

AspEn

MAP Report 2:
Aspirational
Environmentalism

Extract 2



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The second MAP Report takes the greening of communication as its subject. Using unique visual analytic techniques and data resources, AspEn reveals the implications of environmental values on the future of marketing. The document sifts for real future trends and discards fads, providing a vital guide to how environmental concerns will drive new forms of advertising.

The MAP Report takes as its mantra that “everything that happens in the world

Makes A Picture” (MAP). Developed from the work of our global Creative Research team, the report is underpinned by analysis of the searches and choices of more than 1.5 million creative professionals on our website, as well as the review of thousands of tearsheets, commercials and other websites.

The following extract warns creatives and marketers of messaging and imagery they need to avoid, while identifying new positive, aspirational paths to follow.


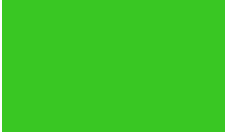

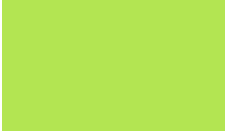
**Death to environmentalism:
Invent a new mythology**

Getty Images visual research
Advertising and marketing study conducted January–October 2007. Samples taken from all the major advertising markets in Americas, Asia, Europe and Australasia
Sample = 2,500 ads

Yankelovich and Getty Images consumer study
Online survey conducted April 25–May 7, 2007, in the US. Nationally representative sample of adults (16+).
2763 respondents

Results

The two greens chosen by the majority of respondents (89%) were also those two greens that we see most used in green advertising presently.

Green most associated with the environment	Total	Men	Women
	56%	51%	61%
	33%	37%	29%
	6%	6%	6%
	4%	5%	3%

Results

The visual icons that consumers connect with the environment are also the icons used in the largest numbers in advertising.

Visual images most associated with the environment	Total	Men	Women
Trees/Forest	70%	65%	74%
Oceans, rivers or waterfalls	63%	58%	67%
Flowers	49%	42%	55%
Drinking water	48%	43%	52%
Soaring birds	41%	37%	44%
Endangered species	38%	33%	43%
Polluted water	37%	34%	39%
Smog	35%	35%	35%
Litter	34%	32%	37%
Recycling logo	33%	31%	36%
Cute animals	31%	25%	37%
Traffic jam	28%	26%	30%
Landfills	28%	25%	31%
Solar panel	28%	28%	28%
Smokestacks	26%	26%	25%
Wind turbine	22%	23%	22%
Urban sprawl	17%	18%	16%
Bicycle	16%	15%	17%
Other	3%	4%	2%

Disposable environments

Disposable income is the limiting factor for those who aren't able to do more for the green movement. 25% of respondents reflect the confusion about what they should be doing and whether it makes a difference or not.



Barriers to doing more for the environment

Total

Barriers to doing more for the environment	Total
I can't afford to do more	21%
I don't know what else I could be doing	13%
I'm not convinced that my actions will really make a difference	12%
I don't want to give up any more quality in my life	11%
I don't have enough time to do anything else	10%
I don't want to give up any more convenience in my life	10%
I don't want to give up any more comfort in my life	10%
I haven't had time to learn about what else I can do	10%
I have made enough sacrifices already	8%
I don't believe environmental problems are bad enough to justify doing more	8%
I am simply not interested	7%

“21% of respondents claimed that they can not afford to do more to help the environment on a financial level.”

200567549-002, N. Beckerman/Stone

How would you rate each of the following companies in terms of their commitment to improving the environment through manufacturing processes, packaging, new-product development, innovation and the like?

Top 5 rated (for full list, see Yankelovich's "Going Green" report)

Corporate environment ratings	Top 5 (8-10)	Don't know	Never heard of them
Toyota Motor Corporation	22%	27%	1%
General Electric	21%	25%	1%
Whole Foods	21%	24%	11%
Honda Motor Company	20%	26%	1%
Wal-Mart	20%	24%	0%

For more information on the "Going Green" report, go to yankelovich.com.



Key findings

Storytelling vs. product selling

Visual communication goes through an evolution of awareness with the consumer. The first stage, as with green marketing, is the propaganda stage. Propaganda has negative connotations, but at its heart it is about educating. As we found in the Yankelovich study, consumers need more information before they can be confident in their purchasing decisions. Brands understand this indecision, so many ads have a copy-heavy, educational feel to them. Those brands who are telling a story presently are the ones that consumers are most associating with environmental friendliness. (See the "Top 5" table, above. It is somewhat ironic that a car company comes out as

being most associated with concern for the environment, but to Toyota's credit, they are the first car manufacturer to really push the hybrid car.)

Unilever, Multi-country

The last time we saw visual propaganda on this scale was during World War II. Visually, the general population was not privy to the "look and feel" of the war in the way we have experienced the war in Iraq, for example, via the live feeds coming through our TVs and computers.

In the early '40s, we were asked to act and consume in a way that would benefit the troops, who were fighting on our behalf. Some of the same language we are seeing in green communication was used 60 years ago. Recycling and restraint are now endeavors to save the planet, while in their early incarnations they were endeavors that would benefit the war effort. →

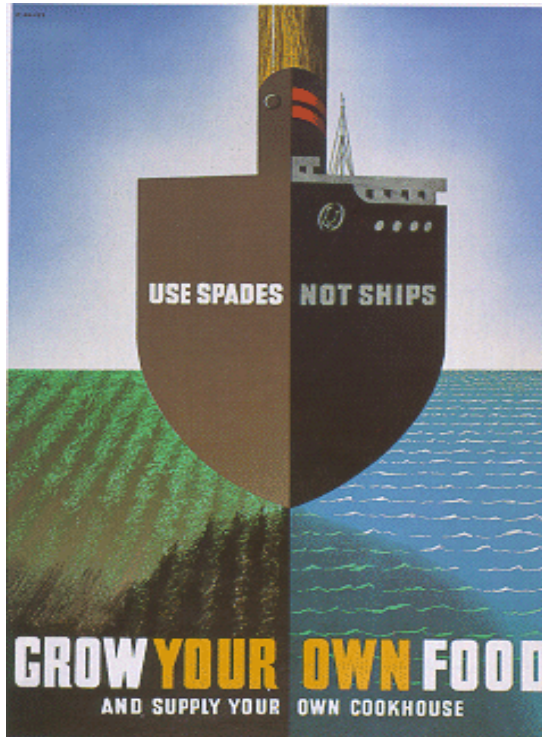
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To a lesser degree, it is similar to communication aimed at boomers or Hispanics (in the US) in the early stages. Both have enjoyed a massive increase in interest from brands trying to attract their spending power when they had previously ignored them as lacking in potential. Much of that communication had a propagandistic feel to it.

Later on, we went through a visual cliché stage (which is still lingering on). Taking boomers as a global example, we still see visual clichés conveying this age group as grandparents leading a static lifestyle detached from the vibrant exciting world. Now, we have arrived at a place where a sophisticated visual language has evolved.

At the present time, it's no surprise then that it's the nonprofit sector that is leading the way in the visual language



Posters, WWII, US



of green advertising, creating a style that is so far beyond anything else, it almost belongs in a different genre. Communicators in this sector have advantages. In the charity or nonprofit sector, the message is simple. You don't have to sell benefits – it's all about awareness and education.

Posters, WWII, US

In the commercial sector, much communication is wordy and →

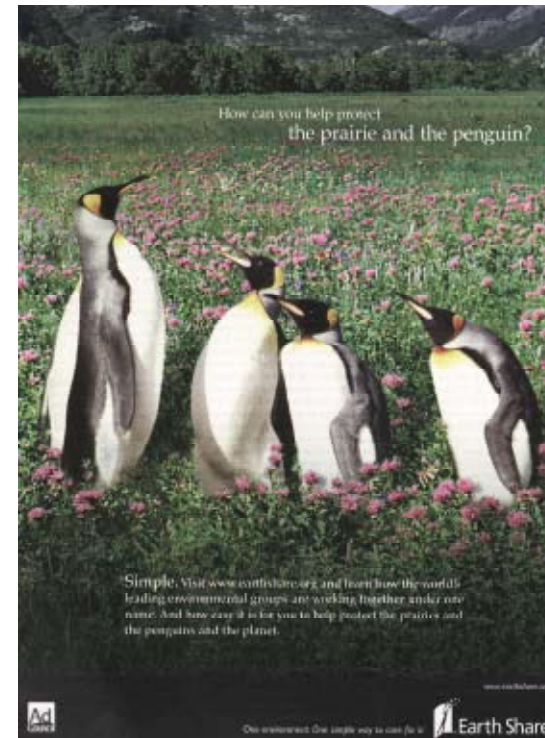
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convoluted (still very much in the propaganda stage), whereas the nonprofit sector has moved on and is able to use the symbolism and icons that we normally see in brand advertising.

Most importantly, we ARE seeing the same messaging being represented in nonprofit advertising and product advertising, which is proving to be visually confusing and adds to the confusion about what action is required from us as consumers.

Part of the reliance on storytelling in both nonprofit and brand advertising is the use of the “butterfly effect” (small actions having a huge impact elsewhere). However, this is a heavy load to bear. Concern for the other side of the world is difficult to compute when you are also being asked to be concerned about what is happening locally. As the Yankelovich study found, consumers are still not convinced that their minute actions have massive consequences, so this style of communication is adding to the confusion.



Ad Council / Earth Share, US

WWF, Finland



Creative value association

Environmental marketing WILL move from its propaganda phase toward a space where there is more value association.

A previous example is the millennium bug era, prior to 2000. There was a lot of proselytizing about how we should protect ourselves before the event, but as the danger became seemingly less apocalyptic, we saw association with millennium blue as a color associated with doing business in the new millennium. (It was associated with a sense of calm, stability, freshness, new horizons, etc.)

Similar to the “bluewashing” of the end of the last century, we are now seeing a “greenwashing.” Promoting “green,” using the color green is so blatantly obvious it’s almost not worth noting, but the surprising element is the limited green color palette that is being used.

In turn, the dominance of the two green shades selected by consumers is not surprising, considering the number of ads in the market that use the narrow green palette. As viewers, we are now so overwhelmed by the dominance in “green” throughout the 3,000 marketing messages we receive each day that →

BP, Multi-country
Waste Management, US



In terms of icons, nature is one of the most obvious value associations we see in green advertising today. We all have a reflexive response to nature imagery; it goes back to our childhood and the nostalgia we have for the wonder and sentimentality of nature. Our national identities and our sense of self are bound up in visions of nature, and back to nature is where we wish to be, whether to relax or simplify our lives in some →

we subconsciously associate the color green with the environment regardless. Breaking away from it requires a pioneering attitude.

However, there is a move away from green when it has been made unavailable by rival brands. Some companies made an early move toward green, driving the rest to fight it out. As a result we have seen brands pillaging other colors in nature's palette. Blues and browns are being used as the next-best

alternative in shades that represent water, the sea, wood and the earth.

We have seen this happen in the oil industry. It has been rebranded as the ENERGY industry and wrapped in environmental messaging wherever it may go. BP appropriated the color green in an early bid to be "on message" (although their brand and their activities are not yet aligned!). As a result, the other oil companies are relying on blues to represent the power of water and wind.

Clarence St. Cyclery, Australia
Wyeth, Dubai
Boeing, Japan
Diesel, Multi-country

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way. Nature is also a typical signifier in turbulent times. (We see it in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings that conveyed a romantic desire to go back to nature as industrialization was taking over.)

We are presently seeing a “cut and paste” attempt to associate brands with nature. In some ads, the imagery is in two sections, the product on one side and the element from nature on the other. The imagery that really connects is the imagery that has integrated the natural and the man-made to produce a symbiotic image.

As with the color green, the Yankelovich study found that trees came out on top with consumers. We have to ask the question, is it advertising imagery that is affecting this reaction, or is imagery merely reflecting our natural instincts? We associate feelings of freedom, freshness and purity with images of nature – trees, leaves, grass, waterfalls, the sea, the sky. Either way, it requires concentration and effort to wade through all the tree and nature imagery that is currently being used in advertising. →



Suez, Multi-country
 Suez, Multi-country
 ExxonMobil, US
 Total, Multi-country





Liberty. Using it in ways that demonstrate our effects on the environment has added impact.

Nicolas Hulot Foundation, France
Mergulho, US

We are also used to seeing skylines of the major cities around the world. We see them with such frequency that we feel at home with them despite never having traveled there. Using the skyline in a future state (under water, under sand, destroyed) is impactful in its juxtaposition of →

Visual benchmarks

Consumers are confused about how the impact of climate change will affect their lives and also how to deal with it. So, using recognizable icons as visual benchmarks is the most effective way of visualizing change.

One of the most often used icons of hope in the Western world is the Statue of



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what we expect to see and what we do in fact see. The imagery used in nonprofit advertising is able to take this a step further, utilizing the visual benchmark in an even more shocking fashion. Icons of green are also being used in an unexpected way to upset our sense of the visual benchmark. We expect to see penguins and polar bears in their natural environment at their respective poles. Placed in a man-made environment (beyond a zoo), the impact is immediate and powerful

Challenge: The competition for impact between products and nonprofits is so fierce in the green space that the message is muddled. We see visual communication using the same benchmarks and icons that we see in nonprofit advertising. One is relaying an important message (see "Storytelling vs. product selling," pg. 11), and one has a more flippant or humorous tone. Yet, in reality, they are incredibly similar visually.



WWF, Finland
Humans for Animals, France
EDF, France
Diesel, Multi-country



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