

Case Study 7

EcoTopTen Initiative

Germany



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Energy behavioral changes



Changing Behaviour



Work package 2

Development of the conceptual model: Analysis of success factors,
underlying models and methods in target group interaction

Case Study 7:

EcoTopTen Initiative, Germany

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Summary of the case

The EcoTopTen (ETT) initiative (www.ecotopten.de) is an innovation and communication system for sustainable products and sustainable consumption started by the Oeko-Institut in Germany. The ETT initiative started its first phase (phase 1) with two interlinked but separate parts – the ETT research and development project on sustainable products, and the ETT consumer information campaign. Now the project has entered phase 2 in which market surveys and the lists of ETT recommended products will be updated on a regular basis.

The ETT initiative encompasses ten product fields: *building&housing, mobility, eating&drinking, refrigerating&cooking&dishwashing, clothing, laundry washing&drying, information&communication, TV&Co., electricity and investment.*¹

The criteria for each product group are related to environment, quality and costs. To a large extent, the criteria are based on existing labels and product tests, like the European energy label, the German eco-label, as well as labels for green electricity or product tests published in the journal of the German 'Stiftung Warentest' which carries out product quality tests and consumer information.

ETT is aiming at going beyond existing labels and consumer information schemes by integrating environmental and quality aspects as well as annual life cycle costs. In doing so, the project promotes the further development from environment labels towards sustainability labels. Furthermore, the Oeko-Institut promotes sustainable product development: sustainable innovation goals are communicated to manufacturers showing which advanced criteria relating to environment, quality and costs should be met by products in a few years.

¹ For this case study the focus will be laid on those elements of the ETT initiative that address energy consuming household appliances.

Step 1: Context of DSM programme

National context in general

The ETT initiative is carried out on a national level addressing all consumers in Germany. The general, national context can be characterized as follows: The energy consumption per household in Germany (adjusted to the EU-27 average climate) is comparable to the EU-27 average. Whereas the energy consumption per capita is above the EU-27 average, the specific energy intensity (energy consumption per GDP) is below this average (BMW 2008, Odyssee 2008). In several product fields ETT is targeting the electricity consumption within the household sector. In Germany an average household consumes around 3.620 kWh per year whereas the EU-27 average is 4.110 kWh. However, electricity consumption of private households is increasing to a larger extent than the overall electricity consumption of the country. Whereas the latter has increased by approx. 0,4% per year between the years 2000 and 2006 (EU-27: 2,4% per year) the annual increasing rate of the electricity consumption in the household sector was in the range of 1%. This rise clearly implies that efficiency gains through technology development are overcompensated by augmenting equipment rates (e.g. tumble driers) and the trend towards larger appliances (e.g. larger TVs, refrigerators).²

The energy prices have increased substantially (although an early opening of the electricity market in 1998) in recent years. Currently, the prices have reached a level at which a certain amount of households are not able to pay electricity and gas bill, making energy poverty an issue on the political agenda.

In several product fields ETT is aiming at assisting consumers to take informed purchase decisions in the field of household appliances (e.g. refrigerators, washing machines). The market penetration of efficient A/A+/A++-rated products is already today relatively high in Germany, in comparison to other countries. Subsequently, ETT is benefiting from the general knowledge about energy efficiency and competence in this area amongst vendors. As little explanation and information is required concerning the fundamentals of energy efficiency ('what it is' and 'why is it important'), more time and effort could be spent on 'how to improve it'.

Germany is one out of few Member States that will most probably reach its 2008/2012 Kyoto GHG reduction target (reduction target of 21% compared to base year 1990). In recent years energy efficiency is gaining more and more attention in the political debate. Different from the discussion about pro and cons of selected renewable energy source (especially wind energy), there seems to be a consensus across all political parties on the issue of energy efficiency. Nevertheless there is still a lack of regulatory framework to enable substantial cuts in the energy consumption in the household sector. In the lack of these regulations, the strategy of the ETT is to create a consumer driven demand for particularly efficient products, which can influence the manufacturers to produce sustainable appliances. However, whereas such initiatives can be an important driver to gradually change markets it is rather unlikely that in Germany – the same might apply to most of the Member States – the consumer approach will gain the power to substitute the need for political interventions towards more efficiency.

In addition the debate on energy efficiency is rather technology orientated (e.g. efficiency standards, development of new technologies). To enhance understanding from the consumer side for these technicalities, it is crucial for ETT to highlight the multiple benefits of many energy efficient products; such as price, quality and/or design. Sufficiency aspects including questions about our lifestyle or our mobility behaviour are more or less left out of the discus-

² It must be noted that it would not be feasible to curb this trend solely through information campaigns such as ETT. The scope of ETT is rather to motivate and inform people on which appliances to make up the most sustainable choice. Taking on an informational and advising role, the ETT can reach a public also beyond the 'green' consumers, which is crucial to its success.

sion. For information campaigns such as ETT it might also be very difficult to integrate sufficiency elements as the majority of the target audience might perceive such thinking and recommendations (e.g. 'walking or taking the bicycle instead of taking the car') to be old fashioned and not compatible with our current lifestyle.

Many product groups subject to ETT are also included in the EuP process (Energy-using Products Directive (2005/32/EC)). This process will establish eco-design requirements for energy-using products (including minimum efficiency standards). However, whereas EuP is aiming at setting obligatory minimum standards, ETT is targeting at the upper end of the efficiency scale of energy using products, thereby promoting the highest efficiency levels. Related to the tool-box of potential instruments to decrease the energy consumption of private households, ETT can be categorized as soft instrument aiming to influence the consumer's purchase decisions. Within the European Union, individual Member States have limited ability to implement regulatory policy options to drive the appliances market to more efficiency. The competence for regulation policies lies with the EU, whereas the Member States must to a large extent to rely on soft measures. Responding to this context, the ETT received funding from public institutions, but sought cooperation and networking opportunities in a larger extent amongst market actors; points of sale and manufacturers. The assumption is that by creating and stimulating demand, the supply side will try to satisfy this market; independently of regulations.

Other policies in Germany addressing the scope of ETT comprise energy taxes (e.g. posed on electricity, natural gas and liquid fossil fuels consumption), various energy labelling activities (including those following the Energy Labelling Directive 92/75/EEC, governmental activities such as the Blauer Engel label as well as private initiatives) and financial support schemes.

In the last 20 years several intermediaries such as energy agencies on the state level ('Bundesland') as well as the actors on the local/regional level have emerged and made the issue of energy efficiency in the household sector to a core topic. The cooperation with these intermediaries was beneficial for ETT in order to reach a greater amount of people with relatively low transaction costs, as they often acted as multipliers (see below). Another important type of institution in the scope of ETT are organisations such as 'Stiftung Warentest' or 'Ökotest' that provide a large degree of transparency in the variety of different offers in one product group by carrying out and publishing product quality tests and consumer information. The scope and the criteria of these labels were assessed during the research phase. It was attempted to integrate them into the ETT scheme, in order to reduce complexity and avoid confusion for the consumers.

Before the German electricity market was opened for competition several utilities operated efficiency programmes such as bonus schemes for A-rated appliances or energy consultancy. However, many of these programmes have not continued after the liberalisation of the electricity market.

Two out of three Germans believe that Germany should take a leading role in the international efforts to mitigate climate change. 96% of all Germans agree that consumer behaviour is an important driver for energy savings. 98% support the idea that the industry should be forced to offer more energy saving products. 84% claim that they pay attention to low energy consumption when buying household appliances (BMU 2006).

Specific context of the project

As previously mentioned, there are several different labels which seek to inform German consumers about the environmental performance of different product groups. However, there are also product fields where ecolabels are not present, such as answering machines or in-

vestment funds. Thus, one of the central goals for ETT is to reduce the complexity for consumers by providing precise recommendations on the basis of transparent criteria for sustainable products.

Sustainable consumption is to a high degree locked in by the increased material flow (including energy use, CO₂ emissions and waste). In Germany and other OECD countries there are four general tendencies contributing to this trend:

- The amount of products per person (more cars, electronic appliances, computers etc) is rising due to higher living standards, and the increase of one and two person-households.
- The requirements related to use and function of products are augmenting; example are bigger and faster cars with additional safety and comfort devices (ABS, Airbag, GPS).
- A numerous increase of new products which do not substitute other products (for example CD-player, DVD-player, MP3-player or fixed line telephone and cellular phones).
- For many products, there is unexploited potential for a lower environmental impact during the use-phase which many users are not aware of.

These four trends (consumption and use behaviour and demographic transition) may very overthrow the ecological gain through technological improvement in products. All products recommended by ETT are easily accessible on the market. For the ETT campaign it is rather a challenge to be up to date all the time. As the market in some product fields evolves quite fast, it must be ensured that the ETT lists of recommended products are up to date reflecting the current range of market offering that meet the ETT sustainability criteria. The ETT initiative is part of Topten approaches that have been established in several European countries.

Step 2: Focus of DSM programme

General issues

The budget of ETT amounted to 715.600 EUR. The ETT initiative can be divided in two phases.

- Phase 1 of ETT started off with a research phase which ended in 2004. During this phase, product groups were assessed according to the ETT criteria. In addition, the Oeko-Institut worked closely with manufacturers and vendors to investigate and explore the opportunities for sustainable product innovation and development. Using the research outcomes as a basis, the ETT campaign started in March 2005 and ended two years later. The goal of the campaign was to create a wide spread awareness about the ETT-products.
- Currently, phase 2 is conducted, where continuous market surveys are executed and this is foreseen to endure until 2010. The campaign has now established the brand/logo of ETT, and communication work will be done in a less intensive way.

Initiators and partners

The ETT research project is being carried out by the Oeko-Institut (www.oeko.de), which was founded in 1977, and is today a leading European research and consultancy institution, employing more than 100 staff. The second project partner was the Institute for Social-Ecological Research (ISOE, www.isoe.de), founded in 1989 in Frankfurt/Main, and renowned as a pioneer in the field of social-ecological research in Germany.

The ETT research project was initially founded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Legacy for the Future Foundation (Stiftung Zukunftserbe). The ETT campaign received financial support from the German Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL). Phase 2 of ETT is funded by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU).

Problem definition

It is difficult and time consuming for the consumer to take the environmentally and economically appropriate choice during the daily purchase and use habits. ETT is aiming at providing a brand that offers guidance for the purchasing decision and the use phase of 'everyday products'.

Goals and objectives

The overall goal of the ETT approach is to promote sustainable products and sustainable consumption in the mass market. The formulated objectives for the research phase were:

- To reduce the material flow (resources and emissions) within the relevant product fields.
- To identify sustainable products and services already available on the market.
- To develop sustainable products with a supply- and/or demand-driven incentive.
- To develop innovative marketing concepts for target-group specific communication.
- To promote network amongst sustainability activities and innovative actors.
- To enhance understanding of consumer interests and behaviour.
- To prepare and follow-up of results through particular product innovation.
- To execute a marketing campaign and prepare a second phase of the project.

The goal and objectives of ETT are highly ambitious. It encompasses ten product fields and a total of 25 product groups; hence the processing of the data was a considerable amount of work. The numerous amount of highly diverging actors on the supply side, as well as the con-

sideration of different target groups and life styles on the consumer side extended the complexity of the preparatory research work, which of course also had an interdisciplinary scope.

The goal of the ETT campaign was to enable awareness rising and taking use of the results regarding products found during the research phase. It seeks to create interest and knowledge about innovative and sustainable products in the media and amongst the consumers. The campaign was highly focused on the multiple benefits sustainable products provide, e.g. high quality, appropriate price, ecologic, social acceptability, and cost efficient use. The ETT products are all sustainable products with these traits. The high product standard of ETT was crucial for the success, as it appeals potential consumer groups along various lines of argumentation.

The targets and target group

The ETT initiative is a broad and large scale initiative to promote sustainable products and consumption. By providing neutral and comparative information within the product groups, it aims to offer consumers guidance in a purchasing decision phase. The ETT campaign also sought to spread knowledge about how to use products in a low impact manner. The target group were consumers on the mainstream mass market, across all ages and social groups. The consumers were divided into different target groups according to the size of household and the use patterns of energy consumption. The foreseen marketing campaign was supposed to include a large range of targeted consumer groups, however the funding did not allow for this (see below). The sole specifically targeted groups ended up to be pupils and housewives. Pupils were chosen as they are in a position where habits have not yet settled (in terms of washing clothes for example). The housewives were targeted, as they are a consumer group where behavioural change is a key element, and practically due to good circumstances for interaction during a trade fair.

From the ETT perspective manufacturers and corporations involved in the research and product development phase were considered as stakeholders rather than as target groups. Nevertheless, the impact of the ETT on awareness within the company, and on their future product development should not be neglected, as they have an interest of understanding consumer patterns.

Step 3: Design of programme

What knowledge and ideas informed the design of the programme?

The research and development component of phase 1 of the ETT initiative assessed various product groups with a new product sustainability assessment methodology called PROSA.³ This involved life-cycle assessment (LCA), life-cycle costing, social assessment and consumer research. To identify and characterize the future development of markets and market segments, a megatrend analysis along with scenarios were generated.⁴ During the research phase of ETT initiative, it was found that in most product groups, there is considerable room for development, in order to achieve sustainable products and consumption. These developments include:

- Formulation of quality standards.
- Inclusion of environmental aspects in the design of products (for example in electronic appliances regarding stand-by-loss).
- Application of systems to support environmentally friendly and cost efficient use.
- Exclusion of too expensive or not affordable products.
- Determination of social standards.
- In general, there is a lack of market overview, and no adequate certification across product groups.

Research conducted on target group

The demand side was mapped through the consumer research carried out by ISOE on consumer types and consumer styles, which provided a consumer guideline for the ETT initiative (UBA 2002). The ISOE approach is qualitative and includes goals of ecological optimisation, in contrast to the Sinus Milieus research which is highly quantitative and does not include ecological aspects. For this reason, the ISOE approach was kept during the research and product development phase, as it provided useful complementarities to the Sinus Milieus research conducted by the corporations. The guidelines identified ten different consumer types which are distinguishable by social status. To map the habits and attitudes of the (green) consumer, the following model elements were employed:

- convenience (orientation towards comfort, time-saving, and idleness),
- status driven (exclusivity or distinction),
- possession driven (need to acquire, to 'possess' more than 'use'),
- quality emphasis (orientated towards quality measures),
- cost-savings driven,
- environmental driven (environmentally conscious consumption),
- regional driven (orientation towards regional economy and markets),
- life time driven (short or long term orientation of consumption),
- experience and leisure driven (fitness and fun orientation),
- technology driven (identification with car, PC and HiFi technology),
- cultural and educative driven,
- animal protection driven (empathy for animals),
- ethical consumption driven (oriented towards social and international justice).

³ For details see www.prosa.org.

⁴ A megatrend analysis is built on traditional market analysis and includes societal and technological developments. The objective of a megatrend analysis is to foresee and conceptualize feasible socio-economic developments which may impact product developments and market segments. Due to the ever faster changes regarding technology and society, scenarios are built to reflect the complex market environment products and corporations are faced with.

The research phase documented a change in behaviour amongst the (green) consumers since the 1980-90's and the present consumers. Examples of these changes are that consumers prefer:

- good design instead of alternative symbolism,
- individual instead of collective focus,
- fun factor before of suffering,
- experience rather than disaster,
- professional instead of home-made,
- delegation rather than individual responsibility,
- gain rather than abstention,
- profitability rather than altruism,
- success before anti-industrialism,
- fast rather than slow,
- solution rather than contribution.

The results of these outcomes are important for both the manufacturers and communicators, which can target products and people in a different manner. It also gave input to the awareness raising campaign that focus can be set on design or comfort without fearing the loss of credibility from environmental conscious consumers. Furthermore other lifestyle-research has shown that the consumer types also depend on product fields; hence specific models within the fields of mobility, energy and housing were developed. One additional factor is occupation, which also inflicts upon the demand structure. Regarding sustainable consumption, the environmental consciousness and consumption attitudes the following findings provided a basis for the initiative:

- Consumers employ their own sense of 'reasonable' rationality, which is often not in accordance to sustainability criteria. Their actions are integrated in a highly complex system of interdependency from the micro level (family/household), to macro level (cultural habits). Thus, consumption attitudes are affected by several individual and structurally dependent factors (time, money, supply, symbols, available infrastructure, habits/routines etc) and by different life styles, which is interfering with both, on a meso-level.
- Consumer behaviour is not one-dimensional; it is furthermore a diverse and independent role-mix as citizen, market actor, employee, and family member. This also explains how a consumer can make informed choices within certain product groups on the basis of his knowledge, whilst in other not; which has led to the characterisation of the 'Patchwork-consumer'.
- In addition, knowledge and action is not correlated; although the consumer is well-informed, sustainable choices will not always be made. Apart from the price factor, transition costs (accessibility, provision) are a crucial aspect for accepting or rejecting certain products. The importance of consumption symbolism (generated through marketing strategies) is increasingly important for the individual and between individuals.

During the product development phase⁵, the relevant consumer groups were included. The method applied were focus-groups consisting of 8-10 persons engaged in group discussions for one afternoon. Hereby, the goal was not to agree, but to produce and identify differences in preferences and decision-making criteria. Participants are thus not randomly selected, but applied by quota (e.g. representatives from different target groups of the VW Lupo however a consumer who would never buy a (small) car is excluded). Questions were mainly related to the object (e.g. answering machine, the 3 litre car, or a bicycle), and the participants expressed wishes, preferences and gave an evaluation of the product.

The second method was expert-groups; composed of maximum 5 persons. The experts selected were journalists who have specialized within ecology and researchers from other insti-

⁵ ETT Pilot-Products included washing machine, answering machine, 3 litre car, car-sharing, bicycle, wood pellet heating, condensing boiler, green electricity, energy saving lamps, Loewe television, and video conference tool.

tutes. The expert-groups were challenging to organize; the higher level the experts were; the more difficulties were related to find a convenient appointment for all. The solution turned out to be one-on-one telephone consultations.

The data analysis from the consumer research was based on audio and video-recordings from the meetings, interpretative and cluster analysis of the content and statistical documentation referring the socio-demographic determinants. The consumer research was employed when creating the marketing and communication material for the ETT campaign.

What barriers, motives and capacities did the programme aim to target?

The ETT campaign targeted the mass market consumer with advice regarding affordable, low environmental impact and high quality products. It was crucial to communicate that sustainable products are attractive products, which with the appropriate use can save considerable amount of money. The market surveys gives consumers reliable information and guidance to choose amongst a large range of products.

The research on the (green) consumer was incorporated in the communication strategy and the campaign of ETT, both concerning content, but also concerning style and argumentative lines. The research results were also employed when choosing communication channels for longer articles. An important barrier to sustainable consumption is often the lack of transparency and information for the customer in a purchasing situation. The purchase-decision as well as the use-phase is targeted by the ETT campaign.

The intervention methods/instruments and activities used

The intervention method belongs to the category of communicative instruments. The intervention is addressing both behaviour patterns: one shot behaviour entailing the purchase of energy efficient appliances as well as reducing energy consumption induced by repetitive behavioural changes (curtailment behaviour).

The ETT campaign was developed after the research phase. Based on the product assessment (PROSA), the consumer research and the input and recommendations from the manufacturers, the campaign was launched. The results from the research and development pilot phase were presented in separate reports for each product field: *building&housing, mobility, eating&drinking, refrigerating&cooking&dishwashing, clothing, laundry washing&drying, information&communication, TV&Co., electricity and investment.*

The ETT logo (see above) is not a new seal or label. ETT is an information and communication platform. The criteria for classification of ETT products are formulated within the ranking. The criteria are not only environmental or social standards; they also include quality, price and life cycle cost. To differentiate the ETT products, the brand/logo ETT is used. In this regard ETT is not a competitor to other environmental certification schemes, but tries to incorporate their standards. Unfortunately, no single environmental certificate or sustainability seal covers all ETT product fields, thus different seals are employed.

The ETT campaign included a large range of communication instruments and activities including

- Launching event with press and patronage
- Internet site with newsletter
- Informational brochures
- Media partnerships with magazines and newspapers
- Working with ETT multipliers⁶

⁶ Described in "Participation" chapter

- Cooperation with consumer advice centre in North Rhine-Westphalia
- Loose inserts in newspapers
- Movie competition: Promotional spots for sustainable consumption
- School competition: Washing and electrical appliances
- Cooperation with the Deutsche Hausfrauen-Bund (German house wife alliance)
- Strategy discussions with environmental organisations, consumer organisations and related projects and campaigns

These instruments were working on individual, group and society levels in terms of spreading knowledge and awareness of sustainable products. The direct educative parts of the campaign were the newsletter and articles in newspapers and magazines. By the end of the ETT campaign, more than 2000 individuals had signed up for the newsletter. The ETT multipliers were to a large extent professionals who received both background and informational material⁷ from the research phase and the campaign.

The ETT initiative is to a large extent capacity building, as it supports environmental organisations and consumer advisory groups by providing them objective and reliable information. The personal contact between the ETT staff and multipliers were close and personal. This was beneficial for the initiative, as it proved to be encouraging both people within the ETT project team and the multipliers. The personal contact also enabled open strategy discussions and external input which improved the quality of the campaign.

The ETT campaign was one of several campaigns promoting the benefits of higher quality products. (in opposition to the ‘geiz ist geil’-‘the gift of thrift’ attitude and trend). The highlighting of a more responsible lifestyle, such as the former campaign ‘Echt gerecht – clever kaufen’ (transl: Really fair-buy smart) from the German Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMELV) or the LOHAS-trend (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) were present in several of the major medias during the same period. The presence of sustainable consumption as an issue in the media was supporting the success of the ETT, making it easier to get the attention from journalists. The approach and the understanding of the (green) consumer underlying ETT was also correlating to a high degree with the messages of the other campaigns.

Between 100 and 200 ETT informational flyers were distributed to the 55 consumer advisory agencies in North Rhine-Westphalia. The consumer advice centres also offered financial incentives available, for example with regards to improvement of energy efficiency in buildings. However, this funding is not related to ETT. Therefore its impact was not subject to the

⁷ E.g. the following brochures were published throughout the initiative:

Product field	ETT-product group
Building & housing	Prefabricated houses Gas and wood pellets condensing boilers Energy saving lamps
Mobility	Car/car-sharing Bicycles
Eating&drinking	Organic and fair trade product range
Refrigerating & cooking & dishwashing	Cooling and freezing appliances Gas and Electric kitchen stoves Dishwashing machines
Clothing	Range of products certified for pesticide use and fair trade cotton
Washing & drying	Wash machines and laundry drier
Information & communication	PCs/Notebooks/Computer monitors Printers Virtual answering machine
TV&Co.	CRT/LCD and Plasma television sets
Electricity	Green electricity suppliers
Investment	Investment funds/ retirement provisions

evaluation of the campaign. The implementation plan clearly formulated the responsibilities of all stakeholders. Nevertheless, this was also adopted during the process; as the multipliers for example preferred bilateral meetings instead of workshops, their wishes were accounted for. Although the official ETT campaign has ended, it was decided to continue to execute market surveys within the covered product fields. The results of these updates and tests will be available on the ETT website, thus the awareness generated have a real potential for changing consumer behaviour in a sustainable way in the long term. The ETT campaign entailed two competition elements, one for film students and the second for pupils in the upper secondary school. The promotional film contest was posted on the website and asked for contributions with the topic sustainable consumption. In total were 26 films submitted, whereof two were given a price and published on the webpage. The school competition was launched in the field of energy and money-saving washing, and the pupils were supposed to describe the washing conditions and habits in their region, and communicate ideas about saving potentials.

Participation

During the research and campaign development phase of ETT, large and small companies, as well as industry associations, were involved directly in product development or refinement, and in the design of the ETT campaign. These included Volkswagen, Deutsche Telekom, Loewe, Deutsche Bahn, LichtBlick, and the German federation of personal hygiene and detergent industries IKW.

The multipliers came in addition to these manufacturers. The multipliers comprised various cities and municipalities, schools and universities as well as environmental organizations, energy agencies, the Environmental Ministry, the Federal Environmental Agency, Friends of the Earth Germany, the parliamentarian group of the Greens, the European Environmental Bureau, Oekotest, the Council for Sustainable Development, the Association for Sustainable Mobility (VCD), the Consumer Initiative etc. The ETT-multipliers approach was employed in order to engage private and professional people to spread the concept and goals of the campaign to the largest group possible. The multiplier effects were generated through the following activities:

- Publishing link to the ETT website on own company website
- Coverage and information on ETT in company newsletters
- Use of the ETT-logo in commercial material and product information (by placing the logo next to the ETT recommended devices)
- Display of ETT informational brochures

Table 1: Overview of activities by manufacturers with multiplier effect

What	Manufacturer	Product group
Press releases	Bauknecht/Whirlpool	Dishwasher, Washing machine
	Gorenje	Stoves/cookers
	Opel	Car
	NEC-Displays	Computer monitors
	Miele	Laundry driers, Cool/freeze appliances, Washing machines
Reference to ETT and link on website	Biotech	Wood pellet ovens
	Crosslee	Laundry drier
	Bosch	Dishwasher
Use ETT logo on trade-shows/external communication	Blomberg	Laundry drier
	EFS-Seppelfricke	Stoves/cookers
	Haier	Cool/freeze appliances
	Tietjen Heating technology GmbH	Heating
	Wagner Solartechnik	Wood pellet heaters
	Neckermann	Electronic appliances
	OTTO	Electronic appliances
	Quelle	Laundry driers
	Radium Lampenwerk	Energy saving lamps
	SOLARvent	Heating
	Miele	Laundry driers, Cool/freeze appliances. Washing machines
	Energiedienst Holding AG	Electricity
	Sony	TV
T-Com	Virtual answering machine	
Sharp	TV	
Distribution of infolyer for internal information	Energiedienst Holding AG	Electricity
	Sony	TV
	T-Com	Virtual answering machine
Article on ETT in customer magazine/newsletter	ASEW ⁸	Electricity
	Junkers	Gas-combined heater
	Stadtwerke Hannover	Electricity
	LichtBlick	Electricity
	Wodtke GmbH	Wood pellet heaters

The ETT initiative does not have a strategy for directly engaging with the ‘end users’-the consumers- of its campaign.

Commitment

The ETT campaign was performed under the patronage of the former Minister Renate Künast from the Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL) that also sponsored the campaign. She was unfortunately unable to attend the opening of the campaign, which may have resulted in a higher media presence. As such, there was no particular influence on the project whether positively or negatively.

Communication

The ETT campaign had a communication plan, related to the internet site, information material and cooperation with multipliers. From the website, the consumers can download detailed research reports, and the market surveys within each product group. Thus, dependent on

⁸ ASEW (www.asew.de) is an association of local utilities throughout Germany. It is a subsidiary of the VKU (association of communal enterprises). The objectives of ASEW are the advancement of rational use of water and energy.

interest and knowledge, the website user can find the appropriate information in accordance to his/her needs.

The internet site was visited by around 413 000 users, and had a total of 8,4 million page views throughout the campaign. The monthly page views were between 33 000 and 16 000; which is comparable to the amount of users of a similar initiative in the Netherlands, but far in front of the campaigns in Austria, France and Belgium (which all have around 10 000 page views per month).

Communication channels employed apart from the internet site and its related newsletter were newspapers and magazines, and broadcasts on the television and radio. In addition, articles written by the ETT-staff was also published. The media partnership with the monthly magazine natur+kosmos resulted in 17 articles from ETT.⁹ The monthly articles provided a good substitution for an advertising campaign (that was not feasible due to financial restrictions), as well as it spread the workload of the ETT-team over a longer period of time, compared to a launch of all the products at once. The monthly article provided a continuous media presence, which was beneficial.

In the media partnership with Badische Zeitung, which is a regional daily with around 427 000 readers German wide, articles on the ETT product fields were published every Saturday from July till October 2006 and from May till July 2007. In the television program 'Welt der Wunder' (World of wonders) on the 3rd of July 2005, the ETT car survey was used for a broadcast on fuel saving cars. Furthermore, the magazine 'House and energy' published five articles about the ETT campaign.

The ETT campaign was also supported by the interest from television programmes and magazines. It should be emphasized that a large amount of the media coverage were provided by channels not typically 'green' such as news-sites; spiegel-online.de, n24.de, focus.de, abendblatt.de, tagesspiegel.de, car-sites; autopresse.de, autodefekt.de, computer-sites; computer-

⁹ natur+kosmos (www.natur.de) is a monthly magazine "for people who care for a life in harmony with nature" with a circulation of more than 83 000. natur+kosmos contains stories on innovative development, provides insights in the relationships between human, nature and technology, and gives consumer and environmental advice in every day issues.

Published ETT articles in natur+kosmos:

Issue no	Title [approximate translation]
03/2005	Throughout good products. ETT campaign supports customers to protect the environment and still live comfortably
04/2005	German cars in front. ETT-list shows that environmentally friendly cars also pass the price-test
05/2005	Washing, drying, saving. ETT shows: Innovative washing machines are too expensive.
06/2005	Mailbox for free. Virtual answering machines are not only utterly environmental friendly, they are also the cheapest
07/2005	Electricity: every customer can choose.
09/2005	Saving money at home. Heating technique and stand-by loss
10/2005	Elegant evergreen: The energy saving lamp
11/2005	Organic food advancing. ETT shows the availability of organically produced products in supermarkets and discounters
12/2005	Savvy cooling. Only A++ appliances will save money and the environment
02/2006	Saving car seeks buyer
03/2006	5:1 for the machine. Doing the dishes is more expensive and has a higher environmental impact than the dish washer.
05/2006	Chic, good and low priced. Flat screens consume less electricity
07/2006	CRT, LCD or Plasma?
11/2006	Hot money-spinner in the basement. Wood pellets are cheaper than oil and better than logs
03/2007	Cheap can be expensive. Increasing life cycle for computers.
06/2007	Comfortably in the saddle. Good bicycles
07/2007	New buildings protect climate. High standards for heating and warm water will pay off

partner.de, tecchannel.de, pcwelt.de, financial sites: handelsblatt.com, wallstreet-online.de, or test magazines; geizkragen.de, geldsparen.de, testticker.de.

ETT provides trustworthy information from a neutral research institute on a wide range of products. The product rankings were based on transparent criteria, with scientific references. The messages of the campaign were communicated clearly on the web site and in various articles. The ETT brand has now entered the catalogues of both manufacturers and vendors, which implies its status as a social symbol.

Learning, evaluation and monitoring

The ETT research phase was wrapped up with a final report in 2004, whilst the ETT campaign was evaluated by the end of 2007, the latter as self-evaluations carried out by Oeko-Institut. Many of the successful elements have already been described above. The monitoring of the website shows that the number of users has continuously increased since the campaign launch. As the ETT initiative now has entered its second phase, it is possible to build on experience and contacts established during the pilot phase and the campaign. Several of the campaign elements could not be carried out as planned, due to restrictions of resources; financially and capacity.

Which elements did not work, did not lead to the planned results or had to be cancelled?

- A patronage of celebrities for each product group was conceptualized as a way to find credible communicators of the ETT, inspiring consumers to follow their example. However, it proved difficult to convince the celebrities to cooperate. Several were hesitant to align their name with a campaign in general, although this was not specifically related to ETT. Additionally, negative feedback on the ‘celebrity promotion idea’ was received from website users. Based on this feedback, this campaign element was not implemented.
- The campaign element of free postcards (300 000 printed and e-postcards) with an appropriate illustration of an ETT product field were supposed to generate the ‘snow ball effect’ in spreading the knowledge about the campaign. The postcards were supposed to portray the latest results from the ETT market survey. This campaign element had to be cancelled due to financial restrictions.
- There was also a competitive element between ‘sustainable cities’ planned, which likewise due to the required planning and financial resources had both to be cancelled.
- The film competition was only moderate success; only 26 films were submitted. Only half of these were related to the initiative. This outcome is to be explained by the not appropriately formulated competition text, the short time frame as well as a not sufficient winning-price incentive. If the film competition should continue, the jury made the following recommendations: to cooperate with film schools, or one specific film team. Furthermore, it is recommendable to have the competition around the idea, whilst the winning price is financing of the production. In general, stronger incentives for the film producers are required.
- The journalist workshop on the issue of sustainable consumption and production was also cancelled. This was due to the feedback from the interested journals and magazines (taz, Frankfurter Rundschau, Politische Ökologie, Badische Zeitung etc) that they would prefer bilateral meetings rather than a common workshop. These bilateral meetings were accomplished with success.

The lessons learned both in regards to communication work and related to the product groups are now taken into account in the second phase of the initiative.

Link to other programmes and policies

Link to other programmes

During the pilot phase of the ETT initiative, experiences and lessons learned from 120 actions and campaigns with product specific goals similar to ETT were evaluated.¹⁰ The analysis included structure and participants, innovation approach, estimations of material flows and the connection of product development and marketing, as well as the communication strategies, cases and the success factors of programs and campaigns. Projects and initiatives from the field of products/marketing, education as well as local Agenda 21 were evaluated, as they approach central aspects for promotion of sustainable consumption. Above all were the means and approaches towards different target groups and the success criteria and barriers experience taken into account when planning the ETT campaign.

ETT is part of Topten approaches that have been established in several European countries. Currently 9 Topten websites are bundled under the European Topten campaign (www.topten.info). Through a new project that will be supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme this network is aimed to be strengthened by the integration of new and further development of existing national Topten websites. The Topten approach in Germany is faced with the challenge that there are two different institutions which have pursued Topten activities; the German Energy Agency (Dena) focuses mainly on efficient office appliances, whilst the ETT initiative (Oeko-Institut) is covering a much broader range of different product fields. Although the EuroTopTen initiative has required that the two German initiatives should agree upon criteria and scopes; there are little signs of cooperation. There are clear signs of a cultural clash between the two institutions; the Oeko-Institut being mainly funded by the public sector, whilst the Dena is a more industry oriented institution.

Link to other policies

The Integrated Product Policy promotes the principle that requirements on the environmental performance of products should address all environmental aspects during the complete lifecycle of the product. This is similar to the approach offered by ETT, in regards to product groups, considering existing legislation and labelling, accounting for market trends, consumer expenditure data and consumer behaviour, and in terms of the product assessment methods applied. Nevertheless, ETT is primarily a consumer information campaign, while EuP (see above) is a political process with a focus on implementation measures. This approach is beneficial as it creates results faster than a weary regulatory process, however within the limitations outlined above (information campaigns as a complement to political interventions that are the basis of energy efficiency policy). By applying the consumer approach, it is also possible and relatively easy to use media channels.

The Japanese Top Runner Standard has also similarities to ETT as it takes use of the value of the product with the highest energy consumption efficiency on the market at the time of the standard establishment process and sets standard values. Moreover, it also considers potential technological improvements which are added as efficiency improvements. Product groups are overlapping with ETT. Top Runner is however a programme prescribed under the Japanese “Law Concerning the Rational Use of Energy” and therefore an obligation for manufacturers to make efforts in improving the energy efficiency of their products. There were no particular challenges for ETT arising due to the Top Runner programme.

¹⁰ For details, see Graulich (2003).

Step 4: Process of programme

Interaction between the different participants

The multiplier activities ensured a high degree of interaction between the Oeko-Institut and the participants. A particularly great amount of consumers could be reached through the integration of ETT in already existing campaigns. There was cooperation with the Forum Sustainable Washing organized by the alliance of German Housewives, with the campaign 'Echt Gerech-Clever Kaufen' that travelled with an info bus throughout Germany, as well as cooperation with the European internet site topten.info (see above).

During the ETT campaign strategy discussions were held with representatives from environmental organizations, consumer associations, ministries and related campaigns and projects: BUND, BUNDjugend, DENA, DNR, Greenpeace, Initiative TopTen Switzerland, Initiative EuroTopTen, Initiative 2000plus, Jury Umweltzeichen, Campaign 'Echt gerecht-clever kaufen', Campaign 'Klima sucht Schutz', Campaign 'Product of the month', NABU, Stiftung Warentest, the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), University of Hohenheim, VCD, Consumer Initiative. These were all supportive of the campaign and worked as multipliers for the concept and the information provided from ETT.

Last, but definitely not the least was the further engagement from the manufacturers. About 30 of the manufacturers have integrated the results from the ETT in their internal and external communications (see above), by using the informational flyers, the stickers, linking the web site, in press releases, customer magazines, product catalogues and commercial material. The manufacturer Miele has applied the ETT logo on a regular basis since August 2006 in their advertising brochures which have a circulation of 15 million. Additionally, the main catalogue of the catalogue company OTTO (30 million circulations) also included the ETT recommendations of electrical appliances.

The use of ETT surveys as a guideline for purchase and use has been taken up by a great amount of people. However, there is no scientific documentation of this development (e.g. in form of a specific number of consumers that were reached or that have actively transferred the ETT product recommendation into their purchase decisions). The ETT did to a large extent adopt the message and the content of its campaign in accordance to what the (green) consumers had expressed as their expectations and demands from a sustainable product. Thus, the campaign was not so much focusing on why a change in behaviour is necessary, moreover focusing on which products do exist that will be in line with certain attitudes or beliefs, or just purely the desire to make a good purchase in economic terms.

There has been no direct feedback from the main target group of the ETT campaign to the initiator of the initiative.

Reaction of the project manager to issues/problems

The main problem was to find funding for the ETT campaign. The fundraising lasted longer than assumed, and the problems endured. Finally, the amounts collected were much smaller. Hence, the originally large scale campaign (including cinema and TV spots) had to be reduced considerably. In accordance with the initiator, the ETT was then downscaled to a level concordant with the funding. In addition, the number of products analysed per product group was increased, incorporating the interest of the consumers which during the research phase expressed the desire to have a large range of products to compare and choose from. Another reason was that for the product group 'electricity supply' ETT had to cope with a rather regional splitted market on which only few recommendable green power products are offered nationwide but many good products are sold only on a regional level.

Step 5: Outcome of process

Objectives/goals/outcomes

The overall goals of the ETT initiative to enhance transparency as well as to promote sustainable products and sustainable consumption in the mass market were achieved. The formulated objectives such as i) identification of sustainable products and services already available on the market, ii) showing the material flow reduction potential within specific product groups, iii) promoting a network amongst sustainability activities and innovative actors, iv) achieving an enhanced understanding of consumer interests and behaviour were all achieved.

During the ETT phase 1, additional goals were developed in relation to the sustainable commodities basket and the activities launched by the Council for Sustainable Development. These include:

- Differentiation and extension of demand side; with the use of the material flow analysis the sustainable commodities basket was enlarged.
- Continuous monitoring and rating of product groups; relying on PROSA the criteria for certification can be updated on a regular basis.
- Basis of information for products for that any labelling scheme is available yet.
- Improvement of fundamental data for evaluation of social and environmental impact of consumption.
- Consideration of social criteria.
- Integration of international dimensions.
- Behavioural recommendations were ascertained.
- Disclosure of conflicting goals in purchase situations (between environmental standards and social acceptance with increased time requirement or related to costs).

Any assessment has been carried out to document a changed behaviour amongst the end users, however it is evident that the multipliers and the media attention has established the ETT as a label that is useful and reliable.

In a broader energy context, the project would in the long run have a positive effect, if consumers apply the information and knowledge provided by ETT. However, this has not been measured (e.g. in terms of CO₂ or final energy savings, material savings due to a changed purchase behaviour triggered by ETT). The success of the campaign in terms of attention and spreading the knowledge about its existence happened during the project; nevertheless, the real successful outcome occurs when consumers also apply this knowledge in their daily action of using the products or when making an investment decision.

Manufacturers have at several occasions contacted the Oeko-Institut, asking for a product assessment before the market launch. This is a great success, proving that the ETT initiative is considered as an important instrument. The desire for the pre-launch test is indicating a perceived added value for ETT products, which thus imply the importance of the brand/logo.

Social learning

The learning for Oeko-Institut has been considerable. The engagement with the manufacturers and corporations showed new ways to cooperate and interact with market actors, who are crucial when it comes to sustainable products and consumption. This interaction occurred partly in the research phase, when conceptualizing new products. This exchange of knowledge about consumer groups and product requirements were mutually beneficial. During the campaign phase, ETT material was promoted by the manufacturers, for external or internal use. The contacts established are highly valuable for the continuation of the project. In addition, the

consumer research gave a crucial insight in the purchase decisions and motivation amongst consumers to buy or to abstain from buying sustainable products.

The goals realized were satisfactory to the programme implementers. Although the target group got an insight into energy saving measures, this was only one aspect. The focus on the multiple benefits of sustainable products – such as good design and affordability, gave consumers a range of incentives for buying these products. The ETT market surveys and the logo reduced the amount of work and time related to information search and comparing various offers.

The ETT is continuing to have close connections to the multipliers, thereby strengthening the network amongst sustainable production and consumption actors. The foreseen expansion to a EuroTopTen (see above) will lead to a further institutionalization and knowledge exchange within this network.

Follow-up of the programme

The ETT market surveys will continue until 2010, thus although the campaign and considerable media coverage has come to an end, the consumers are still offered updates and ratings of new product groups.

Step 6: Analysis and conclusion

The most crucial factors shaping the outcome of the ETT initiative in a positive way were:

1. External factor 1: A rising public awareness of climate change, its consequences and reasons triggered through several climatic effects such as intensive storms, river floodings, combined with the publication of several high level reports such as the 4th IPCC Assessment Reports and the Stern Report and the related media coverage; at the same time an increased knowledge how the individual can contribute to climate change mitigation by changing its energy use behaviour.
2. External factor 2: Tremendously increasing energy prices that lead to a rising awareness of energy saving potentials in the private household linked to related costs (especially investment costs) as well as cost savings.
3. Taking advantage of the trustworthiness of the implementing organisation in spreading ETT material to the consumers and multipliers: As Oeko-Institut has a very good public reputation and is regarded to be free from any commercial interests ETT product recommendations are considered to be based on a trustworthy scientific methodology, to be reliable and independently taken.
4. A solid research basis with scientifically grounded methods to rank the products, and knowledge of different consumer group preferences.
5. Establishment of the ETT brand/label as reliable quality indicator for sustainable products, across product fields (this effect was supported by the fact that the campaign ran under the patronage of the Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture).

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