Climate and Sustainability

It is our belief that the content we create, and the processes by which we create them, should be sustainable and responsibly considered, avoiding either creating or funding climate misinformation and disinformation.

The climate crisis is the defining challenge of humanity, and misinformation plays a huge part in holding back progress. The IPCC report released on the 28th February 2022, states clearly "Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future." On top of this, our biodiversity is declining at an alarming rate, with the current rate of extinction hundreds of times higher than the average over the past 10 million years.

All those involved in funding the media are responsible for being conscious of the climate costs in briefing processes; showing sustainable behaviours in advertising; cutting misinformation aligned to the universal definition of climate misinformation and consciously investing in professional climate journalism. Former US President Barack Obama pointed out the role of advertisers in this: "Each of us, whether we work in a tech company or consume social media, whether we are a parent, a legislator, an advertiser on one of these platforms, now's the time to pick a side. We have a choice right now. Do we allow our democracy to wither or do we make it better? That's the choice we face."

We cannot beat climate change until we take responsibility to bring emissions in line with the Paris Climate Agreement, to limit warming to under 1.5 degrees centigrade, and regenerate our natural environment. The advertising industry must be a part of this solution.

The leadership position

All management teams should consider climate and sustainability commitments throughout their working practices. At board level, all leaders should be accountable for increasing sustainability throughout their business. This involves setting KPIs which are regularly reviewed against business objectives, and understanding the barriers which come in the way of progress. The focus shouldn't be on box-ticking, but on sincere long-term commitments to change, in terms of the sustainability practices within the organisation, and the behaviours shown in advertisements and where these ads are being placed.

Commercial imperative

Research shows that ethical and sustainability issues remain a key driver for almost a third of consumers, who claim to have stopped purchasing certain brands due to a lack of visible commitment on these issues. The market is potentially huge: according to Ipsos, 6 in 10 shoppers consider themselves to be an ethical or sustainable consumer[1]. People do want change, but they aren't completely sure what actions they should take to have the greatest impact, and they need guidance. Brands have an important role to play. The global Ipsos' Earth Day study 2022[2] showed that automotive, energy and home improvement retail are among the top sectors that could benefit from consumers' increasing desire to shop more sustainably.

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[1] Ipsos *Essentials Report*, 10 to 13 February 2022, sample size 10,530 in 16 countries
[2] Ipsos *Earth Day Report*, 18 Feb – 4 Mar 2022, 23,577 online adults across 31 countries

We believe all organisations should make the following commitments and these should be included in all agency briefs:

1. First steps

- Sign up to Ad Net Zero and get your team to take the [Ad Net Zero Essentials certificate](#) to understand the foundations of Ad Net Zero.
- Obtain the [Carbon Literacy Project](#) certification.
- Look into obtaining a [B Corp Certification.](#)
- Join the [Race to Net Zero campaign.](#)
- Consider sustainable accreditations and partnerships with civil society organisations and list them on your website. [See how SSE have done this here.](#)
- Learn about the universal [climate mis/disinformation definition](#), which includes what is in advertising and what advertising pays for.
- Get the facts by [accessing data from Ipsos on consumer sentiments](#) and how to promote change.
- Does your organisation have a plan for Net Zero?

2. Briefing

These are some questions we urge brands to answer, both internally and externally when in conversation with ad agencies and vendors during the briefing process.

- When it comes to briefings and processes, we suggest joining the [#ChangeTheBrief Alliance](#), which provides a learning programme to all of its members, offering insights and expert advice at a category level on how we can adapt our work to promote more sustainable choices and behaviours.
- Have you asked your agencies who their other clients are? Do you know if they work with any clients that further the interests of fossil fuels?
- Is sustainability a part of your procurement and RFPs?
- Are ads considered in your CSR commitments?
- Consider the balance of your investments and be wary of the say-do gap; your reported intentions should be followed with direct action.
- Be clear about the emissions outcomes that will result from your stated marketing objectives, and how you will measure them. See [Purpose Disruptors](#) for more.

Questions for media agencies and teams shaping creative work:

- Do your due diligence on your clients. Have you asked them what their plan is for Net Zero?
- Does your creative reflect the climate reality of today?
- Does your creative work show sustainable behaviours?
- Does your media spend plan include supporting responsible coverage, based on scientific consensus, of the climate crisis?
- Have you considered that AI and emergent technologies such as NFTs are hugely carbon intensive? Have you warned partners to use them sparingly, interrogate data sets for bias, and demand that they run their servers on 100% renewable energy sources where possible?

3. Production - how we are creating content;

- Do you work with specialist agencies in production, like [Greenshoot](#), which offers practical support to help demystify, assist and instruct in sustainability, carbon reduction and offsetting?
- Do you provide any greener solutions to reduce carbon footprint, for example, do you have a sustainable studio for podcasts, renewable energy for OOH?
- Do you estimate carbon emissions from proposed production?
- Are you considering the environmental impact of brand events and consulting with companies like [isla](#)?
- Have you considered not-for-profit carbon offsetting solutions instead of commercial ones?
- Are you using a carbon calculator and reducing your carbon emissions from media and production?

3. Content - what are we showing on screen in adverts;

- Become familiar with greenwashing by referring to [ASA 'Environmental Claims' CAP code](#) and the [CMA guidance](#). Some of this guidance advises that when making environmental claims, always ensure they are truthful, accurate, clear and consider the full life cycle of the product or service.
- How are you showing sustainable behaviours?
- Is your ad showing gratuitous overconsumption of goods?
- Are [conscious consumption principles](#) at the heart of your advertising?
- Could you cut down the length of your ad to decrease emissions produced by it?
- Have you reduced the locations for filming your ad as much as possible?
- Are your sustainability claims robust? Check the [WFA guidance on making credible environmental claims.](#)
- Is the content you're shooting consistent with a 1.5 degree pathway/goals of the Paris climate agreement? (consider using a carbon calculator)
- Check the [Diversity Standards Collective](#) - are you taking an intersectional approach in the climate context? Are you showing accessible, climate-positive, sustainable behaviours? E.g. people cycling instead of driving a car; using reusable bags; are vehicles shown electric; are you showing solar panels; are you showing affordable plant based meals? Ensure you are maintaining sensitivity around cost of living on these topics.
- Is your creative accessible / jargon-free and does it showcase a diverse range of people?
- Is your creative engaging a diverse range of people / audience across gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age etc.?

4. Making sure advertising is not financing misinformation

As per the [universal definition](#), climate disinformation and misinformation refers to deceptive or misleading content that:

- Undermines the existence or impacts of climate change, the unequivocal human influence on climate change, and the need for corresponding urgent action according to the IPCC scientific consensus and in line with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement;

- Misrepresents scientific data, including by omission or cherry-picking, in order to erode trust in climate science, climate-focused institutions, experts, and solutions; or
- Falsely publicises efforts as supportive of climate goals that in fact contribute to climate warming or contravene the scientific consensus on mitigation or adaptation.

Brands must ensure their advertising is not financing content which falls under this definition, which includes reviewing your brand safety settings and blocklists as well as DSP's and SSP's. Check CAN's mis/disinformation manifesto for more information, as well as the IPA Media Climate Charter's guidance on brand safety.

5. Consciously investing in climate journalism and content

To support sustainability, we need to ensure we keep funding media titles creating quality climate journalism and on the other hand making sure we're not accidentally excluding them with our brand safety settings.

1. Check your block lists. Is the word 'climate' and related words on it? Take them off. Make the effort and invest in conscious media planning rather than leave it to the machines. Research has shown that certain 'brand safety' settings can have the unintended consequence of excluding minority audiences, and minority titles.
2. Consider whether you may be able to donate to good causes through your media investment - options include programmatic tools such as Good Loop and WeAre8, or influencer and creator collaborations who are happy to donate a percentage of their fees
3. Are you considering how much investment you want to build into projects for conscious advertising?

6. Climate literacy

- Read the Good Life 2030 report from Purpose Disruptors.
- Read the AdGreen Resources Guide to reducing production emissions.
- Consider using a platform such as Zellar, for small businesses, to calculate and reduce your carbon footprint.
- Read the resources associated with the World Land Trust offsetting programme.
- Read up on the European Commission code of practice on misinformation which platforms, advertisers and agencies are going to be asked to take part in.
- Consider working with the Supply Chain Sustainability School to help make your supply chain more sustainable. Recordings from a programme run for an energy company can be found here.
- Look out for the Code of Practice on Disinformation (CoP), which is being worked on at present with a draft having gone to the commission in April
- Train your team in climate science, climate literacy and sustainability from outside of advertising. Some suppliers include Mike Berners Lee Small World Consulting and Project Drawdown.
- Read how to ensure climate conversations are inclusive from Global Action Plan and Virgin Media O2.

- Sign up to sustainability-focused newsletters, such as Corporate Citizenship, to keep up to date with the latest announcements and trends.
- Listen to this podcast from Ed Gillespie and Mark Stevenson.