

Could the greenbashing be a solution for the environmental advertising failures?

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Abstract

Greenbashing is a new type of environmental ads, based on the sarcasm of the environmentalists (Monnot and Renniou, 2013). These ads were used extensively in recent years especially by the industrial sector as a response to the firm's greenwashing practices (Pras, 2013) and the consumer's skepticism toward green advertising. Rare are the research that studied greenbashing ads. This research is the first attempt to enrich the marketing literature and to provide a framework to analyze the greenbashing ads. We conducted a qualitative research to study how consumers and experts in the field of advertising perceive greenbashing. We used two methods to collect data: the netnography and interviews with experts in the advertising field. The results show that greenbashing is perceived negatively by consumers and seems to have a negative impact on the brand image and the consumer's purchase behavior.

Keywords: Brand image, consumer's skepticism, green advertising, greenbashing.

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Introduction and objectives

Green advertising practices have increased almost tenfold in the last 20 years and tripled since 2006 (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). This increase is mainly due to the growth of the environmental awareness of consumers. Thus, green advertising aims to create positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly companies (D'Souza and Taghian, 2005), to address the link between the product and the environment and to improve the socially responsible corporate image of firms (Banerjee et al., 1995; Pranee, 2010). But, green advertising has failed to convey real environmental benefits for the brand (Chan, 2004), and did not guarantee a green image based on honesty and trust (Peattie and Crane, 2005). Actually, three main problems confront green advertising: poor credibility, consumer skepticism, and consumer confusion (Winn and Angell, 2000). Many companies try to overcome these problems by launching greenbashing ads. Greenbashing is a new type of environmental ads, based on the sarcasm of the environmentalists (Monnot and Renniou, 2013). The term of greenbashing was coined by Shapiro in 2009 to describe catastrophic costs and unforeseen dangers that undermine the progressive environmental programs. In practice, many journalists, bloggers, advertising professionals and websites specified in ads analysis have used this term to describe ads that mock the ecologists (Figure 1). Thus, we employ in this research the term of greenbashing as an eco-sarcasm in advertisements. The eco-sarcasm ads are a new wave of environmental ads used extensively in recent years especially by the industrial sector. These ads are distinguished from other classical environmental communications by the sense of irony and the proactive attempt of the companies to criticize the “greens”. Although much several papers has been published in academic journals about green advertising (Leonidou and Leonidou, 2011; Richards, 2013), much less has been published about greenbashing ads. The main theoretical objective of this research is to enrich the marketing literature and to provide a framework to analyze these ads. Furthermore, this research has a managerial objective, as it aims to give managers recommendations to improve the efficiency of their green communication, and to better respond to the consumers' expectations.



Figure 1: Examples on the use of professionals, journalists, bloggers and advertisers for the term greenbashing as eco-sarcasm.

This paper will attempt to contribute to the green advertising literature by exploring the concept of greenbashing ads. We begin by reviewing literature on green advertising and provocative ads.

Next, we describe the research methods used in this research. Further, we expose the main results obtained. Finally, we consider limitations of our study, identify promising avenues for further research and suggest some managerial implications.

The research problematic is the following:

Why do some companies use greenbashing in their ads? To what extent has greenbashing been effective?

Several research questions arise out of this problematic and are grouped into three sub-categories, in the manner of Zardet and Savall (2004): descriptive, explanatory and prospects:

- What are the principle characteristics of greenbashing?
- How consumers perceive these ads?
- Why have companies chosen greenbashing compared to other conventional environmental ads?
- What are the principle limits of this type of ads?
- What is the future of greenbashing?

Literature review

A question mark might be asked on greenbashing about its classification as green advertising. In reality, despite the eco-sarcasm, these ads transmit to the consumer the environmental benefit and the environmental promise of a product, for example: it consumes less CO₂, tires which consume less fuel, a hybrid car, etc. Green advertising by definition is a means to stimulate the demand for environmental products (Carlson, Grove and Kangun, 1993). Accordingly, we consider greenbashing as a new kind of green ads. In effect, this research will provide a framework to analyze these ads, based on research on consumer skepticism toward green advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998; Mohr et al., 1998) and works on the provocative ads (Paul and Vezina, 1997).

Green advertising and consumer's skepticism

Based on bibliometric tools (Scopus and Web of knowledge), we observe that there is a gradual increase in the academic research dealing with the topic of environmental advertising. We can justify this progressive increase in research by several factors. First of all, green marketing and green advertising practices have increased (Simons et al., 2006), which requires academic research studying the strategic benefits of these practices. Secondly, the environmental concern has now become a major issue for consumers which also justify the importance of these research (Bush, 2008). And finally, we cannot ignore that green advertising has become an important theme for several academic journals, such as "Journal of Consumer Marketing" and "Journal of Advertising". This evolution in the production of academic research dealing with green marketing and environmental advertising will not stop. The management of the environment is among the emerging themes in marketing (Beji-Becheur et al., 2013).

The research addressing environmental advertising have sought to identify primarily, the role of the consumers' psychographic characteristics in the explanation of attitudes and pro-environmental behavior (Schwepker and Cornwell, 1991; Davis, 1993; Shrum et al., 1995; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). Further, other authors have examined the influence of the content

of the environmental ads on consumer behavior toward the product and the brand (Manrai et al., 1997; Dardis and Shen, 2008; Catherines-Mars and Menivelle, 2011).

In addition, an important stream of research on the credibility of environmental ads has been developed (Kangun and Polonsky, 1995; Mohr et al., 1998; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998; Winn and Angell, 2000; Peattie and Crane, 2005; Do Paço and Reis, 2012). In effect, some critics have accompanied the evolution of the environmental ads. The main critics that researchers have mentioned are the lack of credibility of those ads and the confusion among consumers regarding the environmental claims (Mohr et al., 1998; Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998; Chang, 2011). These limitations of environmental ads cause skepticism from the consumer's side. The literature studied the main causes of the decline in the credibility of environmental ads, and examined the effect of the consumer's skepticism on the consumer behavior (Do Paço and Reis, 2012; Richards, 2013; Matthes and Wonneberger, 2014; Bailey et al., 2014). According to Richards (2013) and Fowler and Close (2013), the skepticism of the consumer toward environmental advertising is growing more and more. Many companies have changed their communication strategies in order to gain more confidence and to avoid skepticism among consumers. The new ads called greenbashing are based on the humor and provocation.

Provocative advertising

The provocation-based execution strategy is actually one of the most important strategies executed by advertisers (Laadhar and Romdhane, 2013). The provocative ads use initiatives that were previously foreign to the traditional ads, like death, violence, religious political issues and nudity. The provocation in advertising has emerged since the 80s and many firms have used it in their advertising campaigns (Laadhar and Romdhane, 2013). In fact, the brand Benetton was the pioneer in launching such provocative ads; the brand shocked consumers by using taboo topics like religion, sex, war, etc.

Academic attention to the provocative ads dates back to the 1980s, but interest in such ads has grown exponentially after 1995. The evolutionary path in this research has witnessed the definition of these ads and more particularly, the introduction of various new concepts like sexuality in the ads (Jacobson and Mazur, 1995), social taboos (Tissier-Desbordes and Manceau, 1999) and violence in the ads (Bushman and Bonacci, 2002). However, a key unifying concept in the development of this literature is the provocation. The principle of provocative ads is to use taboo subjects and try to target consumer's feelings (De Pelsmacker and Van den Bergh, 1996). In fact, the effect of the provocative ads on the receiver's attitudes has been the focus of plenty of research (Vezina and Paul, 1997; De Barnier et al., 2004; Pope et al., 2004). Other authors have also investigated the negative effect of some provocative ads on consumer behavior and on brand image (Kirchler and De Rosa, 1998; Tissier-Desbordes and Manceau, 1999). On the other hand, the provocative environmental ads had rarely been probed.

Greenbashing is considered as a humorous provocative advertising, the latter is regarded as the mixture of humor and provocative appeal (Morris et al., 2004). The provocation is defined by Vezina and Paul (1997), as *“deliberate appeal, within the content of an ad, to stimuli that are expected to shock at least a portion of the audience, both because they are associated with values, norms or taboos that are not challenged in advertising, and because of their distinctiveness and ambiguity”*. From this definition, we deduce that the provocation is based on

three criteria: the difference or the originality, the ambiguity of the advertising message and transgression of norms using taboos. Although greenbashing ads have not used ancient taboos topics like sexuality and violence, they were able to be original and different from the other environmental ads in mocking on the environmentalists (Monnot and Renniou, 2013). Moreover, these ads have stimulated a shock to the citizens and to a portion of the company's target. An advertisement which promotes an environmental benefit for a product and mocks environmentalists in the same time, made a shock for the consumers. In addition, the eco-sarcasm in these ads while the consumers have become more aware about the ecology, and while the environmental associations are active more than ever (Szarka, 2013) make these ads provocative. All of these factors have served to receive a great deal of discussion in social media websites and in blogs of professionals in the field of advertising.

Method

We chose two methods of data collection for this research: semi-structured interviews and the netnography. We conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of advertising. We used the criterion of saturation as a stopping criterion of interviews (Miles and Huberman, 2003). The experts interviewed were corporate communication managers, marketing and communication consultants and directors of advertising agencies (Appendix 2).

The interviews were conducted by telephone and recorded. The interview guideline was structured into several parts, as recommended by Gavard-Perret and his colleagues (2008). The first part was the introduction and aims to explain the approach taken during the interview, and then to ask a general question to the experts. In the second part of the interview, we asked the interviewees the principal questions about greenbashing (the characteristics of these ads, the limits and the advantages of these ads). The last part was a conclusion and aimed to reformulate and validate the contents of the interview. The average duration of the interview was 35 minutes. Three tasks have followed the conduct of the interviews: 1) the interview transcription; 2) the codification through Nvivo and 3) the presentation of the data (Miles and Huberman, 2003).

Concerning the netnography, the objective of using this method is to explore how consumers perceive greenbashing, from their comments on these ads in social media and from their posts on several blogs and websites. The netnography allows the researcher to observe the interaction between the individuals online without interfering (Bernard, 2004). The first stage of the netnography is to make an "entry" (Kozinets, 2002). First of all, we have identified on the Net some virtual communities with a concordance with our research questions (examples: page bad ads on Facebook, Websites: Terra eco, culturepub, blog: communication environnement). The following step was to filter the pages and the most relevant blogs compared to the research problem. The communities that had a flow of information, included active members and presented the richest data in link with our research problem were selected. In addition to these communities, it was also important to choose websites that provide a high degree of interaction with the participants (Kozinets, 2010). To do this, we have observed also the comments on "Youtube" about greenbashing ads, where we have seen a significant level of interactions between the members discussing these ads. Then we downloaded all of these messages through "copy-paste" in a Word file. Then, we have classified the messages in order to identify the off topic messages (Appendix 3). We have carried out several roundtrips between the marketing literature and the data before being able to generate relevant interpretations of the data. Finally, we coded these messages using Nvivo in order to generate and organize the coding. Concerning

the verification by the members, we have adopted the posture of Langer and Beckman (2005) which recommends that the researcher does not come into contact with the members of the community. The netnographic study was conducted between January and June 2014.

Findings

The results from netnography and the interviews are summarized below.

1) The principle characteristics of greenbashing

One of the main objectives of this research is to give a better comprehension of the greenbashing notion. According to the experts interviewed, these ads emerged after the year 2009. Volkswagen was the pioneer in launching these ads. Later on, *“many brands followed Volkswagen and started to make these ads, there is more than 30 greenbashing ads till now (Alexandre Pasche, consultant)”*. The first characteristic of these ads concerns the irony in the messages content. In effect, since the existence of environmental advertising, the consumer was accustomed to a specific type of ads which highlights the congruence between the values and actions and those expected by the company (Suchman, 1995). The classical environmental ads have been characterized by a narrative and argumentative content in order to give meaning to these actions and to persuade consumers in the environmental benefit of the product. But the new wave of environmental ads (the greenbashing ads) is characterized by the sarcastic content and differs from other conventional environmental ads. The advertisers use *“the sarcasm on the ecologists and play on the overexposure of sustainable development and the annoyance of some consumers”* (Christophe Bultel, Director of advertising agency). We often find in the greenbashing ads *“environmental militants who try to promote a product in a ridiculous way poking fun of the speech and the requirements of the “greens” for a world without ecological problems”* (Solange Hemerey, consultant). Other ads have diverted terms often used by ecologists like eco-responsible product, ecological product and green brand. For example, *“Honda diverts the expression “eco-responsible to display the slogan ego-responsible”* (Lisa Buono, communication manager). The second characteristic of greenbashing ads is the promotion of the environmental commitment. These ads convey environmental benefits for product, *“We always see in the last part of these ads a description of the product and more especially the environmental commitment of the product and its environmental benefit”* (Christophe Bultel, Director of advertising agency). The third characteristic lies in the ability of these ads to attract the attention of consumers, *“greenbashing ads are able to draw attention of the consumers and the advertising professionals for a new type of ads”* (Franck Bigot, Director of advertising agency), *“these ads have achieved a very high viewership ratings on TV and online”* (Veronique Sauret, Director of advertising agency). The last characteristic evoked by the experts is related to the international aspect of the greenbashing as these latter were used in many countries, *“These ads were launched in Europe, especially in France and in Australia and U.S.A by many brands”* (Alexandre Pasche, Consultant).

2) The reasons of the choice of greenbashing ads

The respondents have given some reasons to justify the adoption of the greenbashing ads by the companies. Firstly, the advertisers sought to launch a memorable ad. On this issue, one respondent admitted that *“brands seek to launch a memorized advertising by the viewers”* (Jean-Louis Desmedt, Communication manager). Another told us that *“the companies wanted to have a*

memorized ad because the memorization of the ads is one of the criteria of ads efficiency” (Daniel Luciani, director of an advertising agency). Secondly, the advertisers were seeking to capture the attention of the customer, *“these ads aim to attract the consumers, the ads are not liked anymore by the consumers and the advertiser knows that. The advertisers try to attract the consumers, and in my opinion, these ads were able to attract the consumers. We can see the number of views in YouTube for these ads, over 200000 views, while the other conventional ads have 1000 views”* (Alexandre Pasche, consultant). Thirdly, the greenbashing ads appear to be a response to the consumers’ weariness from the ecological issues, *“the consumers have begun to express a kind of weariness from the ecology, we can see that in social media, and even some politicians have expressed this weariness. And I think that greenbashing is a reaction from the firms to this weariness and an attempt to exploit this weariness”* (Charlotte Arnal, director of advertising agency). Fourthly, the interviewed have mentioned the identity of the company as one of the main reasons for choosing these ads. The companies that have launched these ads are industrial companies that are not involved in the sustainable development, and because these companies do not want to comply with the requirements, or because the other competitive brands are more innovative in this area. These companies ridicule and mock the ecology to show that the environmental issue is not important. Finally, firms choose to adopt greenbashing ads because of their differentiation benefits: *“the firms have chosen the greenbashing to differentiate from other brands and to distinguish itself from other conventional environmental ads”* (Yves Cappelaire, consultant), *“the brands adopt often this type of ads to comply with the brand’s strategy based on differentiation”* (Marine Gorllemenud, communication manager). Moreover, the advertisers seek through these to enhance the company's notoriety, *“the companies wanted to launch an advertising campaign that can make provocation in society and gain notoriety”* (Daniel Luciani, director of an advertising agency).

3) Perceptions and impacts of greenbashing ads

The respondents have addressed many critics to greenbashing ads. The main one mentioned is that the sarcastic content of these ads is easily criticized by the stakeholders, *“I don’t think it is a good strategy because firms will face 3 enemies: NGOS, Medias and blogs that will disassemble and criticize these ads easily. And moreover these ads will be criticized by the customers who have become more aware and concern about the ecology and will not accept this type of ads that mocks the environmentalists”* (Alexandre Pasche, consultant). According to the experts, greenbashing ads seem to present some limitations. In effect, greenbashing ads are perceived as irresponsible and this for many reasons. First of all, because these ads poke fun on the ecologists *“make fun of the environmentalists and it’s not a responsible act to critic a large community”* (Christophe Bultel, director of advertising agency), *“it’s not a responsible ad because we cannot mock a group of the population, like the religious, politicians and the environmentalists”* (Gildas Bonnel, director of advertising agency). Second, because these ads do not promote ecological and social behavior, *“there is a great risk to send a signal to citizens to raise the feet on efforts already started to solve the environmental problems, so it takes the risk of depreciating the value of the efforts in ecology”* (Gildas Bonnel, director of advertising agency). Greenbashing ads were perceived as an anti-ecological practice. They correspond to an anti-ecological phenomenon in the society. For the consumers, this movement is dangerous, unacceptable and should be prohibited by law, Anthony affirms that *“an anti-ecology mode begins to democratize via advertising and Internet: social network and other, etc. It is for me, a criminal limit practice! This kind of ideas and movements should be reprimanded by the law in the same way as racism!”*

The consumers either in Europe or in Anglo-Saxon countries have criticized these ads on Internet, and have showed strong discontent and rejection of the greenbashing ads. The critiques have been addressed on the credibility of the content of these advertisements. The word “hypocrisy” has been largely used in the messages in the virtual communities and refer to the inconsistencies in these ads. From the consumer's point of view, an advertisement mocking ecologists and trying to persuade the consumer in an environmental benefit for a product in the same ad is not a credible advertisement, Michael comments: *“What hypocrisy on the part of Volkswagen, it defends fossil energy by ridiculing the ecology (under the guise of humor), on the other, it boasts to reject low CO2 emissions, thereby admitting even pollution that it includes! They turn to ridicule the environmental problem, it is appalling”*. Other criticisms were addressed by consumers to greenbashing ads, especially on the humor based on the sarcasm. This type of humor is considered as unacceptable and has skipped the comedy by issuing an advertisement which affects negatively the consumers’ emotions. Thus, this provocative humor has a negative impact on the affective attitude of the consumer and makes him more skeptic toward the ad, Georges says: *“This is not funny to hurt the feelings of people like the ecologists who combat for a better world without pollution,” “my first reaction was smiling! But on the merits, these ads that mock the environmental problems and this discourse on ecology grow my doubts in the firms”*. Furthermore, greenbashing ads have disappointed consumers and did not meet their expectations, Sarah adds: *“ the environmental promise is everywhere in this ad and misleading the consumer while it is in fact a CO2 transmitter product, and encourages consumers to travel by car and not use other soft modes of travel. I am really disappointed because that sarcastic, or exactly the cartoonish tone and the vilification against environmentalists tend to make believe that they are the utopians and Good Year is realistic, while this company uses the content and the form of its advertising to go against the ecological approach.”*

Consequently, the negative perception toward greenbashing may lead the consumers to reject the products promoted in these ads: *“Thanks for this ad; this is another reason for not buying Volkswagen”* (Simon) and even more to boycott the brand: *“Let’s boycott this brand; this is not even worth that it offers tires “badyear” to my next change of tires”* (Peter). Also, these ads seem to impact negatively the brand image, *“the disadvantage of these ads that the customer could believe that it is a “greenbasher” company that it is not concerned about the ecology”* (Ricky Dackouny, director of advertising agency). Another expert told us, *“these ads have given a tainted image on the company to consumers”* (Lisa Buono, communication manager). For these reasons, the experts think that greenbashing will not be used extensively in the next years, *“I don’t think the companies will use these ads in the future, because the environmental issues have become very important for the consumers. So, I don’t believe that the companies will make fun again of the ecological topics”* (Thomas Albisser, director of advertising agency).

Discussion

In this research we aimed to contribute to enrich the green advertising literature by exploring the concept of greenbashing ads. Several interesting findings emerged from our study. First, when comparisons between the conventional green ads and the greenbashing ads, it appears that the irony in the content of the greenbashing ads and the superiority in ability of these ads to capture attention are the main elements of difference between these types of advertisement. In effect,

advertisements containing irony are at risk of being misunderstood and publicly denounced (Lagerwerf, 2007). By contrast, the ability of these ads to attract the consumer attention is an advantage for the advertisers (Pieters et al., 2002). On the other hand, the results of our research show that greenbashing ads and the conventional ads, both, seek to transmit the environmental benefit for a product and to improve the socially responsible corporate image (Pranee, 2010).

Second, the results of this research show a negative effect of provocative ads on the consumer behavior and the brand image. In fact, greenbashing ads did not coincide with the expectations and the perceptions of consumers and did not guarantee a green image for brand. This supports the previous conclusions (Kirchler and De Rosa, 1998; Tissier-Desbordes and Manceau, 1999), which underline that some provocative ads had a negative impact on the brand image. Greenbashing ads have failed also to avoid the skepticism among consumers toward the green advertisements in general (Mohr, Eroglu, and Ellen, 1998; Helm, 2004; Jacques, 2006; Do Paço and Reis, 2012). Greenbashing ads seem to not be able to win the trust and confidence of customers. The difficulty of specifying the company's true environmental stance in these ads has resulted in skepticism and has increased suspicious on these ads. So, greenbashing ads did not achieve two of its main goals: to decrease the skepticism among consumers and to guarantee a green image for brand. Also, the greenbashing ads lack credibility and lead to confusion among consumers. If these problems were not overcome by greenbashing, then the effectiveness is doubtful and the choice of these ads instead of the conventional green ads is questionable.

Third, the findings of this research reveal that many firms have issued greenbashing ads because their competitors are more developed in term of sustainable development and have already the environmental commitment as a competitive advantage. So, companies issuing greenbashing ads avoid actually to take the green root and give up on the environmental challenge with other competitors. These results confirm the previous findings of some research (Moquet, 2005; Robert-Demontrond and Joyeau, 2010) that showed a "resistance" of some companies towards the integration of sustainable norms.

Last, according to many researchers, a humorous advertisement elicit a positive attitude towards the brand, grab attentions and attracts viewer's interest, increase purchase intentions and generate a strong memory for the brand claims (Spotts et al., 1997; Clow, 2007; Shimp, 2010). But the greenbashing ads like the other ads which use the offensive humor become the target of criticism and resentment from audiences (Gulas et al., 2006). In effect, the humor that targets at a particular individual, a public figure or a social group can offend the target and people who have an affinity with the target (Gulas et al., 2006). This type of humor can be found offensive to those who belong to this social group (the ecologists in case of greenbashing ads), leaving the effectiveness of humor questionable as it may work as a negative factor.

Limitations

Our results should nonetheless be considered with some caution in view of certain methodological limitations. The first limitation is linked to the fact that the study did not mobilized communication managers of companies which have already launched greenbashing ads. Interviewing these persons would enrich our research by providing us more details on the efficiency of these ads. Another limitation is that the consumers' perceptions of greenbashing ads have been studied by using the netnography. Actually, the netnography focuses only on online

communities, and in the case of our research this method is insufficient to generalize the findings obtained from a particular online group to other groups (Kozinets, 2002).

Future research

Future research should take into account the limitations indicated. It would be enlightening to conduct an experimental study to examine the perceptions of a representative sample of consumers toward greenbashing ads. This would confer greater validity to the results. Future studies should also investigate the impacts of greenbashing on some important variables like the consumers purchasing behavior toward the products promoted in greenbashing ads (Ankit and Mayur, 2013), the attitudes towards the brand (Hartman et al., 2005) and the pro-environmental consumer behavior (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003).

Managerial Implications

On final element to which this paper draws attentions is the managerial implications. The effectiveness and reliability of environmental ads is an important issue for marketing and communication managers, who try to be more environmentally responsible (Alniacik and Yilmaz, 2012). This research offers important new insights for marketing managers into the efficiency of greenbashing ads. A clearly important finding of this study involves the consumers' reject to greenbashing ads. Managers need to step back and take a fresh look at green advertising. Green advertising, when applied honestly and based on realities of the environmental commitment of the firm, will lead to greater impact for the customer, company and society (Peattie and Charter, 2003). Marketing managers should carry out more credible green ads in order to gain the customer's confidence. The advertisement must be able to justify the discourse by a label or a scientific source. In addition, advertisement should not mislead the stakeholders on the reality of the actions or the properties of the product. Brands must issue a message explaining the progress and the environmental objectives that they have yet to achieve. Assuming the weaknesses, the brand will demonstrate maturity to its target and the environmental ads will be more credibly perceived. Also, the advertisers who want to convey messages about their environmental commitment and integrate the humor in their ads, are ought to pay attention to the "eco-sarcasm" in these ads. We observed that the eco-sarcasm is rejected by the consumers. Marketers and policy makers should continue to address the increasing environmental concern and the humor and must not go into provocation and mock.

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Appendix

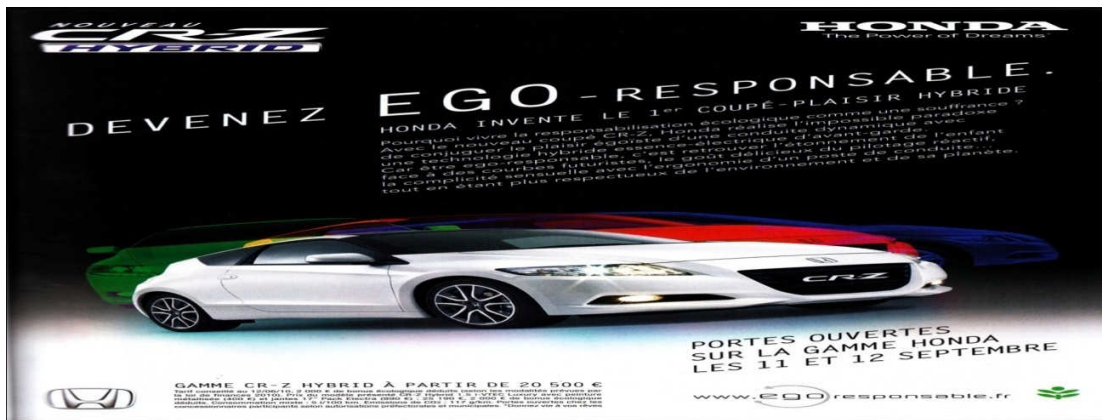
Appendix 1: Examples of greenbashing ads



Good year's greenbashing ad campaign (2010)



A television ad by Volkswagen (2009)



Honda's advertising campaign (2010)

Appendix 2: Presentation of the sample of professionals

Identity of professionals	Company/agency	Occupation
Christophe Bultel	RC2C Agency	Director
Daniel Luciani	ICOM Agency	Director
Marine Gorllemenud	Cristalco-Daddy sucre	Communication manager
Lisa Buono	Novamex-Arbre verte	Communication manager
Alexandre Pasche		Consultant for L'Oreal, PSA Peugeot-Citroen, EDF and GDF-Suez.
Sauveur Fernandez		Consultant
Christophe Sorin	Sorin Agency	Director
Ricky Dackouny	Tarte aux poires Agency	Chief executive officer
Charlotte Arnal	Patte Blanche Agency	Director
Stéphanie Gentilhomme	Rendez-vous RP Agency	Director
Franck Bigot	OCOM&CO.	Director
Véronique Sauret	Verte Agency.	Director
Jean-Louis Desmedt	Ecover	Communication manager
Mathieu Combe	Natura Sciences	Communication manager
Fady Chamaa	JWT Agency	Chief executive officer
Thomas Albisser	Hop-Cube Agency	Director
Leo Bonnin	Grennbox Agency	Director
Dominique Guyonnetly	Cetelem	CSR manager
Stéphance Duphonce	Amezis	Director
Yves Cappelaire		Consultant
Gildas Bonnel	Sidièse Agency	Director
Mireille Lizot	Léa nature	Communication manager
Solange Hemery		Consultant

Appendix 3: Example of the classification of the netnographic messages

"The car's price is so high".	Out of topic.
"I really liked the design of the car".	Out of topic.
"My first reaction was smiling! But on the merits, these ads that mock the environmental problems and this discourse on ecology grow my doubts in the firms".	On topic
"I never liked the ads because they are only a means of controlling the spirit of people and their wealth by imposing trends. In short, the ultimate goal being to make stupid people and absorb their money. In addition, when even it neglects its harmful effect, I do not see that there are "excellent" in this ad, it must be said that if we find this great ad it is certainly has a low cultural level and a shabby intelligence".	On topic

Appendix 4: Extract form N'vivo work: treatment of data collected from interviews

The code	The verbatim
Characteristics	"The interest in greenbashing ads grew progressively after 2010".
	"This type of ads was used usually by the industrial firms".
	"These ads were launched in Europe, especially in France and in Australia and U.S.A by many brands".
Advantages	"We can see the number of views in Youtube for these ads, over 2000000 views, while the other conventional ads have 1000 views".
	"The Volkswagen ad for example in 2010, people are still watching and discussing about this ad till now".
	"These ads were capable to attract the attention of the consumers".
Limits	"I denounce these ads because in my opinion this isn't humor to criticize a community and do not serve to promote the ecological behaviors".
	"For me this ad was funny but I think it was provocative and not responsible".
	"This advertisement is not perceived in a positive manner by consumers because it discredits people who are mocked in these commercials and manage of stereotypes for these people".

The code	The verbatim
Choice of greenbashing	"I think the companies wanted to launch an advertising campaign that can make provocation in the society and gain notoriety. In addition, they wanted to have a memorized ad because the memorization of the ads is one of the criteria of ads efficiency".
	"I think that these are short-sighted strategies, there is a weariness of the opinion, in this finding there was a rejection and weariness. Therefore to this rise of rejection some advertisers have surfed on this trend and exploit it".
	"Because the majority of the brands that launched these ads were not committed in the sustainable development".
Consequences	"The risk is terrible, the first risk is to continue put the community face to face, cleavage and radicalize the communities face to face between cyclists and motorists between environmentalists and non-environmentalists and it is a risk to the responsibility of the communication".
	"The risk is to have a tainted image perceived by consumers".
	"The risk is to discredit the environmental issues".
Perspectives	" It's going to stop at this point, environmental issues are becoming increasingly important and I do not think that advertisers are going to make fun of important topics such as ecological issues".
	"I don't think this type will be more used by the brands".
	"I don't think the companies will use these ads in the future, because the environmental issues have become very important for the consumers. So, I don't believe that the companies will make fun again of the ecological topics".