

Getting the “green” message right: ICC issues new environmental ad framework

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As more consumers consider environmental features important in their purchasing decisions, businesses have a keen interest in communicating the ‘green’ attributes of their products. Getting the message right is far from easy. To help marketers and advertisers avoid the mistakes of vague, non-specific or misleading environmental claims, the International Chamber of Commerce has produced a new global Framework for Responsible Environmental Marketing Communications.

Launched today at a seminar for marketing professionals and self-regulation experts in New York, the framework responds to a call from industry stakeholders for guidance on how to better engage in, and evaluate, environmental marketing communications to ensure consumer confidence in these claims is safeguarded.

“The new framework helps marketers and their agencies ensure the messages they develop hold up to the basic principles of truthful, honest and socially responsible communications,” said John Manfredi, Chair of the ICC Commission on Marketing and Advertising. “While the principles are simple, applying them amid the hype and fury of new claims and terms that are not universally understood, is more complicated. This guide is an attempt to map that process for companies and provide a standard for self-regulators to evaluate when claims are questioned.”

Developed by the ICC Commission on Marketing and Advertising, the framework includes a practical checklist aimed at the creators of marketing communications campaigns around environmental claims, as well as a chart that provides an easy reference to relevant provisions of the global advertising code and interpretations on current issues related to environmental marketing.

The launch seminar featured a presentation of the new framework and an interactive discussion based on case examples that demonstrate how the framework tools can be applied to improve advertising and avoid misleading claims. Participants from Europe, Mexico, China and the US discussed regional differences in approaches and the importance of consumer perception in the determination of whether a claim is useful or misleading and the impact symbols, images and colours can have on that.

“Even a widely recognized symbol like the mobius loop, the three arrows that follow each other in a triangle, does not necessarily communicate something universally understood by consumers. When a consumer sees this loop what do they infer about the product? That it has been recycled? Is recyclable? Or both?” seminar moderator and expert Sheila Millar of Keller and Heckman noted. “The framework is designed to help walk advertisers through a review process that maintains a focus on how a consumer might interpret a particular advert or claim.”

ICC’s Framework for Responsible Environmental Marketing Communications is a companion to the Consolidated ICC Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications, which sets forth general principles governing all marketing communications. The framework offers more detailed interpretation of the environmental claims chapter of the general code. As many of the national and regional codes are built on ICC’s Codes, this interpretation can also be applied to national and regional marketing codes used by self-regulatory organizations to set best practices for business.

ICC has been a major rule-setter for international advertising since the 1930s, when the first ICC code on advertising practice was issued. Since then, it has extended the ICC self-regulatory framework on many occasions to assist companies in marketing their products responsibly.

[Click here](#) to view the ICC Framework for Responsible Environmental Marketing Communications

Additional Information

[* ICC Commission on Marketing and Advertising](#)

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