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# Huntsman Professors Find Ways to Make “Green” More Macho

Last spring, Huntsman marketing professors Cathy Hartman and Edwin Stafford got a chuckle over an OgilvyEarth study that found green was too pink. Specifically, the ad agency reported that men, in general, resist environmentally-preferable behaviors and products, such as carrying reusable shopping bags at the supermarket, drinking from reusable water bottles, or driving gas-electric hybrid Priuses, because they perceive environmentalism as inherently too feminine.

“The implication was that half the population was potentially not motivated to live more frugally and sustainably to conserve resources for their kids and grandkids,” Dr. Stafford said.

Drs. Stafford and Hartman, who have been studying environmental marketing since 1995, immediately recognized several successful green brands that are definitely not feminine, including Patagonia’s outdoor gear and Tesla’s heart-pumping Roadster Sports electric vehicle that can accelerate from zero to 60 miles per hour in 3.7 seconds. Indeed, one of the most talked about advertising slogans in business schools, the macho “Don’t mess with Texas” campaign, is an anti-littering initiative by the Texas Highway and Public Transportation Department.

“Young men were the primary source of tossed cigarette butts and beverage cans along the Texas highways,” Dr. Hartman said, “and the ‘Don’t mess with Texas’ slogan cleverly aligned young men’s Texas pride with the act of not ‘messing up’ their beloved home state.” Within five years of the campaign’s launch, litter on Texas highways was down 72 percent.

“The OgilvyEarth study told us that a lot of green marketing suffers from a message framing problem,” Dr. Stafford said, “but green marketing doesn’t have to be feminine.”

This summer, Drs. Stafford and Hartman published a response to the OgilvyEarth study entitled, “Making Green More Macho,” in the cross-disciplinary sustainability journal, *Solutions*. Drawing on their message framing research, they explain how green marketers can better reach male audiences.

“Our past research shows that effective green messages must appeal to hearts as well as minds,” Dr. Hartman said. Their new article overviews common “macho” values and shows how green messages can resonate with those values. Improving green marketing practice has been the focus of their ongoing research. Earlier, Drs. Hartman and Stafford collaborated with New York green marketing consultant, Jacquelyn Ottman, to find that compelling green messages need to connect with consumers’ values and needs, such as saving money, health and safety, convenience, prestige, and better performance (Click [here](#)). A non-toxic carpet cleaner, for example, may not interest most consumers, but when the product’s benefit is framed as, “Safe for crawling babies,” it becomes appealing for parents regardless of the product’s environmental benefit.

In an advertising campaign for the State of Utah’s Natural Resources Department some years ago, Drs. Stafford and Hartman helped craft a billboard campaign for wind power with the slogan, “Wind Power Can Fund Schools,” to draw attention to how wind farms’ property tax revenues (paid by wind developers) largely go to support local school districts. (Click [here](#)).

“Our message communicated a broader message of sustainability relating the social and community benefits of wind energy for children and schools beyond its environmental advantages,” Dr. Hartman said. “Effectively framing messages to appeal to your audience’s values can make all the difference.” The campaign helped jump start wind energy in the state.

This past year, Dr. Stafford has been delivering luncheon talks on making green more macho to such groups as the Utah Chapter American Marketing Association, Kiwanis Club, USU Extension, and other groups with more talks scheduled through next year.

"Audiences find the topic amusing," Dr. Stafford said, "but they come away with a better understanding of how message framing works and can contribute to better marketing."

"We look forward to integrating this research in our marketing classes this fall," Dr. Hartman said, "to continue with our efforts to educate our students about sustainable business opportunities."