



UNCONFERENCE 2016 - INSIGHTS

Workstudio 3 | [#ws_engage](#)

Sustaina...what?

The consumer relationship challenge



photo by Thorsten Nieuwenhuizen



Contact

Georgina Guillen-Hanson,
Project Manager, CSCP

ginnie.guillen@scp-centre.org

In what ways can we activate the consumers?

This workstudio explored what successful responsible engagement means, identified and shared the latest tools and best practice to achieve consumers' engagement and its benefits. Through the interactive format, participants discussed ways that communication is "making sense" to consumers, either as ways of bridging a disconnect between trust in companies/reputation compared to brand attachment or as approaches to enable a consistent interaction with the consumer.

Take stock and offer new perspectives

The workshop took place at the Baumsche Villa, a classic construction turned into a showroom for local sellers to engage consumers directly. The CSCP Moderators, **Ginnie Guillen-Hanson** and **Neil Coles** opened with a short introduction to the topic of engagement and where to go from classic marketing and green segmentation. This presentation was followed by two experts' keynotes.

In "Secret Codes of Sustainability" Dr. Stefan Hermann Siemer, founder and project leader at Ambulanz für neue Kommunikation, showed examples of how consumers decode sustainability principles and values and how implicit key drivers for sustainability impressions are used in communication.



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With “A look into uncomplicated behaviour change – from an award ceremony to the consumers’ hands” Marco Voigt, Managing Partner Green Tec Awards/Green Window showed how after 9 years of organising the GreenTec awards they took the next step to make the awarded and nominated products and other innovations easily available to the consumer through the Green Window, a responsible, transparent marketplace for everyday lifestyles.

Participants then embarked on a dynamic station tour, showcasing the relevance of different consumer engagement practices and challenges, building on innovative methods, existing consumer communication and marketing and exploring ways brand power can be leveraged to support sustainable values and behaviour.

Some highlights and insights from the station discussion

Station 1 The point of sale: where the consumer gets inspired - Placements provide additional information that consumers can easily address at the moment of decision making. The display and the informational material tell a story together, to bring the consumer closer to the product, its origins and even certifications that make it worth having a special recognition, shown by an eye-catching display.

Station 2 The Quality Means More Initiative. – Nestle’s “Quality Means More Initiative” journey provides consumers with opportunities to deliver clear



photos by Thorsten Nieuwenhuizen

messages on what could be the next steps to move on. This strategy is an invitation for future dialogue and shows the openness of the company to take the consumers' opinions and experiences into consideration for improving their own products.

Station 3 Editorial Storytelling for sustainable communication. – Touching on human emotions and evoking different memories and/or aspirations is a way that a story can make consumers think on the attributes they value in the products they want to consume. Sustainability-related stories widen these emotions by also bringing the environment and other social aspects into the picture.

Station 4 Common Sense Marketing: The case of Red Bull (focus on approach not the brand). – Successful brands co-create platforms and formats with creative leaders to meet and engage interested parties who are not necessarily the actual consumers. This case highlights the importance of addressing fears versus chances as an engagement element for sustainability communication and shows the potential for collective influence and benefits as the result of individual engagement.

Station 5 “Walking in your shoes: Gamification to understand your consumers’ lifestyles and interactions”. “Personas” are a gamification tool to understand behaviours that we can associate with our own and decide based on values and behaviours that are reflected in “someone else”. A



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“persona” is not the same as an archetype or a segmentation, its special aspect is to highlight the relevant attitudes and the specific context associated with the area of consumption being communicated in the context of a lifestyle-centred narrative.

Station hosts

1. **Nicola Tanaskovic**, Division Manager Corporate Responsibility, REWE Group.
2. **Hartmut Gahmann**, Head of Corporate Communications and Jolanda Schwirtz, Program Manager, Nestle Deutschland
3. **Philipp A. Thode**, Director of Strategy at United Senses and Co-Founder of Love Green
4. **Tim Kriegelstein**, Managing Director, Creative Sales Consulting
5. **Neil Coles & Georgina Guillen-Hanson**, CSCP

Some further common answers and observations arising in discussion included:

- Bringing narratives “home” is a crucial element for successful engagement as consumers are influenced mainly by what they are familiar with and want to have a “real experience”. An example is the peer-to-peer influence of social media among younger consumers;
- Communicators must think as marketers to address the “fast vs. sustainable” challenge and turn it into an opportunity to become a pioneer in new ways of talking with consumers and engaging them, turning the consumers into communicators themselves, even if in a passive way;



photos by Laura Schleder

- Certifications and transparent reporting are some elements of brand or company trust building and rely largely on our experiences as consumers ourselves and how we communicators make our own lifestyles appealing to others.

Next Steps

The unique approaches will be presented in a separated document to be distributed among the workstudio participants and interested parties.

The CSCP is also opening the door for follow up activities for those in the pioneering group including:

- Further best practice dialogue events
- Capacity building workshops for practitioners
- Co-developing strategies for consumer engagement
- Identifying opportunities to go beyond communication by enabling knowledge-exchange opportunities with consumers and other stakeholders

Quotes

“My expectations for this workstudio were about understanding the different ways customers can be engaged throughout the life-cycle of a product, including end-of-use phase. I also wanted to understand the different ways of communicating sustainable benefits based on other non-sustainability-related communication tools.”

“How can we give consumers credible, transparent and comparable insights on the sustainability of products and companies? It is important that we are aware of the impact of labels, certifications, ratings, rankings, sustainability reports etc. on perceptions and behaviour of consumers since they keep changing.”

“Consumer communication is key to change behaviour. But what if the consumer is not interested? Finding the right touch points and communication story is the basis for more sustainable consumption.”