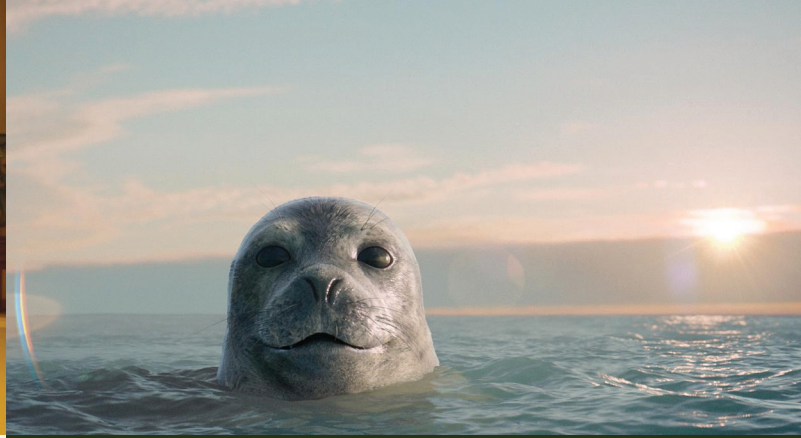


THE GREENPRINT

How advertising can step up
to the climate challenge

System1

itv



Introduction

Behaviour change is notoriously hard, especially where sustainability is concerned, but advertising has proven its ability to shift behaviours and beliefs. Its potential to step up to the climate crisis is huge, but only if businesses and brands get their communications right.

As the nation's biggest commercial broadcaster, ITV has a unique role to play in supporting the UK's transition to a lower carbon economy. At COP26 it signed the Climate Content Pledge, committing to broadcasting more climate-related content, to raise awareness and educate the nation about the climate crisis. As a media owner, ITV can be a valuable partner for the advertising industry as it too plays its part. And as creative effectiveness experts, System1 are equipped to give brands and advertisers actionable insights to create environmental advertising with confidence.

We feel there's increasing momentum for change in the ad industry. The effort to decarbonise the advertising business is gathering pace and there's real awareness of how ads can be a force for good, encouraging more climate-friendly choices. That's why ITV, System1 and Richard Shotton have joined forces to create *The Greenprint*. It's both a celebration of some of the best green advertising, and a guide to help brands do it even better.

"Effective environmental narratives in advertising play a vital role in inspiring long-term change. The Greenprint serves as a guide on how to captivate audiences and encourage them to step up to the climate challenge. In it, we explore the opportunity that effective environmental advertising presents, where the benefits are tangible for our planet, consumers, and brands themselves."

Jon Evans, Chief Customer Officer, System1

"ITV reflects and influences culture both through our programming and the advertising we carry. As such, we can play an important role in helping the nation move faster towards a lower-carbon economy and part of our commitment to doing that is to help advertisers create advertising that works hard to drive the change we need."

Kate Waters, Director of Client Strategy and Planning, ITV

"Marketing has the potential to be a force for good by encouraging climate-friendly behaviours. However, there are wild differences in the effectiveness of ad campaigns. That makes it crucial to learn from the growing body of behavioural science experiments that reveal the best tactics for encouraging sustainability."

Richard Shotton, Founder, Astroten



Jon Evans
Chief Customer Officer
System1



Kate Waters
Director of Client Strategy
and Planning
ITV



Richard Shotton
Founder
Astroten

Foreword

The advertising industry is in a unique position to tackle the climate crisis. Most sectors (ours included) need to accelerate the rate at which we are decarbonising, but few wield the potential to influence culture and society to the same scale as advertising.

However, driving population-wide behaviour change through advertising is not easy – after all, advertising is just one, comparatively ‘weak’ factor influencing our behaviour. But, used well, and drawing on all the now well-documented principles of behavioural science, advertising can be a highly effective way of framing choices in a more positive and appealing way. The long history of brilliant public service advertising in the UK, tackling the biggest societal issues from smoking to drug abuse to road safety and COVID, is testament to the behaviour change power of advertising at its best.

The climate emergency is – like COVID – a challenge not just for us as citizens, but also as businesses. For the commercial sector, climate action needs to address how we can transition to a lower-carbon economy and how businesses can thrive within it. Part of our approach at ITV is to support advertisers who have a positive role to play, ensuring their advertising works as hard as possible to communicate the environmental values that influence consumer brand choice, and to use advertising to encourage consumers to make lower-carbon choices.

The Greenprint is a resource that we hope will help advertisers do just that. Fusing behavioural science with System1’s unrivalled insight into what makes compelling and effective advertising, this guide aims both to inspire and educate all of us involved in the creation of advertising to use our power to its best effect in tackling the climate crisis.

Kate Waters, Director of Client Strategy and Planning, ITV

“ **Navigating the transition to a sustainable society will involve a range of lifestyle and cultural changes for all. Promoting solutions with both robustness and effectiveness is going to be critical for all communicators to support audiences through these changes, and to ensure businesses are set to thrive in the transition.** ”

Jeremy Mathieu, Head of Sustainability, ITV



www.itv.com

**THE
GREENPRINT**

THE GREENPRINT

How advertising can step up
to the climate challenge

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THE CHALLENGE

Tackling the climate crisis will involve significant behaviour change from consumers, and brands can play a role in making this change easier. In fact, the good news is that consumers *want* brands to play this role. They want brands to step up, lead the way and help people make those changes.

Audiences are open and receptive to green messaging from advertisers. There are numerous studies suggesting that brands with green credentials are more appealing to at least some segments of consumers, and that greenwashing is actively off-putting. This report celebrates ads which combine strong sustainability messages with a proven appeal to audiences.

So, there are some clear and meaningful roles that advertising can play:



AWARENESS

The most basic role – signposting ‘greener’ brands to fuel their growth.



EDUCATION

Helping consumers understand which behaviours need to change to reduce carbon emissions.



REPUTATION

Going deeper into proving environmental credentials, thus building brand reputation.



DRIVING CHANGE

Framing climate-friendly behaviours in an appealing and motivating way to actively create change.

A single campaign could address several of these in one go.

But achieving these objectives is not trivial.

Even the most basic level – raising awareness – isn’t as simple as it seems. Unfortunately, bad communication of green messages can confuse, or at worst mislead, consumers. The BCAP code has made recent changes to address this, understanding consumer confusion about the language around climate change and how to judge brands’ claims. So, brands rightly need to be careful that they’re communicating the message they intended.

THE CHALLENGE

When the focus shifts from brand behaviour to consumer behaviour, the challenges only increase. As Richard Shotton's section on behavioural change points out, simply confronting the audience with a problem and expecting them to do the 'right' thing often doesn't work. That's especially true of a problem as all-encompassing and serious as the climate crisis. To educate, more subtle approaches are needed.

And when it comes to driving behaviour change, the changes the public think are important are not always those which would make the biggest difference. Advertising needs to work hard to focus attention on the most meaningful changes, rather than simply reinforcing existing beliefs.

Beyond all these challenges, there's one final factor – one that applies to any advertising, whether climate-related or not. The general conclusions of System1's work on creative effectiveness still hold true. Advertisers need to create an emotionally engaging narrative within their ads. System1 tells advertisers they should "Entertain for Commercial Gain" – that's still true even when commercial gain isn't the only guiding principle. While many consumers may claim that green credentials influence their brand choice, when it comes to making effective advertising, simply relying on green credentials is not enough to move audiences.

With such a weighty issue, it's easy for marketers, as well as consumers, to feel discouraged and as if there is little we can do to make a real difference. But powered by insight from System1's creative effectiveness database and the expertise of behavioural scientists, we're confident that advertising can wield its power for good – creating inspiring and emotionally engaging narratives that can shift culture, change behaviour and help us create a lower-carbon economy in which we can all thrive. The challenges are real. But so are the solutions.

USING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE TO ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR



Richard Shotton
Founder, Astroten

Behavioural science – once known as social psychology – is the study of how people actually behave, rather than how they claim to.

If you're going to design effective marketing, you need to understand these genuine motivations. That's true whether you're selling Humvees or heat pumps.

The EAST Framework

But applying behavioural science isn't always straightforward. So many experiments have been conducted that the topic can feel a bit bewildering. If that's the case, the best tactic is to use one of the readily available frameworks as a starting place.

For a topic like sustainability, I'd recommend the **EAST** framework.¹ Created by the Behavioural Insights Team, it identifies the four key principles of behavioural science.

Let's go through each one in turn and look at how it can be applied...



¹ Four Simple Ways to Apply the EAST Framework by The Behavioural Insights Team [2014]

USING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE TO ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR



MAKE IT EASY

One theme from behavioural science is that people repeatedly underestimate the importance of friction. If you want positive change, start by identifying the seemingly inconsequential barriers getting in the way. If you remove them, it'll have a surprisingly large effect.

For example, if you want people to stop printing in colour at work, change the default of the printer to black and white. It'll have a bigger effect than educating people about waste.



MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE

Often when trying to encourage sustainable behaviour, marketers try and emphasise the underlying ethics. However, a number of experiments suggest that making sustainable options appealing and attractive is more effective.

So, for example, if you want to encourage people to pick a vegan dish, it's often better to focus on the taste rather than the eco benefits.



MAKE IT SOCIAL

This principle relates to a long-standing idea called *social proof*. That's the finding that people are deeply influenced by what they think others are doing. If you make it appear like lots of people are behaving sustainably, you'll encourage others to join in.

In the case of sustainability, be extra vigilant that you're not making the unwanted behaviour appear commonplace. Bemoaning the lack of people cycling might feel like a way of shocking people into changing behaviour, but it'll generally backfire!



MAKE IT TIMELY

People's likelihood of adopting new, green behaviours varies according to when you communicate to them.

We're more receptive to starting new behaviours at fresh-start moments, such as the beginning of a year, month, week or after a birthday or major life event. At these moments, our habitual behaviours are destabilised, meaning we become a bit more open to change.

Next time you want to encourage sustainable behaviour, remember **EAST**. If you use this simple framework to generate ideas, your campaigns will have a greater chance of success as they'll be based on sound psychological insights.

THE RESEARCH

To understand the impact of green advertising, we started by randomly selecting 1,000 ads from the last three years (2020-2023) using System1's database of UK TV ads.

We looked at whether these ads contained environmental messages. If they did, we grouped them according to the area they focused on (e.g. energy, alternative transport, waste reduction etc.). We looked at how the ads communicated the message and the emotional responses they generated.

We then chose a subset of 11 best-in-class ads for deep-dive analysis, from which we derived our **Green Hints** – key themes that facilitate more engaging and effective environmental advertising.

In this report, we explore the themes in depth, then go into more detail on the individual ads we found worked well at promoting sustainability and green messaging.

THE GREENPRINT

METHODOLOGY

System1's methodology has been validated in experiments with **The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA)** and shown to predict long-term impact and market share change within categories.

The methodology is ground-breaking because of the leading role it gives to emotion. How people feel about an ad – happiness, anger, surprise, or a range of other emotions (including none) – is an important factor when you are trying to measure the degree to which an ad makes consumers change their habits, behaviours, and perspectives in the long term.



THE GREENPRINT

HEADLINE MEASURES

System1's quantitative model is the same we use for commercial ad effectiveness testing. The aim is to measure viewers' emotional responses to ads, as our validated methodology proves that emotion leads to action. Taken together, these responses combine to give us three key measures of creative impact on commercial effectiveness.

Star Rating



The Star Rating is based on how positively viewers respond to the ad. It predicts the potential of an ad to contribute to long-term brand growth and long-term consumer behaviour. Star Rating runs from just 1 to 5.9 Stars. The higher the Star Rating, the more brands should invest in and build campaigns around the ad. Around half the ads in System1's database score only 1 Star, and only around 1 in 100 gets the top, 5-Star Rating.

Spike Rating



The Spike Rating predicts the potential for an ad to drive short-term activity – sales, donations or other calls to action. The Spike Rating is based on how intensely viewers respond to the ad and how quickly they accurately connect the ad to the brand. The response doesn't have to be positive – for short-term impact, feeling anything is better than feeling nothing. Spike scores below 1 suggest limited or no short-term impact, Spike scores of 1.3 and above predict strong or exceptional activity.

Fluency Rating



Brand Fluency is a measure of how many respondents correctly identified the brand by the end of the ad. Fluency is a warning light – if Fluency is low, then the ad may be emotional but may risk losing out on the reward and impact it deserves. To stay top of mind, brands need to make effective use of their brand assets and cues.

THE DIVIDED BRAIN

At the core of System1's research into effectiveness is Chief Innovation Officer Orlando Wood's work on how the different creative elements in modern advertising impact its effectiveness. In his two books, *Lemon* and *Look out*, he addresses the industry's creativity crisis and unpacks it using Dr Iain McGilchrist's ground-breaking work on the human brain.

McGilchrist's great insight is into how the two hemispheres of the brain pay attention to the world. It's a myth that the left and right brains do different things – instead they do things differently. And each hemisphere attends to the world around us in different ways. The left brain has a narrower and more goal-oriented focus, while the right brain sees the whole rather than its parts, and understands the world through the relationships between things.

In the context of advertising, this means that more abstracted features – such as zoomed-in product shots, close ups on body parts, voiceovers, and rhythmic music – will have greater appeal for the left brain. We know this can be useful in the short term and particularly when targeting consumers who are already in buying mode, but to truly drive long-term effects, advertising should seek to appeal to the right brain. And while the left brain is drawn to abstraction and flatness, the right brain loves the living: character interaction, spoken and unspoken communication, melodic music, recognisable settings, humour. These are the features that we know drive the most emotional engagement and, in turn, the greater long-lasting effects.

For ads with sustainable and green messages, it's crucial to catch the attention of the right side of the brain. You're looking to create longer-term behaviour change, so you want to make use of creative elements that help create long-term associations (and build brands).

LEFT

- Abstracted product, feature, ingredient
- Abstracted body part
- Monologue
- Voiceover
- Freeze-frame effect
- Adjectives used as nouns
- Flatness
- Audio repetition
- Words obtrude during the ad
- Highly rhythmic soundtrack



RIGHT

- Characters with vitality/agency
- One scene unfolding with progression
- Dialogue
- Implicit and unspoken communication
- Distinctive accents
- Play on words or subversion of language
- A clear sense of place
- Reference to other cultural works
- Set in the past
- Music with discernible melody

WHAT WE FOUND

Only 8% of ads include a green message

For all the industry's talk of 'brand purpose', environmental messages are far from common on British TV. Of the 1,000 ads from the past three years we looked at, only 8% – 83 ads in total – included an environmental message (See Fig. 1). An additional 9% included a sustainable message that related to one of the non-environmental sustainable goals as outlined by the United Nations (UN). Many of these ads were from charities and non-profit organisations.

UK Environmental Advertising (%)

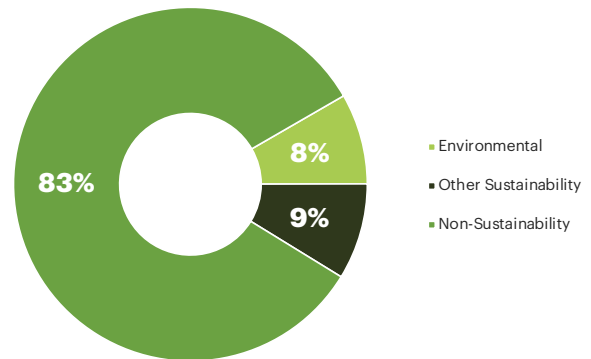


Fig. 1 Percentage of ads containing an environmental or sustainability-related message

Source: System1, 1,000 ads from the past 36 months

The remaining 83% didn't include any reference to the environment. Despite strong public demand for climate action, ads don't seem to be keeping pace with the news agenda.

There is no 'Green Dividend', nor detriment

The next question we asked was how the effectiveness of green ads compared to the average UK commercial.

In previous studies, like our *Feeling Seen* work on diverse representation in ads, we've found an effectiveness dividend that comes from including specific elements in ads. There's a 'Diversity Dividend', for instance, unlocked by featuring minority and underrepresented groups in ads – these ads are often more effective than average and then get an extra boost among people in those groups. Would we find a similar 'Green Dividend' from environmentally-minded ads? Or would we find that the presence of environmental messages actually decreased effectiveness?

WHAT WE FOUND

In fact, neither of these turned out to be the case. Ads with an environmental message performed in line with the UK average across metrics (See Fig. 2). Being environmentally conscious is neither a shortcut to creative effectiveness nor a turn-off for viewers.

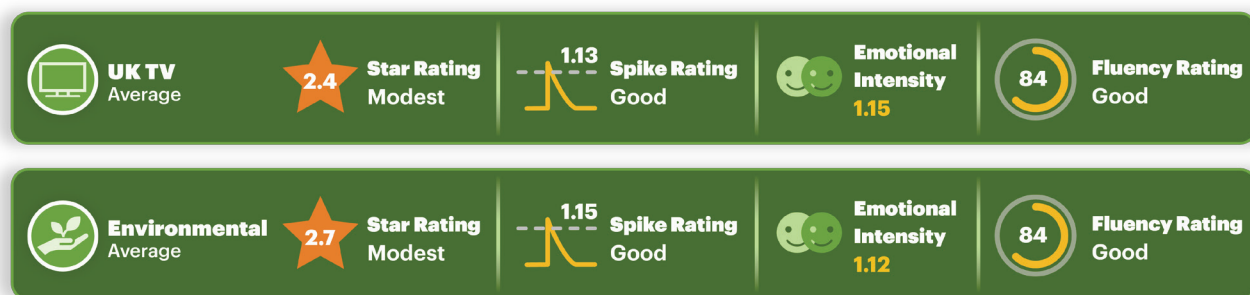


Fig. 2 Average scores for all UK TV ads compared with those for ads with an environmental message

Source: System1 total UK Premium database and 83 environmental ads from the past 36 months (12,450 respondents)

While the average scores for environmental advertising did not outperform the averages for all other ads, obviously the average disguises some examples where communicating a brand's sustainable credentials is associated with an uplift in performance.²

We also tested some of the green ads among 18-34 year olds alongside the wider audience, to see if they performed better among an audience often thought to be more aware of and concerned about the climate emergency. But even among this audience, green ads scored only marginally higher.

So, there's definitely work to be done on making environmental ads more engaging and effective for audiences. But perhaps even more striking is the fact that the ads that *do* talk about the climate crisis tend to focus on the behaviours with least impact on our planet.

² In the recent **Sky Zero Footprint Fund** research, Sky found that of the 50 ads tested, on average sustainable ads did perform better. However, any average disguises a range of performance (some better, some worse) with many factors influencing the effectiveness of 'green' ads from creative quality, to the brand's green credentials, the category they're in, etc.

WHAT WE FOUND

The most impactful actions are underrepresented

The most heavily featured message is waste reduction – 22% of all green ads we identified talk about recycling or other waste-reduction methods (See Fig. 3). Recycling is salient, easy and has a tangible impact – which is likely why the British public considers it the most impactful action for a greener future, according to an Ipsos study.³ However, separate research reveals it actually ranks 60th in importance for reducing carbon emissions (See Fig. 4).⁴

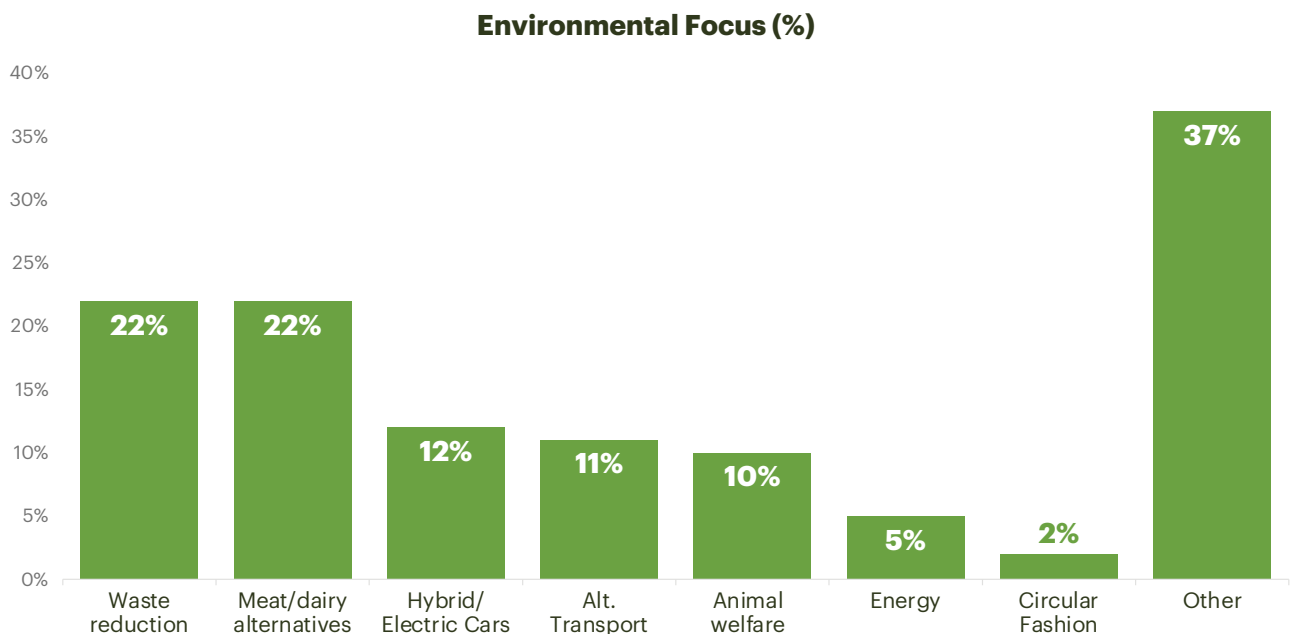


Fig. 3 Types of environmental messages ('Other' refers to broad climate-related messages that couldn't be linked back to one distinct action)

Source: System1, 83 environmental ads from the past 36 months

³ Ipsos, Pan UK Broadcaster Climate Research [2022]. Base: 1,001 GB online adults aged 16-74, Q: "Which three of the following actions, if any, do you think would have most impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions?"

⁴ 'Quantifying the potential for climate change mitigation of consumption options' by Ivanova et al. [Environmental Research Letters, 2020]

WHAT WE FOUND

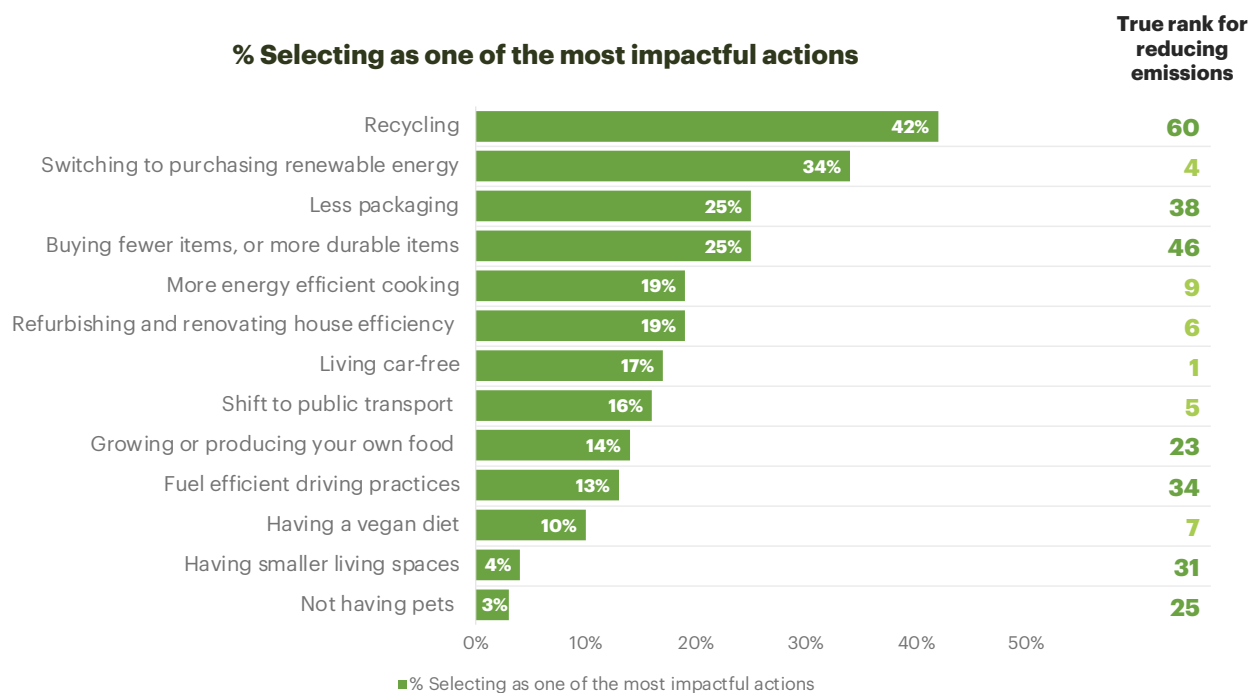


Fig. 4 What consumers perceive to be the most impactful environmental actions vs. those actions' true rank for reducing emissions

Source: Ipsos and Environmental Research Letters

Plenty of ads do show more impactful behaviours – switching to meat-free alternatives, for instance – but the emphasis on waste reduction shows how brands and businesses are not always featuring sustainable behaviour with wider impact in mind.

From a behavioural science perspective, we know that focusing on low-impact activities can lead to dangerous **moral licensing**: someone who recycles (a not-so-impactful action) may feel like they've done their bit and neglect more impactful actions, such as opting for public transport over driving.⁵

It's clear that the industry is currently misdirecting its energy. For greater impact, it needs to focus on more impactful behaviour in ways that are more emotionally compelling. That's a big challenge for brands, but also a huge opportunity. Effective ads which drive meaningful change will do good and deliver profitable growth. But to make them, marketers need to learn the right lessons from what is and isn't working now.

⁵ 'Ironical effects of dietary supplementation: illusory invulnerability created by taking dietary supplements licenses health-risk behaviors' by Wen-Bin Chiou, Chao-Chin Yang, and Chin-Sheng Wan [Psychological Science, Vol. 22, No.8, pp. 1081-1086, 2011]

THE INSIGHTS

Environmental messages alone are not enough to provide a competitive advantage – let alone drive behaviour change – but when done right, they are extremely powerful.

By looking at best-in-class examples, we identified six **Green Hints** – things brands can take on board to make commercially effective work that inspires consumers to change their behaviours when it comes to the environment and sustainability.

1 2 3 4 5 6

THE
GREENPRINT

GREEN HINT 1

HOPE OVER FEAR

The climate crisis is deadly serious. It's easy to feel that your communications around sustainability should reflect that, and provoke action using fear and anger. But remember what behavioural science calls the **ostrich effect**: if you make people feel guilty, they put their head in the sand.⁶

Advertising that scares people is just digging them that hole in the sand. It will leave people feeling deflated and unmotivated. In the worst case, they'll stop engaging with sustainability entirely. Even in the best case, they won't thank your brand for making them feel bad.

We're not saying that advertising can't educate, teach, or raise awareness of a particular environmental issue. But in order to effectively drive behaviour change, the lasting feeling should be that of optimism and hope.

The most effective emotions for advertising are happiness and surprise, and prioritising hope over fear can really boost those responses. What's more, the types of happiness hopeful advertising generates are feelings of uplift and awe – which we know are two of the most powerful at creating long and lasting business effects.

It's even possible to use humour to spark hope. Marketers are understandably wary of this, but when we've looked at humour in advertising at System1 we've found it to work especially well during times of hardship, like recessions, the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Behavioural science tells us humour boosts memorability and makes uneasy topics more approachable.⁷ If you can think of a way to make people laugh while you put your serious point across, it will pay major effectiveness dividends.

“ **Sustainability is a serious topic, but when it comes to advertising in this space, we don't have to take ourselves so seriously. We've found that some of our most effective campaigns have used 'feel good' emotion to encourage more sustainable behaviours.** ”

Martin Beverley, Chief Strategy Officer, adam&eveDDB

⁶ 'The ostrich effect: Selective attention to information' by Niklas Carlson, George Lowenstein and Duanne Seppi [Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 95-115, 2009]

⁷ 'Teaching and Learning with Humor' by Avner Ziv [The Journal of Experimental Education, Vol. 57, No.1, pp.4-15, 2014]

GREEN HINT 1

HOPE OVER FEAR

The AA is an organisation that might not immediately be regarded as a climate champion but its ad is a good example of how environmental messages can successfully be built into brand communication. It addresses head-on an obstacle to switching to electric vehicles – the fear of being stuck if something goes wrong. The AA has EV experts on hand, and their reassurance helps remove that barrier and let motorists move into the future – symbolised by Tukker, a cute dog puppet driving through a neon landscape, just to add to the positive vibe. Once again, positive framing that emphasises confidence, not fear, makes an ad more effective.



Star Rating
Strong

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

The AA
Power to Electric Drivers
(adam&eveDDB)

“ For us, it was important **The AA** led in perception metrics as the first choice for EV drivers vs. the competition, as well as front of mind as a modern and relevant brand, as our driving world evolves. We saw considerable perception % uplifts, even short term, because of the marketing creative.

We used Tukker, the dog who had performed well in 2020, to bring our superior, differentiated roadside EV product credentials to life with consistent brand devices – visually, tonally, and sonically.

Will Harrison, Group Brand Director, The AA

GREEN HINT ²

SUGGEST IT, DON'T SHOUT IT

Sometimes, the best way to drive climate action is not to mention climate change. Behavioural science would explain it with the principle of **appeal vs duty**.⁸ It ties back to the EAST framework's principle of 'Make it Attractive': if you can align an issue with what the audience naturally cares about (something appealing), you can change behaviour without having to remind them directly of a wider, bigger issue they feel they *should* care about (duty). In a food ad, for instance, the sustainability elements can often work better sitting in the background of mouthwatering imagery.

This avoids two important pitfalls. First, it makes people less likely to fear having to trade off the appealing aspect and the dutiful one. And second, it avoids **moral licensing**, when people feel so pleased about having done something positive that they let themselves take less 'good' actions they might otherwise avoid.

The best way to make an appealing environmental ad is to concentrate on making an appealing ad first and foremost. Create an engaging ad using features like strong characters, dialogue, or a sense of place and time to grab the attention of the right brain – and then weave in the environmental message.



⁸ 'From Sad Salad Tweets to Twisted Carrots and Dynamite Beets: Leveraging Tasty and Enjoyable Attributes of Healthy Foods to Promote a Culture of Healthy Eating' by Bradley Turnwald, Danielle Boles and Alia Crum [JAMA Internal Medicine, Vol. 177, No. 8, pp. 1216–1218, 2017]

GREEN HINT 2

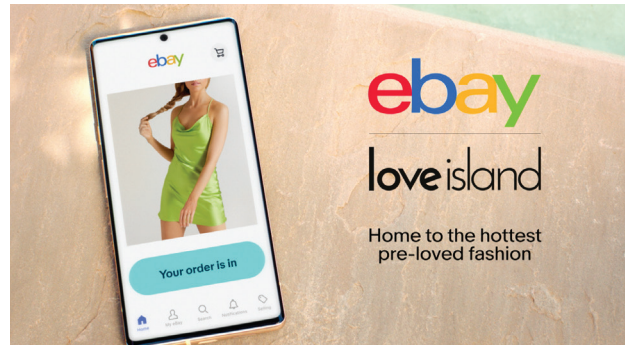
SUGGEST IT, DON'T SHOUT IT

eBay's Love Island partnership, which champions pre-loved fashion, is a brilliant example of how to do sustainability without shouting about it. It takes what the Love Island fans care about – the outfits of their favourite Islanders – and cleverly frames the environmental impact in a really subtle way. It even calls the clothes 'pre-loved' instead of 'second-hand' to avoid any negative judgement.



Star Rating
Strong

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)



eBay

eBay x Love Island: Find the pre-loved of your life
(MediaCom and ITV, supported by McCann London)

“It is good they are promoting pre-loved clothing.”

Test Your Ad survey participant

GREEN HINT 2

SUGGEST IT, DON'T SHOUT IT

M&S' summer ad for its strawberries embeds green cues throughout – wind turbines, solar panels, natural pollinators – but the focus of the narrative is still very much on the luscious fruit. The ad opens and closes on the strawberries, with the growers' environmental commitment in between. M&S is known for its very successful 'food porn' style of mouthwatering ads, and this delivers on that familiar emotional promise while discreetly reminding viewers of green issues too.



Star Rating
Strong

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)



Marks & Spencer Farm to Foodhall: Red Diamond Strawberries (In-house)

“ In *Farm to Foodhall*, it was important to us that our brilliant farmers, producers, growers and suppliers were allowed to tell their own stories in their own way. And Tom proved the perfect guide to show how, for M&S, it's never just food.

Robert Black, Head of Brand, Communications and Omnichannel Marketing, Marks & Spencer Food

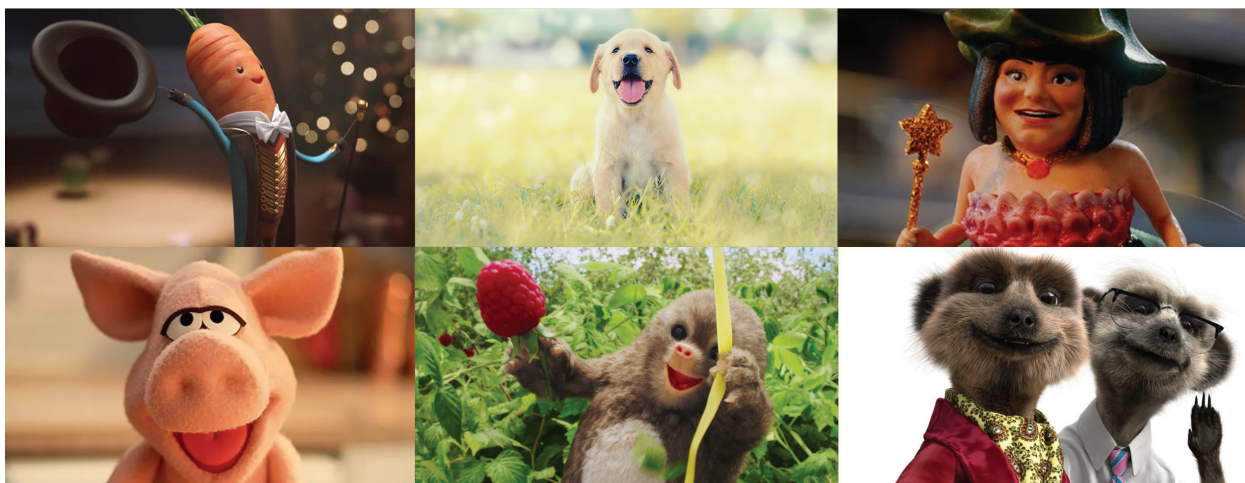
GREEN HINT ³ STORIES OVER STATS

The climate crisis is global in scale, which means messages around it are often very abstract. As humans though, we are wired to better remember and respond to concrete cues, not abstractions.⁹ In the context of advertising, this means that individual stories are more powerful and memorable than abstract information.

Fortunately, storytelling is what advertisers are brilliant at. We know from decades of ad testing that a compelling narrative and strong characters are both things that can really boost effectiveness. In a sustainability context, focusing on real people or recognisable characters makes the topic of the environment less anonymous and makes green behaviours feel more achievable. This also adds personality and warmth to ads, helping brands feel more authentic in their sustainability efforts.

One particularly useful tactic is to employ Fluent Devices – brand characters which recur across ads and build familiarity as well as positive emotion. As recognisable individuals, they make the message more concrete, and as brand mascots they tie that positive emotion back to your brand. Not only is this impactful from an emotional perspective, but ads featuring familiar Fluent Devices require less frequency, helping to reduce emissions associated with advertising.

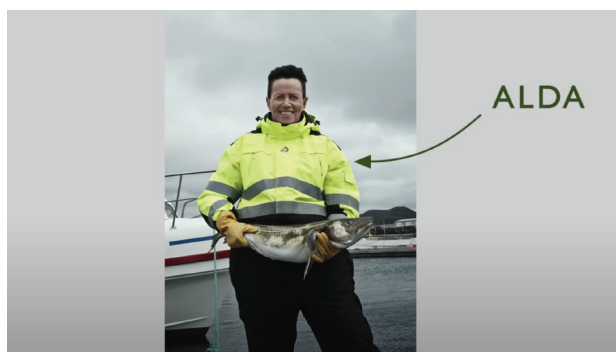
Examples of character Fluent Devices



⁹ 'Recall of meaningful phrases' by Ian Begg [Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behaviour, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 431–439, 1972]

GREEN HINT ³ STORIES OVER STATS

Waitrose shows real people – local farmers, growers, and consumers – in action, making sustainability less abstract. By showcasing its commitment to locally grown British products, it heightens consumers' trust in its brands. But the use of real, individual people also subtly shows how a more sustainable way of eating is achievable.



Star Rating
Strong

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)



Waitrose Food to Feel Good About (adam&eveDDB)

“ When we launched ***Food to Feel Good About***, it was not just an advertising or marketing communications campaign, but a wider brand promise. Alongside showcasing great tasting quality food, we also wanted to communicate our commitment to food that makes a positive difference – for consumers, animals, farmers, and the planet.

Joanne Massey, Partner & Advertising and Bought Media Lead, Waitrose & Partners

GREEN HINT ³ STORIES OVER STATS

Great Western Railway tells an entertaining story of a trip to the seaside, and uses individual characters to make its messages more concrete. In a comedic and uplifting way, it leverages what behavioural science calls the **identifiable victim effect**: we have greater empathy when we see misfortunes happening to recognisable individuals.¹⁰ This allows us to empathise with the aunt and uncle driving to the beach – but we also don't want to be in their (overheated) shoes. So we also strongly relate to the kids modelling the desired behaviour – using public transport instead of the car.



Star Rating
Strong

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)



Great Western Railway Five Get There First (adam&eveDDB)

“ We really wanted to shine a light on the key benefits of rail travel; using the wit, charm and warmth of the Famous Five to do so.

People intrinsically know that rail travel is a greener way to travel than by car, so we wanted to bolster this by also conveying rail's comfort and speed, adding a deeper appeal to the overall experience of travelling by train.

Amanda Burns, Director of Sales and Marketing, Great Western Railway

¹⁰ 'Sympathy and callousness: The impact of deliberative thought on donations to identifiable and statistical victims' by Deborah Small, George Loewenstein and Paul Slovic [Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Vol. 102, No. 2, pp. 143-153, 2007]

GREEN HINT 4 MEET THEM 90% OF THE WAY

Because the climate crisis is so huge, people can feel that making a difference will need huge lifestyle changes – so it’s harder to encourage them to make any. But moving to a lower-carbon lifestyle doesn’t have to mean overhauling everyday life – it can be small changes that make the most profound difference.

Providing consumers with alternative solutions that are convenient, cost-effective and still better for the environment lets sustainability feel more accessible. It taps into one of the most important and effective tenets of behaviour change, the ‘E’ in the EAST framework: make the change as easy as possible.

A great example is plant-based food. People worry most about plant-based products not tasting as good as their meat or dairy counterparts. This triggers the well-known behavioural principle of **loss aversion**.¹¹ People feel more strongly about avoiding losses (in this case taste) than about making gains. So, the most successful brands in the plant-based space concentrate more on minimising that perceived loss – reassuring people there is no loss of taste – than promoting the sustainability benefits of switching.

Another useful behavioural science concept in this case is that of **optimal newness**: finding the perfect balance of new and familiar to help people transition more easily.¹² For plant-based food, successful brands make sure their products look, smell and are packaged in ways that bring meat and dairy counterparts to mind – lots of familiarity to counteract the ingredients’ newness. But there are other routes to optimal newness: you can build familiarity by partnering with a known entity, like Impossible Meat did with Burger King – what’s more familiar than a Whopper?



¹¹ ‘Using Social Cognition and Persuasion to Promote Energy Conservation: A Quasi-Experiment’ by Marti Hope Gonzales, Elliot Aronson and Mark A. Costanzo [Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Vol. 18, No. 12, pp. 1049-1066]

¹² ‘The Novelty Paradox & Bias for Normal Science: Evidence from Randomized Medical Grant Proposal Evaluations’ by Kevin Boudreau, Eva Guinan, Karim Kakhani and Christoph Riedl [Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 13–53, 2012]

GREEN HINT 4

MEET THEM 90% OF THE WAY

While many plant-based brands have mastered this principle, that's not to say it only works applied to food. This **IKEA** ad dramatically brings to life how tiny behaviour changes can make a big difference – each simple, sustainable change (like using energy-saving bulbs) reduces the overall danger. The ad fits well into IKEA's existing *The Wonderful Everyday* platform, with its focus on sustainability as a collective family effort, and on creative, IKEA-enabled sustainable solutions to small problems.



Star Rating
Good

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

IKEA Fortune Favours the Frugal (Mother London)

Bosch turns its message – our products make sustainability easy – into a song and uses quirky, surreal effects to bring it to life. Behind the humour is a powerful product pitch – all you need to do to improve your environmental behaviour is use Bosch: it's taken care of it for you. So, you can look 'like a Bosch' without doing anything different at all.



Star Rating
Good

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Bosch Like a Bosch (Jung von Matt)

“Appliances that save water and energy but look fun to use.”

Test Your Ad survey participant

GREEN HINT 5

USE THE RIGHT MESSENGER

The **messenger effect** has long been known to have a powerful influence on consumer behaviour – messages land more effectively depending on who they come from, and different kinds of messengers will have different impacts.¹³ Behavioural science identifies three types of messenger: neutral, relatable or authoritative messengers. All three can have a role to play in making effective environmental ads.

In the ads we analysed, we found many examples of authoritative messengers. We saw both aspirational influencers (e.g., Love Islanders, Tom Kerridge, Iain Sterling) and partner organisations. Partnerships work by leveraging credibility (WWF) or brand values (ITV) to build relevance and trust, and give sustainability claims the sense of being a public commitment, which also builds trust. With authoritative messengers, we're also seeing the **optimal newness** effect at work again – an unfamiliar message coming from a familiar entity.



We also often saw children used as messengers. In behavioural science terms, children are innocent and non-partisan, and work as neutral messengers. They are valuable for environmental ads because they can act as adults' conscience, provoking them to think about the impact of their actions for future generations.

What we don't see so much is the relatable messenger – an individual the audience can identify with, on their level. This is surprising, as it could be a particularly effective way of getting sustainable messages over by tapping into social influence, going back to the EAST framework's principle of 'Make it Social'. Relatable messengers are a tactic brands should be using more.

Choosing the right messenger is important, but so is ensuring they deliver the message in an effective way: from a right-brain perspective, communication between characters is more effective than a to-screen monologue.

¹³ 'The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness' by Carl Hovland and Walter Weiss [The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 635-650, 1951]; 'Messengers: Who We Listen To, Who We Don't, and Why' by J. Marks and Stephen O'Neil Martin [2019]

GREEN HINT 5

USE THE RIGHT MESSENGER

Not only did the partnership between **Carlsberg and WWF** (an authoritative messenger) build credibility for Carlsberg – its ad *The Seal* also features a relatable messenger in the form of the two ordinary people whose chat introduces the ad. The adorable, chirpy seal doesn't hurt either, of course! The combination of relatable and authoritative messengers really helps bring the sustainability message home.



Star Rating
Strong

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Carlsberg The Seal (Fold7)

“ I loved the seal and the fact [Carlsberg] is doing something to help the environment.

Test Your Ad survey participant

With their ad about soft plastic recycling, **Co-op and ITV Home Planet** are another example of the power of an authoritative messenger (the ITV Home Planet brand lending credibility to the national initiative) combined with a relatable messenger – the old man going for his walk to recycle his bags. He provides a point of ordinary identification and helps the ad reach the rare 5-Star rating.



Star Rating
Exceptional

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Co-op You can now recycle soft plastics at Co-op (Lucky Generals)

GREEN HINT 5

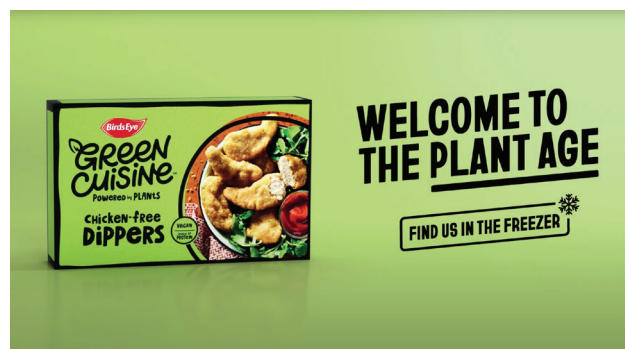
USE THE RIGHT MESSENGER

Birds Eye Green Cuisine is an excellent example of a neutral messenger – its ad features a conversation between a parent and a child on meat-free alternatives. The child’s line of questioning is uncomfortably insightful – but because it’s coming from a child, the ad can have its cake and eat it, pointing out the fear of change without seeming accusing. It’s a clever approach from Birds Eye, showing how important open family conversations can be, but also proving how useful the neutral messenger approach is for making difficult topics easier.



Star Rating
Good

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)



Birds Eye Green Cuisine Welcome to the Plant Age (McCann London)

“ Kids huh? Those little cherubs, always able to ask us the most challenging of questions and get away with it. The team used this truth to create this charming yet disruptive campaign for Green Cuisine, where our animated kids innocently question and challenge our habitual, archaic, outdated, and entrenched eating habits. Welcoming us into a more progressive and sustainable future for food – The Plant Age.

Matt Crabtree, Creative Director / Partner, McCann London

GREEN HINT 6 TRIGGERS FOR CHANGE

While motivation is the necessary foundation for change, to actually make it happen you need triggers.¹⁴ For brands, wider cultural context is often the best place to look for triggers: they can leverage it to their advantage to tick off the key EAST framework's teaching of 'Make it Timely'.

For instance, social events like Veganuary, or wider news stories like the COP summit, can raise the relevance of environmental issues and lifestyle changes and make triggering personal change easier. We also know that fresh-start moments, like the New Year, are when people are more likely to change their behaviour.¹⁵ If you can identify fresh-start moments and other trigger points, people will be more receptive to your ad and messages.



Star Rating
Exceptional

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Co-op You can now recycle soft plastics at Co-op (Lucky Generals)

When **Co-op**'s ad showing an elderly man walking to the Co-op to recycle plastic bags first aired in 2021, it coincided not only with the end of lockdown in the UK, but with COP26 too. Its exceptionally high Star score of 5.1 is not only due to its emotionally engaging qualities, but also to the context in which it was aired: conversations about the climate crisis and interest in the issue were at their highest. When **retested in late 2022**, it still scored high – testament to its strength as an ad – but a whole Star lower, at 4.

¹⁴ 'Combining motivational and volitional interventions to promote exercise participation: Protection motivation theory and implementation intentions' by Sarah Milne, Sheina Orbell and Paschal Sheeran [British Journal of Health Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 163–184, 2002]

¹⁵ 'The Fresh Start Effect: Temporal Landmarks Motivate Aspirational Behaviour' by Hengchen Dai, Katherine Milkman and Jason Riis [Management Science, Vol. 60, No. 10, pp. 2563–2582, 2014]



STAR PERFORMERS

We've explored the hints, levers and tactics that make green-themed advertising most effective. Now let's take a deeper look at some of the most successful ads – the ones which scored well with consumers while conveying an environmental message.

Most of these ads relate to several of our **Green Hints** at once, and use multiple behavioural science principles to get the environmental message across. They can offer vital lessons for brands looking to inspire their own sustainable behaviour changes and work towards a better and brighter future.

THE GREENPRINT

Marks and Spencer Farm to Foodhall: Red Diamond Strawberries

(2023, In-house)



M&S' Farm to Food Hall campaign, starring TV chef Tom Kerridge, puts the spotlight on the British farmers who grow the food M&S sells – and the sustainable practices they use. Red Diamond Strawberries is the campaign at its best – it showcases sustainability while feeling real, relatable, down-to-earth, and funny. Kerridge visits a British farm and chats to two strawberry farmers who grow sustainably-sourced fruit for M&S.

It's a brilliant example of how to make a very human, right-brained ad which incorporates an environmental message, and it's stuffed with elements which are proven to boost effectiveness.

For a start, the ad has a strong sense of place – it opens with beautiful British countryside and makes it clear this is a local farm and a national initiative by M&S. The ad also sets a reassuring, relaxing tone with Fleetwood Mac's classic 'Albatross', which has become the signature theme of M&S Food advertising. Its soothing melody is one of the campaign's most familiar assets.

The bulk of the ad is a very relaxed, natural, and entertaining interview between Kerridge and the farmers. It's unusual for an ad to be so conversational, which helps M&S' approach stand out as more human and relatable. It also helps conversations about sustainability feel normal. And the banter between Kerridge and the farming couple helps the ad end on a funny note – a creative way to leverage the 'peak-end rule', where a strong, optimistic ending leaves viewers on a high and makes the whole ad more effective.

Beyond these right-brained elements, the ad also makes excellent use of its food and of its celebrity star. M&S is well known for 'food porn' – lingering shots of delicious food – and the ad delivers on that front too, creating positive feeling via aesthetic pleasure. As for Kerridge, he's a familiar face from shows like Sunday Brunch and Saturday Kitchen, and the perfect balance of expertise (he has two Michelin stars) with a friendly, easy-going persona. In behavioural science terms, he's a brilliant example of an authoritative messenger using the **messenger effect** to build credibility.

M&S effectively weaves his role into the narrative – he champions and celebrates great work, actively engages with new information and seeks to know more. Because he approves of and takes an interest in the farm's sustainability efforts, the audience is likely to as well.

And what about those sustainability messages? The ad doesn't attempt to hide them – lots of the conversation is about the green energy the farm uses and how its success means it can turn land over to wildflowers. But, following the behavioural principle of **appeal vs duty**, the emphasis is always on the food. You aren't being encouraged to buy the strawberries because they're green – you want to buy them because they're red, and juicy, and downright delicious.

Marks and Spencer Farm to Foodhall: Red Diamond Strawberries

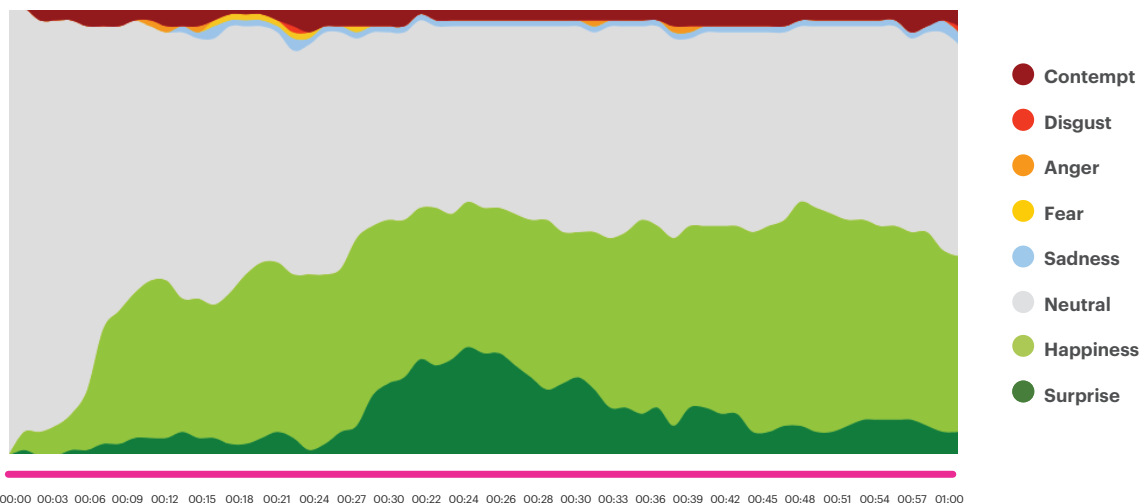
(2023, In-house)



“ Our *Farm to Foodhall* campaign has seen Tom Kerridge travel the breadth of the UK, meeting our Select Farmers to showcase the lengths that M&S goes to, to deliver the very best quality produce.

Our strawberries ad not only allowed us to showcase that only the largest, sweetest, and juiciest strawberries are picked to be an M&S Red Diamond Strawberry, but also the Taskers’ family efforts to reduce and create energy and build a more sustainable future.

Katy Allison, Head of Paid Media & Campaign Planning, Food Marketing, Marks & Spencer



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Great Western Railway Five Get There First

(2023, adam&eveDDB)



Star Rating
Strong

NatRep



Great Western Railway has been using the Famous Five classic children's characters consistently for several years now, tapping into nostalgia to promote both GWR's services and the picturesque places they run through. In this animated ad, the five kids head for the seaside by train. Their hapless aunt and uncle offer to race them there in the car, and get into a series of inconvenient but hilarious mishaps, ending up on the beach well after the kids.

Viewed through an environmental lens, it's a fascinating ad. It's promoting a more eco-friendly, emissions-light mode of transport, but it never presents itself explicitly as an environmentally-themed commercial. Instead, it makes its point more subtly.

First, it doesn't lecture its audience. Its use of humour not only makes the ad more memorable, it leverages the **appeal vs duty** effect: show the relaxing joy of a reliable train journey rather than simply tell people not to drive. By not directly talking about emissions, it also avoids the **ostrich effect** of creating a sense of unease and discomfort.

And while the misadventures of the couple in the car are exaggerated for comic effect, they also create an **identifiable victim effect** – jams, breakdowns, and wrong turns are all part of the driving experience and showing them makes the advantages of train travel vivid in a way statistics or words wouldn't.

It all adds up to an ad that's funny and charming, but also highly effective at using humour to promote sustainable behaviour. Perhaps best of all, it really stands out – there's a behavioural science principle called the **Von Restorff effect**: when people see a lot of similar things, like ads, the one that stands out is more likely to be remembered. GWR's ads are highly distinctive, and that's why they work so well.

Great Western Railway Five Get There First

(2023, adam&eveDDB)



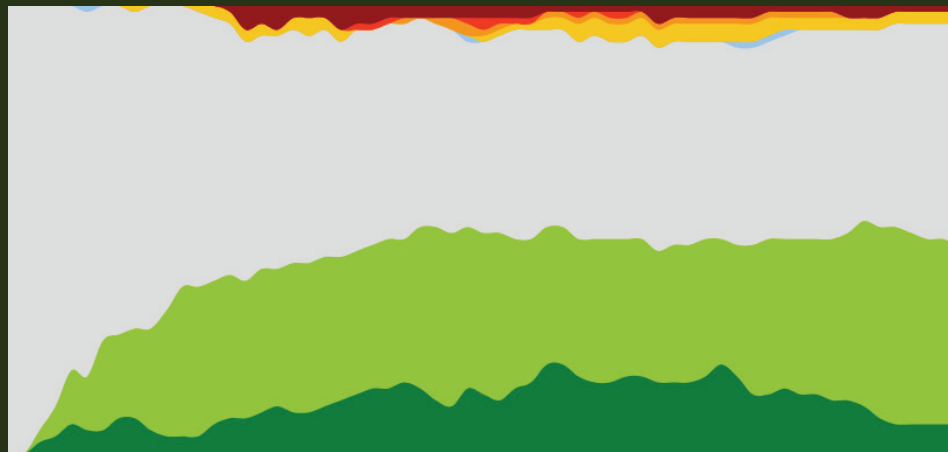
Star Rating
Strong

NatRep



“When it comes to making decisions about how to travel, factors like comfort and journey time are often bigger, more immediate motivators than concerns about environmental impact. So, to help guide people towards more sustainable travel choices, we wanted to show that Great Western Railway is not just a greener way to travel, but also a more comfortable and faster way to travel.

Kit Owens, Senior Planner, adam&eveDDB



- Contempt
- Disgust
- Anger
- Fear
- Sadness
- Neutral
- Happiness
- Surprise

[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Carlsberg The Seal

(2021, Fold7)



Star Rating
Strong

NatRep



Carlsberg is best known for tongue-in-cheek, quietly confident beer ads. But behind the scenes it's one of the greenest drinks brands – in 2018 it was one of the first to introduce packaging that uses glue, not deadly-to-wildlife plastic, to stick cans together. And it has made public pledges on improving sustainability and reducing its carbon footprint.

Finding a tone of voice that communicates that while staying true to Carlsberg's urbane brand image isn't easy, but the brand managed it with *The Seal*, in which a couple drinking beer on a pier spot a happy seal. The seal dives underwater and frolics in a meadow of seagrass – while the voiceover explains how Carlsberg, in partnership with the WWF, is growing the plant to help with carbon capture and revitalise marine environments.

“ I have never heard [of] a company planting sea grass. It is very interesting.

Test Your Ad survey participant

So just by buying Carlsberg, the ad is saying, the consumer is helping the planet: they don't have to do anything else, the brand will do the hard work. It's a highly seductive prospect, backed up by some creative elements that grab right-brained attention (like a cute, expressive seal, and meaningful glances between the human protagonists), which is why the ad cruised to a high 4-Star score on System1's Test Your Ad database. It also leverages light humour to better stick in the memory, and uses the **messenger effect** by having endorsements from the WWF, an authoritative messenger.

But while it's an effective ad, behavioural science should tell us to sound a note of caution. When an easy and simple action is seen as doing a lot of good, it can also trigger **moral licensing** – where consumers feel that adopting the brand and drinking Carlsberg gives them license to 'compensate' and behave in less green ways elsewhere. Helping the planet by drinking Carlsberg should only be the first step on a journey – the **foot in the door** technique, which says easy-to-adopt behaviour changes should lead to more involved ones later.¹⁶

¹⁶ 'Compliance without pressure: The foot-in-the-door technique.' by Jonathan L. Freedman and Scott C. Fraser [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 195-202, 1966]

Carlsberg The Seal

(2021, Fold7)



Star Rating
Strong

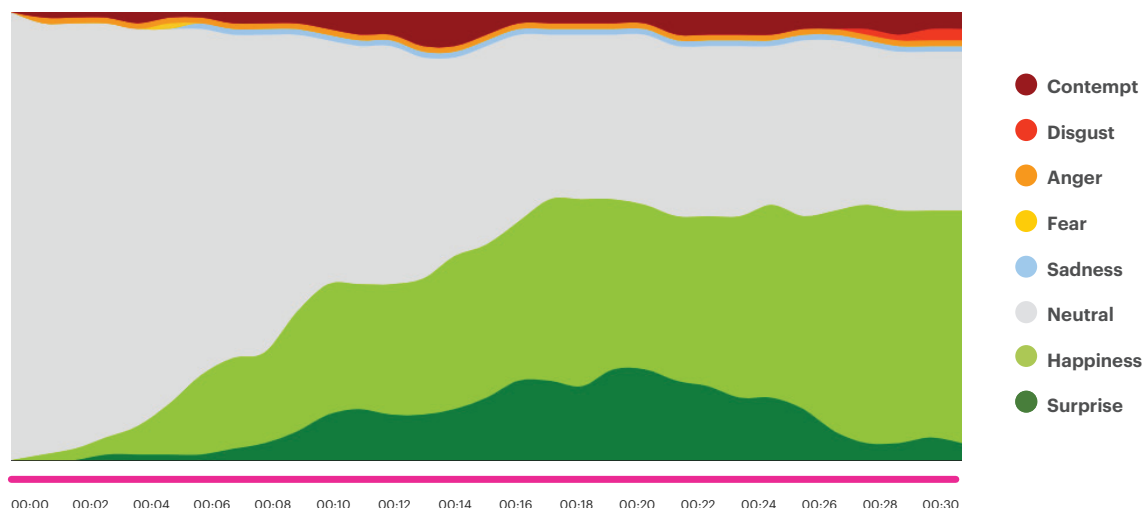
NatRep



“ People often want to make a difference but don’t know how – we wanted to show that simply by choosing Carlsberg, you were able to contribute to this important project and a better tomorrow.

We recognised that this was quite a departure from our previous advertising and so working with a trusted partner in WWF helped to add further credibility to this message. However, we didn’t want the message to be too heavy, and so it was important that we still retained the playful and relatable tone that is so synonymous with Carlsberg’s advertising.

Sam Johnson, Head of Marketing, Carlsberg



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

IKEA Fortune Favours the Frugal

(2021, Mother London)



The **ostrich effect** is one of the riskiest pitfalls for brands' sustainability efforts. If people feel sustainable behaviour is too difficult or the crisis is too great to be resolved, they will 'stick their head in the sand' and do nothing.

So it's bold of IKEA and Mother London to actively flirt with the ostrich effect in their *Fortune Favours the Frugal* ad, part of IKEA's *The Wonderful Everyday* campaign which shows how IKEA products can improve

everyday life for consumers via tiny acts of creativity. IKEA's ad raises the spectre of the ostrich effect in order to dispel it, and does so via a very clever and creative use of metaphor.

The ad begins with a news flash – a giant meteor is heading towards Earth. The meteor is made out of waste – bottles, cans, plastics, and more. Seems terrifying – but the child listening and her family aren't that bothered. They simply get on with their sustainable behaviour, recycling the waste they create and performing other green activities like saving water for plants. With every bit of recycling the meteor shrinks, until what falls to Earth is one single plastic bottle – which the child can pop into her recycling bin.

It's a lovely visual metaphor for how small actions can have a big cumulative impact and demonstrates how for individual consumers, climate action begins at home. The ad embodies the behavioural science principle of **chunking**: action is easier if it's broken up into more accessible and practical chunks.¹⁷ It's also a message of hope for audiences, which first provokes the ostrich effect, then flips it to inspire viewers to action. There's an emphatic change in pacing and soundtrack between the fearful beginning of the ad and the more active, hopeful ending.

It's also smart of IKEA to focus on a little girl – it's the next generation who will have to deal with the effects of climate change, after all, and the ad shows that sustainable behaviour is the responsibility of the whole family. The ad is a bold, creative way to bring sustainability to life, and its focus on a single household is well in line with IKEA's broader branding and overall campaign.

¹⁷ 'The Benefits of Specificity and Flexibility on Goal-Directed Behavior over Time' by Aneesh Rai, Marissa Sharif, Edward Chang, Katherine L. Milkman and Angela Duckworth [Working paper, 2020]

IKEA

Fortune Favours the Frugal

(2021, Mother London)



Star Rating
Good

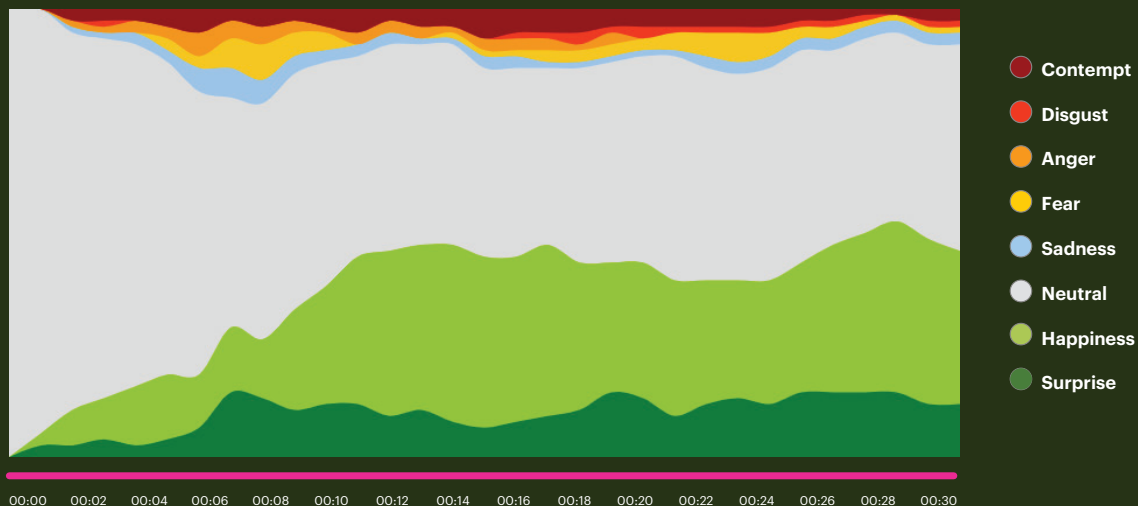
NatRep



“Our brand platform *The Wonderful Everyday* is a summary of the brand’s founding vision: ‘to create a better everyday life for the many people’. So, our starting point for this brief was always going to be about the small things that people can do at home, rather than chest beating about what the business was up to.

Our research found that although a sustainable life at home is something many care about, a lot of people believed sustainability was something you could only afford to do with time and money to spare. The metaphor of the meteor’s destruction is a symbol of hope. While we aren’t suggesting that hanging your washing out will fix the climate crisis, we want people to feel that, regardless of their means and circumstances, they too can have an impact.

Kemi Anthony, Marketing Communications Director, IKEA



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Birds Eye Green Cuisine Welcome to the Plant Age

(2022, McCann London)

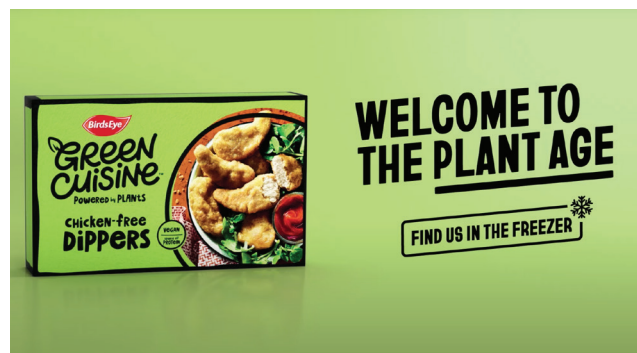


As the saying goes, “From the mouths of babes...” – children can get away with straight-talking and revealing uncomfortable truths in ways adults never could. That’s the dynamic this Birds Eye Green Cuisine’s ad for plant-based foods exploits, making a potentially difficult conversation into something funny and charming.

The ad, by McCann London, shows an animated mother and child – the girl is asking her mum why they haven’t yet gone meat-free, and suggests it’s because the mum fears change: after all, she eats Birds Eye plant-based food at school. The mum is a bit embarrassed!

Like the IKEA ad, Birds Eye here is confronting the **ostrich effect** head on. Most people, accused of fearing change, would get defensive and might become even more set in their ways. And there is a risk of this ad normalising fearful response by showing it (a kind of **negative social proof**). But when the accusation comes from a small child it has an innocence and clarity which can be powerful – especially when the ad makes the situation seem amusing. It’s an example of exploiting the **messenger effect** by making a child act as a neutral messenger.

The animated characters with a real natural backdrop make the ad feel distinctive, and reinforce the central message – ‘Welcome to the Plant Age’. That message also helps reassure viewers that the change the daughter is asking for is underway, nothing to fear, and led by the younger generation. It’s a sly way of using **social proof**: the girl is trying to get her mum on board, because the change is happening anyway.



Birds Eye Green Cuisine Welcome to the Plant Age

(2022, McCann London)



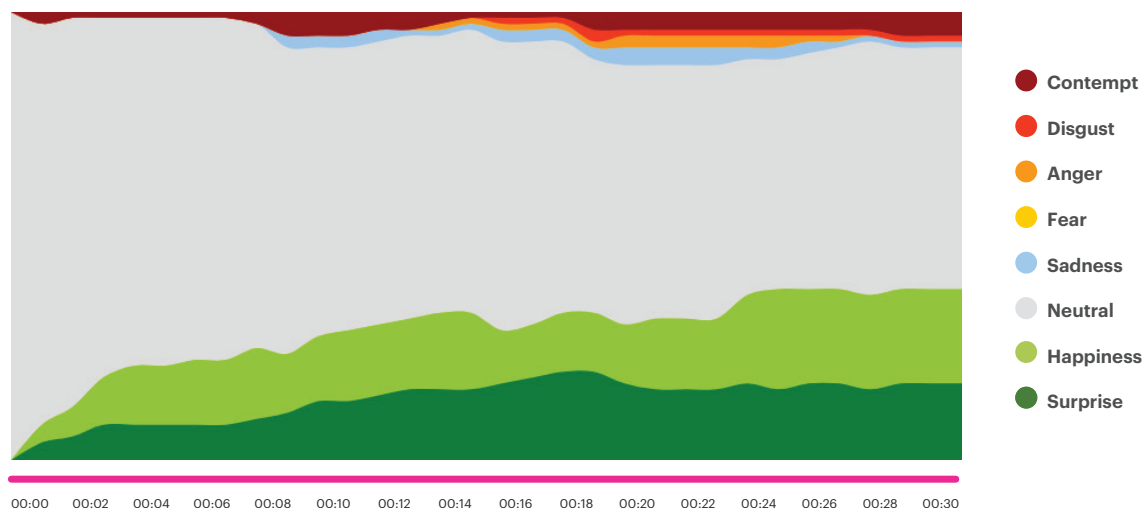
Star Rating
Good

NatRep



“ We have a huge opportunity to help consumers eat healthily and sustainably by switching to a planet-friendly diet. The idea behind the campaign was to use the innocent curiosity of kids to challenge parents’ incorrect negative biases about plant-based food in a disarmingly humorous way. Finally, we wanted to communicate that with our Green Cuisine plant-based products, they can find easy swaps for well-known family favourites to help bring in what we have called ‘*The Plant Age*’.

Joe Clark, Lead Insight Manager, Green Cuisine



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

Bosch Like a Bosch

(2020, Jung von Matt)



Star Rating
Good

NatRep



Getting factual messages across in ads is never easy – it's all too common to see brands stuff their commercials full of product information and fail to entertain the viewer at all. With no humour, story, or visual interest, it's no surprise that the ads aren't memorable or effective and the messages fall flat. Add sustainability to the messaging mix and the job gets even harder.

Bosch's way of solving this problem is to use humour and cultural references. Its ad takes

the phrase 'Like a Boss' – made famous via hip-hop, comedy sketches, and memes – and flips it to 'Like a Bosch', with the ad showing individuals making sustainable decisions and better choices thanks to their Bosch hardware. The ad also livens its messaging up with quirky visual choices and effects, like a man in an outfit whose colours match the bands on an energy-saving certificate.

There are so many behaviours shown that the ad risks overloading the viewer with information, but mostly the light-hearted approach pays off. The ad is offering viewers easy, practical and small-scale behaviour changes – a great example of **chunking** behaviour to make it more accessible. It's also letting the Bosch machines take the strain – an example of the **optimal newness** principle, with the machines being advanced enough to impress but not so high-tech that the tasks they perform require new behaviours.

Ultimately the ad scores 3 Stars – not the highest score in this report, but very impressive for an ad selling unglamorous products like dishwashers and washing machines. Being more energy-efficient has a tangible consumer benefit as well as helping the environment, and is a critical part of sustainable action – so it's good to see a brand talking about it. What's even more beneficial for Bosch is that its Brand Fluency is exceptionally high – it turns out creating a jingle repeating your brand name every few seconds is very helpful in getting people to remember it!

Bosch Like a Bosch

(2020, Jung von Matt)



Star Rating
Good

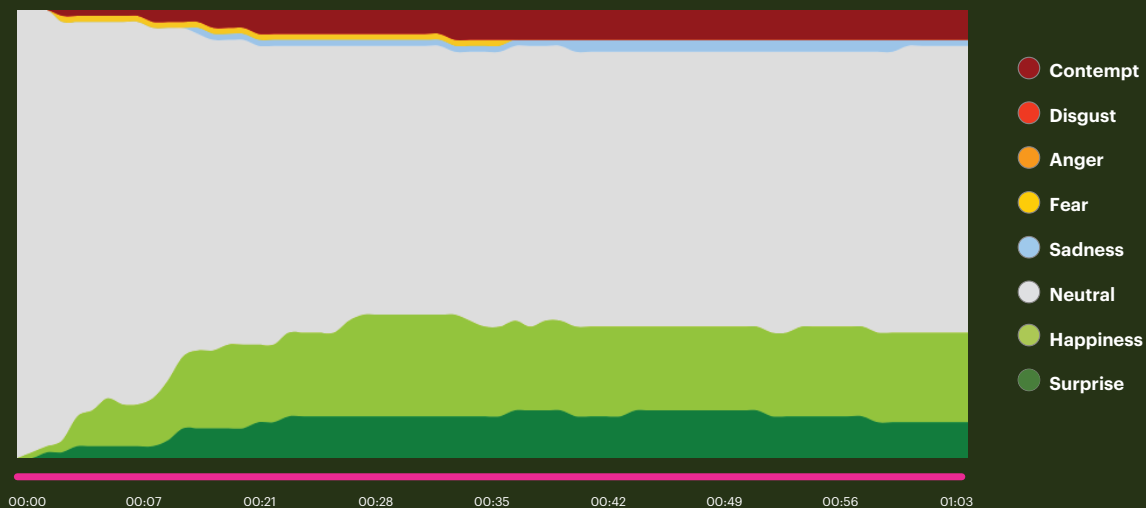
NatRep



“ We are committed to providing our consumers with high-quality solutions to their everyday challenges. This includes offering appliances that deliver perfect results, while reducing the potentially negative impact their usage has on the environment.

The *Like a Bosch* platform allows sustainability messaging to be included in a manner that is engaging, light in tone, and without judgment. This is a good way to go about landing the message: reception is higher when presented in a positive and uplifting manner.

Mohamed Sattar, Head of Global Campaigns and Brand Building, Bosch Household Goods



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)



The Co-op's touching ad in partnership with ITV Home Planet is a great example of how sustainable messages don't have to be upfront to make a powerful impact. The ad opens on an elderly man, Tom, alone in his home, and follows him as he enjoys a leisurely walk through his community on a sunny day, smiling at people going about their business and greeting old friends.

Finally we reach Tom's destination – his local Co-op store where he can recycle empty bread packaging thanks to its soft plastics recycling programme. The ad was promoting sustainable behaviour all along – but it handled that subtly, getting us invested in the lead character instead. A great example of how **framing** can help an ad build up positive emotional response and put the eventual message in a better light.

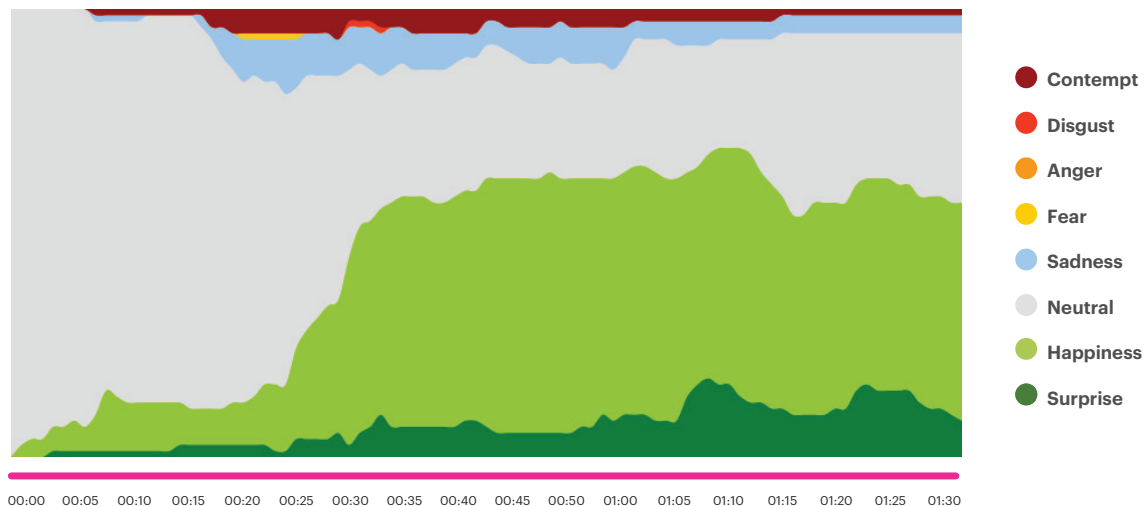
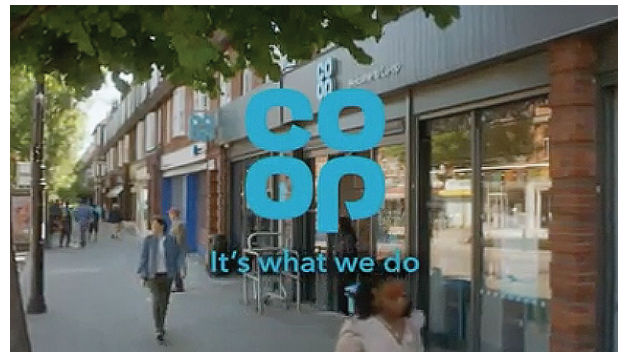
The ad was extremely effective – it hit 5.1 Stars on System1's Test Your Ad database. Partly, it was the right commercial for the right time – spring 2021, not just coinciding with COP26, but with the UK coming out of its COVID pandemic lockdown and beginning to return to normal. When our hero says "Nice to be out", it was a sentiment a lot of viewers could truly sympathise with.

But good timing isn't the ad's only advantage. Tom's journey uses many creative elements that appeal to the right side of the brain and attract 'broad-beam' brand-building attention. The focus on a central character and a single narrative is one. Another is the ad's strong sense of place – Tom walks through a typical English town and sees urban foxes, dandelions, buskers on the street, and kids playing in the garden. There's also a bit of human between-ness – Tom sees a couple kissing in the park and enjoys his own interactions with Co-op staff. And of course there's the classic, upbeat soundtrack.

So it's an excellent ad even before you get to the sustainability elements. The ad reinforces those in two ways. First is the subtle linkage of community to sustainability – Tom's re-entry into his community is to do some recycling: a kind of indirect **social proof**. Second is the way the ad uses the **messenger effect**. ITV as sponsor is an authoritative messenger, but Tom, as a highly likeable and ordinary character, is an example of the more unusual relatable messenger, reinforcing sustainable behaviours by showing that the people doing it are just like you or I.

Co-op
You can now recycle soft plastics at Co-op

(2021, Lucky Generals)



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

The AA Power to Electric Drivers

(2022, adam&eveDDB)



Star Rating
Strong

NatRep



The AA isn't a car brand but it's doing its bit for the transition to electric vehicles, training up more experts in EVs than anyone else – which in turn helps the entire EV ecosystem by reducing drivers' fear of switching and getting stuck with no support.

To let us know this, in 2022 it brought in Tukker the dog, an adorable woolly hound who first surfaced in an AA ad in 2020, when it was hoping to persuade people to go on road trips again after the initial wave of

pandemic restrictions. Tukker's proven record at persuading people to do things they were a little wary of made him the perfect fit for an electric vehicle ad.

Tukker is now enjoying a well-earned rest from his mascot duties, but his regular appearances in The AA ads made him what's known as a Fluent Device – a recurring element of an ad which sets the creative shape of it. What Tukker most liked to do is chill out, imagining himself in a car with the wind in his hair, vibing to a funky soundtrack. Here, to show we're in an electric vehicle ad, he dons mirrorshades and is seen in a neon-lit cityscape, but otherwise it's very similar to other Tukker commercials.

Fluent Devices have a double advantage for advertisers. They work as a brand asset, because they become closely linked to their brand owner. But they also work to prime the audience for positive emotions – if you liked seeing Tukker in one ad, here he is again. For an audience who might be wary of electric vehicles, Tukker's presence – and the AA's status as an authoritative messenger – was a way of helping to normalise them and make sustainability more concrete.

Finally, the tagline – Power to Electric Drivers – has a double meaning. It refers to the AA's expertise in powering, recharging and supporting EVs. But it's also a reference to returning power and autonomy to drivers – casting their choice to switch as a positive and determined one.

The AA Power to Electric Drivers

(2022, adam&eveDDB)



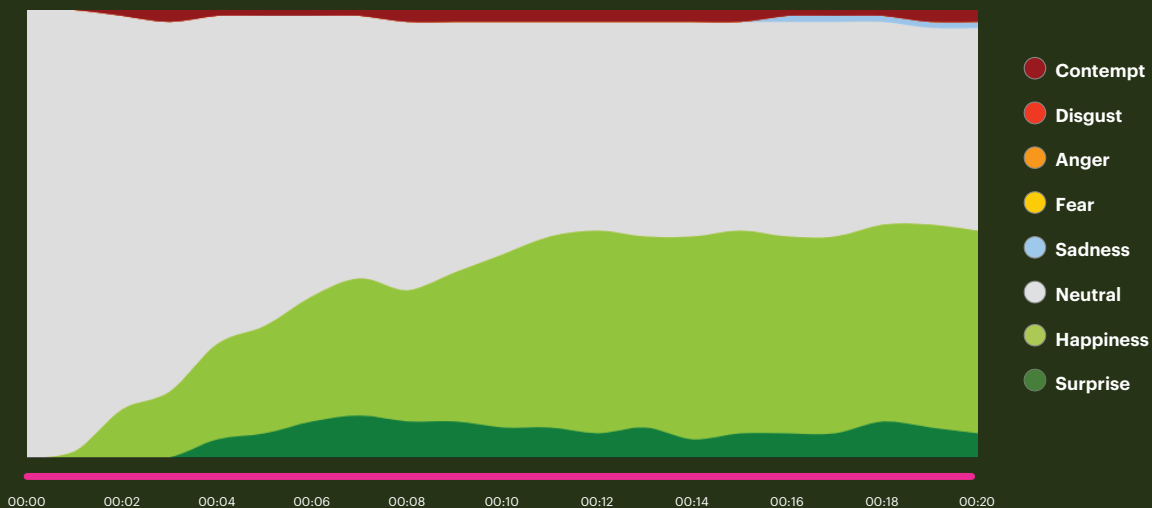
Star Rating
Strong

NatRep



“EVs are still at a very early stage in this country. Part of this is down to cost and charging infrastructure, but we identified that there was another barrier – support. As a brand there for every driver, we wanted to position The AA as a modern brand there for every electric driver in a category that is growing fast.

Hugh De Winton, Planning Partner, adam&eveDDB



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

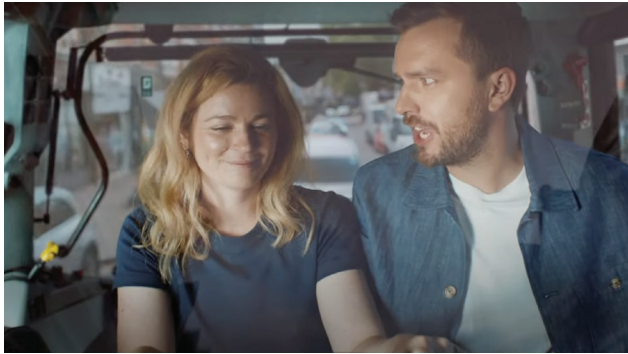
McCain Let's All Chip In

(2023, adam&eveDDB)



Star Rating
Strong

NatRep



McCain's *Let's All Chip In* takes a very similar tack to the M&S ad featuring Tom Kerridge. In this case, though, it's not a chef but Scottish comedian Iain Stirling who fills the celebrity role, talking to a farmer who grows potatoes for McCain and practises regenerative farming.

The ad is very straightforward, with plenty of shots of the farm and lots of detail on regenerative farming, including the core pledge at the end of the ad – McCain has

promised to move entirely to regenerative farming by 2030. The use of Iain Stirling leverages the **messenger effect**, with a familiar face making the brand's claim feel less abstract and more trustworthy. The seconds of comedy at the start, with the farmer picking Stirling up in her tractor and driving it through city traffic, also do a great job at making viewers relaxed and amused from the start. And the tagline – 'Let's All Chip In' – is clever too, reinforcing the explicit message that simply by buying McCain, consumers are helping the environment.

Finally, that public pledge is important for both McCain and the audience. Behavioural science shows that **commitment bias** is important for ensuring action – if you've publicly pledged to do a thing, you're more likely to follow through on it.¹⁸ The 2030 date makes the pledge feel realistic – near-term but not immediate – and puts the seal on the trust the ad's built up.

“Knowing that sustainability is an important driver of brand choice for the Gen Z audience, our *Let's All Chip In* campaign aims to tell a serious message in an unserious way that shines a light on the values and farming practices that make McCain chips not just tasty but good for the world around us all.

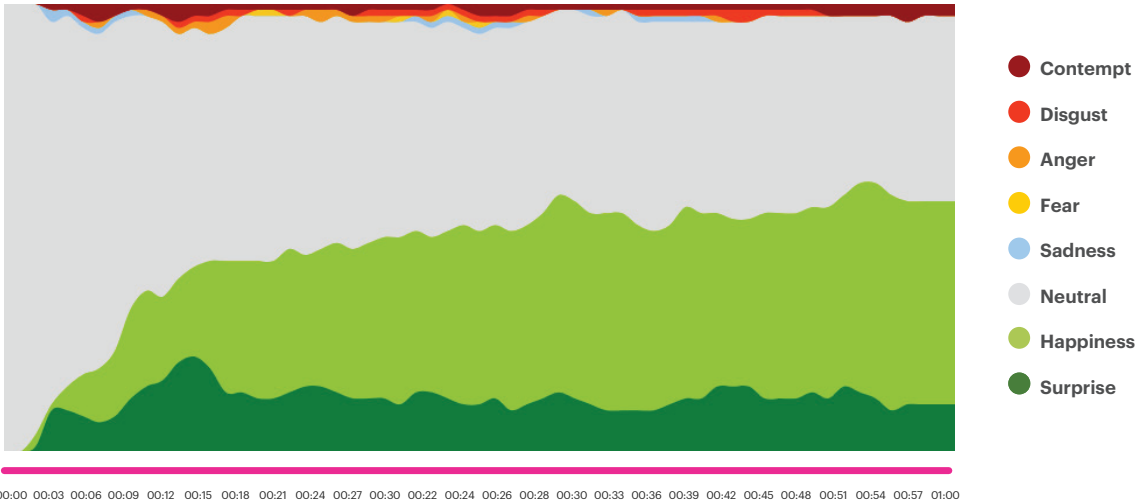
Hugh De Winton, Planning Partner, adam&eveDDB

¹⁸ 'Low-ball procedure for producing compliance: Commitment then cost.' by Robert B. Cialdini, John T. Cacioppo, Rodney Bassett and John A. Miller [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 36, No. 5, pp. 463-476, 1978]



“*Let’s all Chip In* targeted a younger audience to educate them about the importance of regenerative agriculture, following our research which revealed this audience feels passionate about climate change but at times overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge. In its totality, the campaign portrayed that, simply by choosing McCain, consumers are able to chip in and help prevent the future threat posed to some of our most loved foods.

Mark Hodge, Vice President, Marketing, McCain Foods UK&I



View Test Your Ad Report

eBay eBay x Love Island: Find the pre-loved of your life

(2022, MediaCom and ITV, supported by McCann London)



Star Rating
Low

NatRep



Star Rating
Strong

Love Island viewers



At System1 we've explored how brands can best use their sponsorships of popular shows. The key is to balance elements from the show with elements from the brand. People who dislike the show may well reject the ad – but they won't be the ones seeing it. And fans will appreciate an ad which likes it as much as they do.

So for this eBay x Love Island collaboration, featuring Gen Z'ers happily dancing around

the iconic Villa because they've won auctions on pre-loved items, we saw a low effectiveness score among the general audience, but a far higher one for Love Island viewers. And in this case, they're the ones who matter.

This ad is only a small element of a much wider partnership, which saw Islanders promote eBay pre-loved clothing – AKA second-hand – by wearing it in the show itself. The **framing** of the language – 'pre-loved' – is important as it puts it in a positive light and doesn't touch on environmental messaging. In fact, the ad and campaign are careful to stay away from any criticism of unsustainable practices – it's aligned with the audience's ideals prioritising fashion and style while stealthily promoting better behaviour. By not stressing the environmental factors the ad also avoids **moral licensing** – viewers won't feel they 'deserve' a piece of new clothing just because they 'did the right thing' and bought pre-loved.



eBay

eBay x Love Island: Find the pre-loved of your life

(2022, MediaCom and ITV, supported by McCann London)



1.2

NatRep

Star Rating
Low



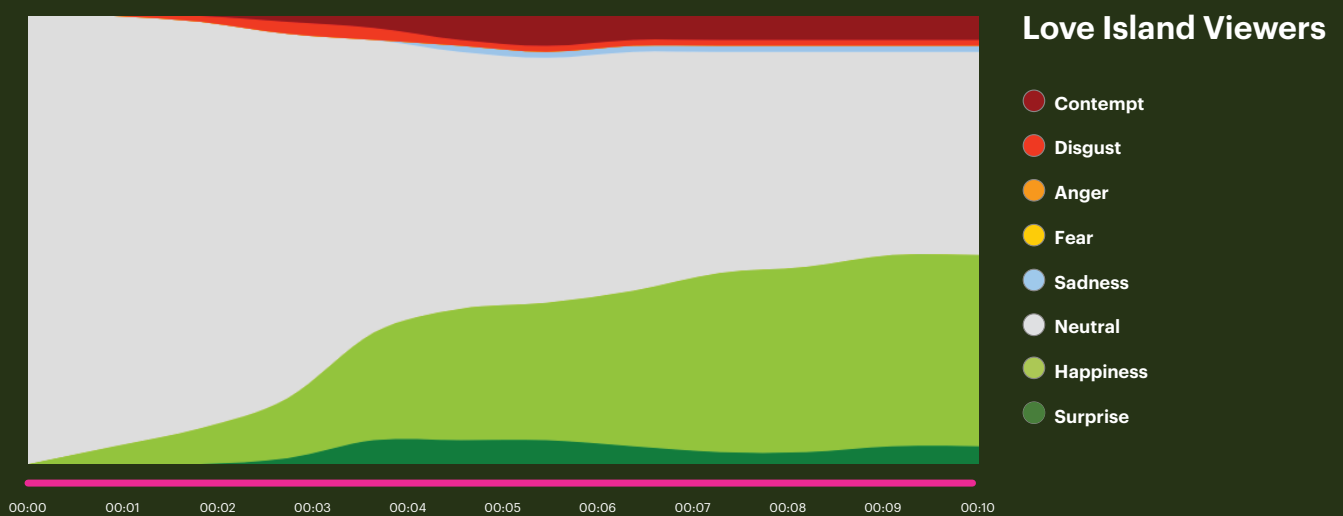
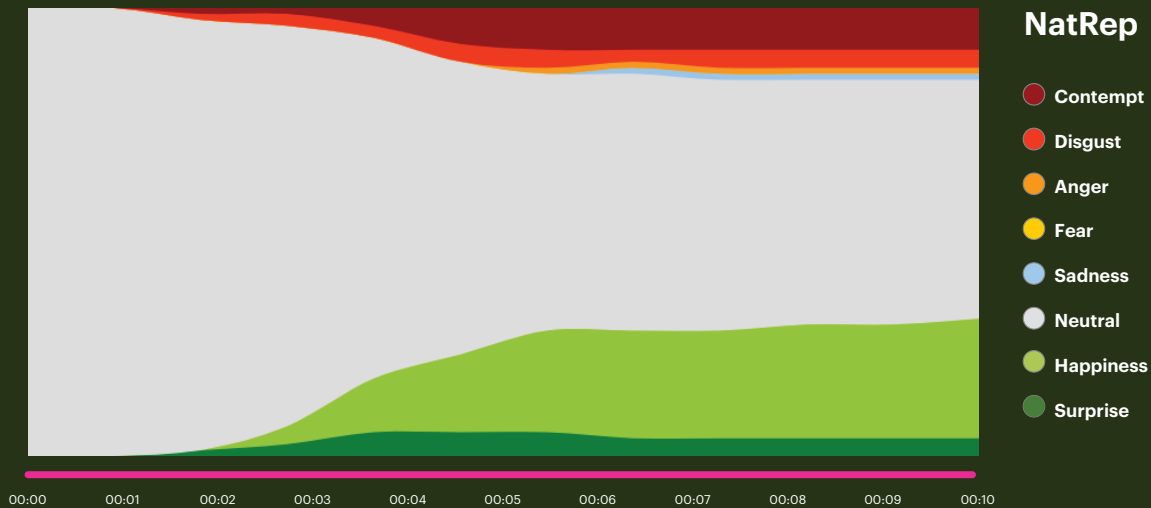
4.2

Love Island viewers

Star Rating
Strong

“As one of the original homes of pre-loved, we believe that joining forces with this incredibly influential programme allows you to have a direct say towards the source of industry conversation, while also inspiring the nation to think differently and make more conscious choices when it comes to their wardrobes.

Eve Williams, Vice President and General Manager, eBay UK



[View Test Your Ad Report](#)

SUMMARY

Let's look one last time at our six Green Hints:

1

HOPE OVER FEAR

If people feel overwhelmed or think there's no hope, they will stick their heads in the sand and do nothing. Use positive emotions to build hope and drive action.

2

SUGGEST IT, DON'T SHOUT IT

Climate ads don't have to mention the climate to work. Don't make people feel they're doing their duty – present behaviours that feel good.

3

STORIES OVER STATS

Storytelling is advertising's superpower. Big, abstract numbers won't move people like individual stories or familiar faces can.

4

MEET THEM 90% OF THE WAY

Optimal newness – finding the least disruptive way to present new behaviour – will get better results than demanding radical change.

5

USE THE RIGHT MESSENGER

Different messages will need different messengers – from children challenging adults' behaviour to trusted brands lending their voice. Don't neglect the power of ordinary voices, either.

6

TRIGGERS FOR CHANGE

People will change more readily at moments when they want to change – when big climate events are in the news, or times like New Year's, when they might be shifting behaviour anyway.

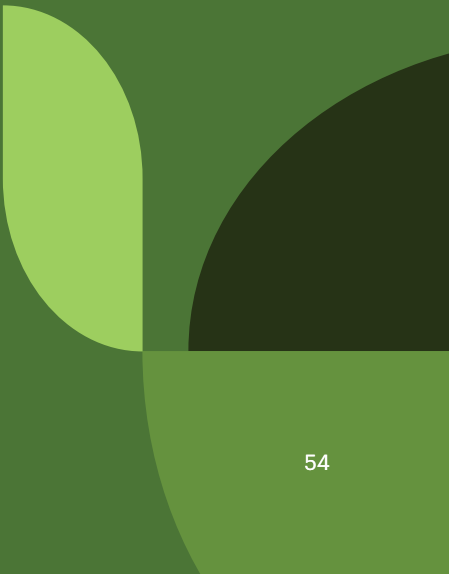


CONCLUSION

When it comes to green ads, we can all point to good examples. But as this study has found, they exist in the context of an advertising landscape where ads with environmental messages are rare, where many of the behaviours they feature aren't high-impact, and where, on average, green ads are no more effective than others.

This is what ITV and System1 want to help change with this report. By looking at green advertising through the lens of behavioural science, and by shining a light on ads which do present sustainable behaviour in an entertaining, emotional way, we hope we've offered a true 'greenprint' for better practice going forward.

**THE
GREENPRINT**



Credits

Kate Waters	Director of Client Strategy and Planning	ITV
Richard Shotton	Founder	Astroten
Chiara Manco	Creative & Media Partnerships Director	System1
Genevieve Norris	Senior Partnership Executive	System1

The AA

Power to Electric Drivers

Mark Felix	Chief Commercial Officer and Group CMO	The AA
Will Harrison	Group Brand Director	The AA
Matt Woolner	Creative Director	adam&eveDDB
Steve Wioland	Creative Director	adam&eveDDB
Hugh De Winton	Planning Partner	adam&eveDDB

Birds Eye Green Cuisine

Welcome to the Plant Age

Elle Barker	Former Global Marketing Director	Nomad Foods
Joe Clark	Lead Insight Manager	Green Cuisine
Matt Crabtree	Creative Director / Partner	McCann London

Bosch

Like a Bosch

Jonas Eklof	Former Head of Communications	Bosch Home Appliances Europe
Mohamed Sattar	Head of Global Campaigns and Brand Building	Bosch Household Goods
David Leinweber	Managing Creative Director	Jung von Matt
Jörg Meyer	Creative Director	Jung von Matt
Alexeji Dobschinski	Creative Director	Jung von Matt

Carlsberg

The Seal

Emma Sherwood Smith	Former Marketing Director	Carlsberg
Sam Johnson	Head of Marketing	Carlsberg
Ryan Newey	Founder and Chief Creative Officer	Fold7

Credits

Co-op

You can now recycle soft plastics at Co-op

Ali Jones	Former Customer Director	Co-op
David Hunt	Creative Director	Lucky Generals

eBay

eBay x Love Island: Find the pre-loved of your life

Eve Williams	Vice President and General Manager	eBay UK
Rob Webster	Creative Director	McCann London
Alexei Berwitz	Creative Director	McCann London
Bhavit Chandrani	Director of Digital and Creative Partnerships	ITV

Great Western Railway

Five Get There First

Amanda Burns	Director of Sales and Marketing	Great Western Railway
Ben Tollett	Executive Creative Director	adam&eveDDB
Kit Owens	Senior Planner	adam&eveDDB

IKEA

Fortune Favours the Frugal

Peter Wright	CMO	IKEA
Kemi Anthony	Marketing Communications Director	IKEA
James Sindle	Creative Director	Mother

Marks & Spencer

Farm to Foodhall: Red Diamond Strawberries

Sharry Cramond	Marketing Director	Marks & Spencer
Katy Allison	Head of Paid Media & Campaign Planning, Food Marketing	Marks & Spencer
Robert Black	Head of Brand, Communications and Omnichannel Marketing	Marks & Spencer Food
Nate Camponi	Film Director	In-house

Credits

McCain

Let's All Chip In

Mark Hodge
Frances Leach
Martin Beverley

Vice President, Marketing
Creative Director
Chief Strategy Officer

McCain Foods UK&I
adam&eveDDB
adam&eveDDB

Waitrose

Food to Feel Good About

Martin George
Nathan Ansell
Joanne Massey

Former Customer Director
Partner & Customer Director
Partner & Advertising
and Bought Media Lead
Creative Director
Creative Director

Waitrose
Waitrose
Waitrose & Partners

adam&eveDDB
adam&eveDDB

ABOUT US

ITV is the nation's biggest commercial broadcaster. We are proud of our ability to reach and engage huge audiences through our programming and are passionate about helping our advertisers to do the same. Our partnership with System1 is part of our ongoing commitment to build an evidence base for creative effectiveness. Contact your ITV rep to find out more about how we can help you connect more effectively with our viewers.

System1 is The Creative Effectiveness Platform that harnesses the power of emotion to drive growth for the world's leading brands.

Our Test Your Ad (TYA) and Test Your Idea (TYI) solutions quickly predict the short- and long-term commercial potential of ads and ideas, giving marketers confidence that their creative concepts will resonate with consumers and drive profitable commercial growth. Complementing TYA and TYI is Test Your Brand (TYB), which measures the impact of ads and ideas on brand health.

With a database of over 170,000 ads, System1 allows brands to compare their ads against competitors, and System1's expert guidance helps brands improve the effectiveness of ads and ideas.

System1 was founded in 2000 by Founder & President John Kearon. Our global operations are led from offices in Europe, North America, Brazil, Singapore, and Australia.

Learn more at system1group.com

Astroten was founded in 2018 by Richard Shotton, author of *The Choice Factory* and *The Illusion of Choice*. It is a consultancy that applies behavioural science to marketing to make it more effective. Whatever the challenge, Astroten draws on findings from behavioural science to offer solutions grounded in evidence.

Alongside consultancy, Astroten provides tailored training and workshops so that brands and agencies know how to best apply behavioural science to their challenges. Astroten works with clients like LloydsPharmacy, Mondelēz, Nestlé, and Sky.

THE GREENPRINT

Our Commitment

In 2022, **System1** partnered with Carbon Intelligence (CI) to report on its carbon emissions and to voluntarily disclose its energy and carbon footprint, based on our worldwide figures. The methodology is aligned to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, developed by the World Resources Institute, and it is the industry standard for measurement and reporting. As the Company is a provider of professional and digital services with coworking offices, has a flexible working environment, and has a fully cloud computing infrastructure, other than employee laptops and mobiles, most of our footprint is in scope 3, meaning indirect emissions associated with upstream and downstream operations.

In 2023, we are committing to assist ITV in achieving its emissions reduction targets, in alignment with the **Science-Based Targets initiative** (SBTi) Corporate Net-Zero Standard Framework and to achieve at least a 5% reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions year on year.

ITV has an ambitious climate action programme, supporting our commitment to meet our Science-Based carbon emissions reduction targets by 2030, and to meet the most stringent definition of Net Zero by 2050.

We are focused on decarbonising our operations and supply chain, reducing waste and supporting a culture of sustainability: all programmes produced or commissioned in the UK must undergo sustainable certification, and all colleagues are trained in climate action. As founding signatories of the Climate Content Pledge announced at COP26, we are also increasing the amount of content on-screen that supports the transition to a Net Zero society.

In 2022, ITV was awarded an A by the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) for our transparency and governance on climate action, putting us in the top 2% of disclosing companies worldwide.

ITV Commercial is an active member of AdNetZero and is fully supportive of the industry's mission to decarbonise advertising production and media and to use advertising as a force for good to encourage lower-carbon choices through advertising. In 2021, we created ITV Home Planet to give climate-friendly brands a platform to communicate their messages in partnership with ITV.

We are immensely proud to have won both the 2023 Ad Net Zero Awards Grand Prix for the eBay and Love Island partnership and the Gold Award for Best Practice in Sustainability: media owner.

THE GREENPRINT

How advertising can step up
to the climate challenge

TV advertising can change consumer behaviour and drive meaningful action on the climate crisis. *The Greenprint* shows you how. ITV and System1 have teamed up with behavioural scientist Richard Shotton to uncover how brands and advertisers can tackle the climate crisis through creativity, using behavioural science principles and System1's effectiveness data. *The Greenprint* is an actionable guide to better green advertising – empowering the industry to make creative decisions that elicit positive change.

System1

www.system1group.com

itv

www.itv.com