environment and homelessness. Why should a campaign that's creative, effective and impactful be used only once instead of being shared with others facing the same challenge? It's kind of like buying your own takeaway mug for coffee instead of throwing away a coffee cup every day.

One ingenious initiative, for example, has been generously shared with the community by a Burmese supermarket chain, Citymart. They wanted their customers to shift to reusable shopping bags by rewarding them for doing their part while making sure the bags were used and reused. A priority till was made for customers carrying a reusable shopping bag and in return 70 000 bags were sold, preventing countless thousands of plastic bags going to landfills or ending up in waterways.

Volvo is also a company that understands this mindset, for example. When one of their engineers, Nils Bohlin, invented the three-point seatbelt in 1959, which we all use today, the company thought it was too important an innovation to patent and keep, but instead shared it with the global car industry. Shouldn't we in the communication industry be ready to embrace the same generous mindset?

The potential upsides are many. We've already facilitated contact between an American hospital that wanted to reuse a campaign from a Brazilian agency, which means potentially more business could be derived from the same campaign and more lives could be improved.

egta: Can egta members i.e. the broadcasters and sales houses participate in such initiatives?

T.K.: Yes, they definitely can! A platform like this needs attention and support. For the media houses this means more business. **If a creative campaign is reused, it still needs media to create attention and impact**. We're always looking for partners and supporters. For the media houses this might also be a possibility to sponsor airtime for certain recycled initiatives. What if we could scale up a national campaign that made a massive difference locally and make it Europe- wide?

Examples of campaigns:

- » <http://www.natura.com.br>
- » <https://www.bcorporation.net>
- » <http://www.bmw.com/com/en/insights/corporation/bmwi/philosophy.html>
- » http://www.nike.com/us/en_us/c/innovation/flyknit
- » http://www.kering.com/fr/dev-durable/succes/collection_puma_incycle-0
- » <https://collectively.org>
- » <http://static.guim.co.uk/ni/1409917485530/Guardian-sustainability-rep.pdf>
- » <http://wherogoodgrows.com/works/view/106>
- » http://saatchi.com/en-us/news/days_of_hope_for_europes_homeless



Background info

Please click on the links below to access more information on this topic:

- » **Where Good Grows** (please click [here](#))
- » **Goodvertising Agency** (please click [here](#))
- » **Goodvertising - book & info** (please click [here](#))
- » **Thomas Kolster's website** (please click [here](#))