



User guide  
for advertisers

March 2022

**Lifestyle  
representations  
and the ecological  
transition**

**epe**  
entreprises pour l'environnement



# Chairman's message

---



Since the Paris Agreement, businesses and EpE members in particular have played an active role in meeting the collective challenge of carbon neutrality. The financial community, public opinion and political decisions are accelerating their transformation.

The studies available, including the ZEN 2050 report published in 2019, have convinced us that the ecological transition is possible as well as compatible with economic activity, employment, and above all with diverse, comfortable and healthy lifestyles for everyone, albeit somewhat different from those French people tend to imagine today. Change goes further than the "token gestures" that are commonplace.

In 2020, the Citizens' Convention on Climate came to a similar conclusion. The ensuing discussions that led to the Climate and Resilience law have shown us the high expectations people have of communication players, including advertisers, creative agencies and the media, in terms of the need for consistency between what those businesses put forward and the requirements of the ecological transition. The question is can we make sustainable lifestyles converge with desirable lifestyles, and reassure, involve, and make those new lifestyles the prevalent consumer dream?

The communication sector has already demonstrated its ability to contribute to profound changes in values, such as the active promotion of non-discrimination through its careful monitoring of gender and diversity stereotypes.

Bearing this in mind, EpE members have drawn up a first guide on the stereotypes relevant to the ecological transition and lifestyles. We hope it will help inspire and mobilise the creative talents of the media sector and prove useful to many firms.

**Jean-Laurent Bonnafé**

CEO of BNP Paribas

Chairman of EpE

# CONTENTS

Chairman's message	3
Why this guide?	5
Message from the research community	6
Principles of the guide	7
Positive or negative stereotypes? Dos and don'ts	7
Ten lifestyle stereotypes	8
1 The compulsive carnivore	10
2 Fossil-fuelled mobility	12
3 The conquistador	14
4 The solo driver	16
5 The detached house fantasy	18
6 Winter in a T-shirt	20
7 The beach on the other side of the world	22
8 I consume, therefore I am	24
9 Ever faster	26
10 Fantasised nature	28
Recommendations for operational use	30
Contributors and acknowledgements	31
Documentation resources	32

## Why this guide?

The ZEN 2050 study by EpE member companies concluded that France could achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, provided all stakeholders (corporate, government, citizen-consumers, etc.) rallied strongly to achieve an unprecedented transformation of our lifestyles and consumption patterns. The equally important goal of preserving biodiversity further reinforces the need for transformation.

Every person pursues or adopts a lifestyle of their own, influenced by the context in which they evolve. Commercial messages carry representations through and beyond the promotion of goods and services. Businesses, especially advertisers and the advertising sector as a whole, therefore have a key role to play in what could be a revolution of the collective mindset. Several EpE members have already committed themselves to this path and their practices provide material for this guide.

Acting on those representations is one of the ways to achieve the ecological transformation of our society and economy. The energy and creative talent of the entire sector (brands, agencies and media), brought to bear on the representation and promotion of a new environmentally-friendly consumer society and new ethical standards, could well play a leading role in the transition of our lifestyles, based on three approaches:

- **identification** of the positive and negative impacts on the environment of the lifestyles projected by commercial messages;
- **promotion** of lifestyles conducive to the ecological transition in order to make them desirable;
- **avoidance** of representations which mainstream lifestyles not conducive to the ecological transition.

Accordingly, this guide identifies a number of representations that need changing and proposes pathways for creating new mindsets.



## Message from the research community

### What is a representation?

*By Stéphane La Branche, sociologist,  
scientific coordinator at GIECo-IPBC*

Little known to engineers and economists, "social representation", nevertheless, is a basic concept in sociology. Representations are mental realities, "frameworks for interpreting the real, reference frames for action and systems for hosting new realities" (Jodelet, 2012, pp. 47-48\*), which act as organising filters of perception and guide (not determine) behaviour as well as communication and practices. A representation lends meaning to an action before it can be turned into practice. It is closely associated with imagination as it acts in an unconscious manner. Social representations help organise the enormous amount of information and stimuli targeted at our senses. In the process, they regulate, isolate and exclude bits of information.

**Social representations, therefore, play a more important role than actual information in fashioning our attitude to change**, which ranges from outright rejection (for various, multi-rational reasons) to total adherence or mere indifference (all according to the aforementioned process). Indeed, new information will only be integrated into an individual's cognitive system if it is deemed consistent with that person's overriding social representations. Failing this, he or she will alter this information to make it fit into their dominant social representations (this is how it works, not the other way round!). Where this proves to be impossible, the information will simply be discarded as illegitimate, false, or irrelevant.

There is also a collective dimension to the concept, denoting representations shared by a given social group and defining so-called 'normal' or common (referential) thoughts and attitudes, along with the behaviours that enact them. Social representations, however, are multi-faceted and, more importantly, evolve over time (e.g. social representations about sexuality and family).

The foregoing explains why advertising plays such a crucial role. It does not use traditional information or scientific data, but employs and addresses our social representations which, as an inherently reductive yet organising filter of reality, actively shape the stereotypes we develop.

\* Jodelet, D. [ed.]. *Les Représentations sociales*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, p 447, 2012.

### Consumption stereotypes and social constructions

*By Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, sociologist,  
Research Director at CNRS, Centre de sociologie  
des organisations (CNRS-Sciences Po)*

Stereotypes are collective constructs that form the backbone of individual behaviour. In other words, they are embedded in long-term trajectories where certain ways of doing things are deemed appropriate and have normative value. In this sense, they function as norms, which become all the more important as they are upheld by increasingly large groups who legitimise them.

Accordingly, consumer norms are undoubtedly made by the consumers themselves, but even more so by advertisers who constantly match certain ways of doing things with negative or positive values in their overall communication.

Building a norm therefore takes time. Similarly, deconstructing a social norm, which requires changing the values associated with certain behaviours in various public spaces, will take time too.

A classic example of this is the promotion and devaluation of smoking. Promotion, from the iconic cowboy and the emancipation of women associated with cigarettes to numerous pop culture figures represented with a cigarette, was the brainchild of the tobacco industry's advertisers. It has taken many years of public campaigning, combined with taxation, bans on cigarette representation and then on cigarette consumption, to ensure that smoking is no longer only identified with positive values. Changing norms, therefore, often requires public intervention. This is more readily accepted when value changes are linked to collective issues such as public health or the environmental crisis.

## Principles of the guide

This guide aims to raise awareness about a number of unconscious stereotypes in our imaginations and to promote the emergence of new lifestyles within the physical limits of the planet. While the carbon footprint was the spur for our studies, it appeared necessary to introduce not only natural resources and biodiversity considerations in our analysis, but also broader issues that sometimes underpin environmental impacts. This approach complements the many existing studies and guides on gender and diversity stereotypes. It also supplements the guide entitled "La représentation de comportements écoresponsables en publicité" (The representation of ecoresponsible behaviours in advertising) published by Union des marques (French Union of Brands) in February 2021, and draws on WBCSD reports on the contribution brands make towards building aspirations for sustainable lifestyles<sup>(1)</sup>.

The representations might concern the products and services promoted, although in advertising and awareness campaigns they usually concern the way the products and services are represented and their surroundings.

This guide is organised around the following principles:

- **ten representations are selected** for their environmental relevance based on EpE studies. We decided to limit the number in order to ensure practical application of the guide and allow for future updates;
- **the representations reflect common issues** and so rely on existing referentials: food, transport, housing, travel, entertainment, ideas of happiness and success in life, relation to time and to nature. The issues fall under the main environmental impact sectors (greenhouse gases, biodiversity);
- **the guide sets forth proposals** to make sustainable behaviours and lifestyles desirable, and illustrates them with best practices.

In the final pages, it suggests ways to develop operational strategies.

## Positive or negative stereotypes? Dos and don'ts

Lifestyles are as diverse as people, so their environmental footprint can vary greatly. This guide proposes to classify behaviour stereotypes represented in advertisements into four categories. The goal is to help identify the most problematic and, above all, to give positive leads and alternatives.

- **To be mainstreamed:** representations to be included as often as possible in advertisements, so that those behaviours become widespread.
- **To be promoted:** representations to be built regularly into advertisements in order to develop the behaviours associated with them.
- **To be limited:** representations to be restricted in advertisements, or used sparingly.
- **To be avoided:** problematic representations that require reengineering in order to build and propose alternatives.

### The example of gender stereotypes

Following the publication in October 2017 of the CSA report on the image of women in advertising, a charter was signed by the audiovisual, communication and advertising industries (CSA, UDA, AACC, ARPP) to combat "sexual, sexist and gender stereotypes in advertising".

The report highlighted some of the stereotypes conveyed through advertisements:

- 82% of expert roles are played by men;
- 67% of the characters sexualised in advertisements were women, 37% men;
- over-representation of men in the automotive and economic sectors, and over-representation of women in body care and clothing advertisements.

Since the onboarding of this issue by industry professionals, advertising messages are gradually changing in line with the recommendations of the charter.

1 <https://www.wbcd.org/Overview/News-Insights/WBCSD-insights/Why-don-t-we-Redefine-the-Good-Life>

# Ten lifestyle stereotypes

The stereotypes are set out below, along with the environmental challenges, transformation drivers and relevant best and worst practices.

1 /



**The compulsive carnivore**

If food is represented, is it a meat dish?

2 /



**Fossil-fuelled mobility**

Are the modes of transport represented especially polluting?

3 /



**The conquistador**

Are the vehicles depicted in an idealised context?

4 /



**The solo driver**

Does the vehicle contain a single person?

5 /



**The detached house fantasy**

Are dwellings represented as detached houses?

6 /



Winter  
in a T-shirt

Do the garments worn reflect  
the season represented?

7 /



The beach on  
the other side  
of the world

Are the destinations  
and types of leisure represented  
far away and resource intensive?

8 /



I consume,  
therefore I am

Does advertising spread the idea  
of happiness through (over)consumption  
and possession?

9 /



Ever faster

Is a faster pace of life being promoted?

10 /



Fantatised  
nature

Does nature appear to be domesticated  
or an object of conquest?  
Is access to wilderness areas encouraged?

1 /



## The compulsive carnivore

## If food is represented, is it a meat dish?

### Description of stereotype

Meal scenes and foods represented in advertisement settings commonly highlight meat dishes (roasts, chicken, BBQs, etc.). While the introduction of meat into the diet has historically been synonymous with social progress (summed up in Henry IV's quote that each family should be able to afford boiled chicken on Sunday), this injunction is no longer adapted to the challenges and realities of developed countries today.

### Issues

According to FAO, the production and consumption of meat and dairy products account for 14.5% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and 80% of deforestation. To produce meat, large agricultural areas are dedicated to the production of animal feed (soy bean, etc.). Livestock production occupies 70% of all agricultural land, and about 30% of the world's land surface. These numbers are growing as new populations acquire Western lifestyles. According to the United Nations, maintaining these Western diets in line with population growth forecasts would lead to a 75% increase in world meat consumption by 2050.

In addition, over-consumption of meat, in particular red meat, would have adverse effects on our health according to a report by the WHO-agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer<sup>[2]</sup>. Accordingly, a better balance between the share of animal and plant proteins in our diet would yield health benefits.

According to ADEME, the French Agency for Ecological Transition, consumption of better quality products with certifications such as AB (organic farming), Red Label, etc. would reduce the carbon footprint, while not necessarily costing more<sup>[3]</sup>.

### Transformation drivers

The goal is neither to remove meat from advertising images nor to make the population 100% vegetarian, but to show consumers that a hearty, healthy, and festive meal can be associated with the consumption of non-meat foods. In fact, France is trending towards a decline in meat consumption, so what is needed in this country is simply to encourage it. The portrayal and promotion of fruit, vegetable and carbohydrate consumption is one of the drivers of transformation, because it involves these foods no longer being presented as mere side dishes. The idea is also to diversify one's diet by discovering new foods, including ancient or unusual vegetable varieties, as well as experimenting new recipes.

### Example:

**If an advertisement depicts a barbecue, there can still be meat on offer, but other foods that can be barbecued or grilled (corn, peppers, aubergine, cheese, etc.) could also be shown.**

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/sante/article/2017/01/24/moins-de-viande-et-de-charcuteries-moins-de-sucre-les-recommandations-de-l-agence-sanitaire\\_5068115\\_1651302.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/sante/article/2017/01/24/moins-de-viande-et-de-charcuteries-moins-de-sucre-les-recommandations-de-l-agence-sanitaire_5068115_1651302.html)


<sup>3</sup> ADEME Guide "Manger mieux, gaspiller moins" (Eat better, waste less), September 2019

Classification of representations	
● TO BE MAINSTREAMED	Meals with vegetables, carbohydrates and fruits
● TO BE PROMOTED	Meals without meat Representations of vegetables and vegetable proteins as a main dish
● TO BE AVOIDED	Meat-only food Patently excessive meat portions

### Examples


● TO BE MAINSTREAMED

Representations of a fun moment around a meal where meat, vegetables and carbohydrates are included.




● TO BE PROMOTED

Visuals of a meat-free meal showing consumers that alternatives to meat not only exist, but are also appetising.



● TO BE AVOIDED

Representations with meat as the sole food, so as not to promote a meat-only diet with a high carbon footprint.



2 /



**Fossil-fuelled  
mobility**

## Are the modes of transport represented especially polluting?

### Description of stereotype

Pervasive advertising featuring the most polluting forms of transport (large cars, journeys by plane or ferry, etc.) contributes to the trivialisation of those modes of transport and eats into the space available for ramping up existing alternatives relevant to the ecological transition.

### Issues

The environmental impacts associated with travel are numerous and particularly important. Mobility is the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions in France (30% of total emissions), and the only source that is not decreasing but lagging behind national targets. When we move about, especially in vehicles with an internal combustion engine (diesel and petrol cars, aircraft, etc.), we discharge greenhouse gases and other kinds of pollution that impact the climate, air quality and biodiversity as well as our living environment (noise, smell, safety, etc.).

As a result, the increased demand for mobility wipes out any gains made by technological improvements. The growth in private vehicle use worldwide (up 19% between 1990 and 2015) is an important factor behind this trend.

### Transformation drivers

There are many alternatives to showcasing the most polluting forms of transport:

- getting around on bicycles or on foot;
- public transport (bus, tram, train, etc.) and car-pooling;
- light or electric vehicles;
- multimodal transport.

### Example:

If the advertisement features a holiday or business trip, it is preferable to associate it with a low-emissions mode of travel, such as the train in France.



## Classification of representations

- **TO BE MAINSTREAMED** Sensible transport use and specific travel-appropriate transport
- **TO BE PROMOTED** Representation of soft transport modes (walking, cycling, public transport, etc.) and carpooling
- **TO BE LIMITED** Non-urban vehicles in the city
- **TO BE AVOIDED** Trivialisation of highly polluting modes of transport

## Examples

### ● TO BE MAINSTREAMED

Positive representations of user-friendly travel by public transport (train, bus, etc.) contribute to the establishment of a "new normal", providing an alternative to the most polluting forms of transport (private cars, planes, boats, etc.).



### ● TO BE LIMITED

Non-urban vehicles presented in an urban setting.



### ● TO BE AVOIDED

Trivialisation of the most polluting modes of transport (planes, heavy vehicles, cruise ships, etc.) to promote a consumer product, even though they are not the subject of the advertisement.



3 /

## The conquistador



## Are the vehicles depicted in an idealised context?

### Description of stereotype

Since the democratisation of the internal combustion engine in the early twentieth century, the private car has gradually become an ideal embodying freedom of movement.

### Issues

Every so often, ads depict situations that are not representative of reality, reinforcing mindsets that have a strong environmental footprint.

Shooting vehicles in idyllic, wild natural settings or on empty roads is commonplace. The mindset associated with private cars contributes in particular to the overuse of this mode of transport in everyday life.

### Transformation drivers

The decarbonisation of the mobility sector, in addition to space and resource limitations, calls for leveraging a broad range of drivers (engine electrification, development of soft and collective transport). Embracing each of these solutions and modes of transport is therefore crucial, and involves:

- representing cars as a means to meet a mobility need, rather than as an instrument of freedom or conquest;
- avoiding systematic representation of vehicles in natural spaces for recreational use;
- showing realistic conditions of use (traffic lanes, etc.).

### Example:

Heavy traffic is generally closer to actual conditions than an empty road.



## Classification of representations

- **TO BE PROMOTED**      Vehicles in realistic road traffic situations
- **TO BE LIMITED**      Vehicles travelling in empty traffic lanes.  
Association of the private vehicle with freedom, fulfilment
- **TO BE AVOIDED**      Vehicles in wild and idyllic landscapes

## Examples

### ● TO BE PROMOTED

Realistic representation of traffic conditions, i.e. holiday departures.



### ● TO BE LIMITED

Clearly inappropriate and rare traffic conditions: (almost) empty roads that hardly fulfil their function.



### ● TO BE AVOIDED

Representation of cars as a means to reach large wilderness areas.



4 /



The solo driver

## Does the vehicle contain a single person?

### Description of stereotype

Representations of a vehicle carrying only its driver contribute to mainstreaming this practice by depicting it as a rational use of cars.

### Issues

Out of the 30% of France's GHG emissions that come from transport, more than half are due to car use. The average number of people per car and per journey is steadily declining in France, and stands between 1.2 and 1.5 depending on usage. Driving one's car alone is known as "solo driving". This practice increases the number of cars on the roads, and thus the amount of pollution and congestion.

### Transformation drivers

In order not to promote solo driving among drivers, and on the contrary to encourage more collective uses of cars, several means of representation are available:

- illustrating at least two people per car;
- suggesting carpooling and carsharing situations.

### Example:

If the advertisement relates to a work situation, several colleagues could be represented. In a leisure situation, representing friends or family is more suitable.



## Classification of representations

● **TO BE MAINSTREAMED**

Presence of several individuals in the vehicles shown

● **TO BE PROMOTED**

Carpooling

● **TO BE AVOIDED**

Single person in a vehicle

## Examples

● **TO BE PROMOTED**

Advertisements featuring several individuals in a car, suggesting that the practice of carsharing and carpooling is pleasant and fun.



● **TO BE AVOIDED**

Featuring a single person in a vehicle, with the exception of certain professional or personal situations where the context clearly requires it.



5 /



## The detached house fantasy

## Are dwellings represented as detached houses?

### Description of stereotype

In France especially, an individual detached home is the stuff of many people's dreams, nurtured by the notion of a nation of homeowners, and the detached house fantasy. Popularised during the second half of the 20th century on the back of affordable motor cars and the development of industrial construction techniques, low-rise housing areas have accelerated the decay of town centres and inner cities in France. This paradoxical aspiration between the need for nature and the prevalent obliviousness to the benefits of urban life is not new, as noted by the comedian and writer Alphonse Allais in the late 19th century: "*Il faudrait construire les villes à la campagne, l'air y est plus sain*" (Cities should be built in the countryside; the air is healthier there).

### Issues

In France, between 20,000 and 30,000 hectares are built up every year. Such land take is mainly the result of urban sprawl, housing expansion, and the development of shopping malls and infrastructure on the outskirts of cities and in the countryside.

Ultimately, urban sprawl contributes to the gradual loss of biodiversity, an increase in flood risk areas, and the shrinking of agricultural and natural space

required for the ecological transition, including France's natural carbon absorption capacity. Urban sprawl is also a cause of social insecurity by making it more difficult to access services and public transport, and inevitably leading to solo driving. For society at large, such practices entail higher development and investment costs, particularly in infrastructure (water, sanitation, energy, transport, etc.).

### Transformation drivers

France is engaged in a series of initiatives to revitalise town centres by densifying and redeveloping them as well as reintroducing neighbourhood services that reduce the need to travel. Advertising can help promote the assets of city life, for example by highlighting:

- easy access to public transport, cultural and sports services, shops, etc.
- the ease of getting around on foot or by bicycle;
- the opportunity to live in a pleasant and rena-tured urban environment;
- reduced daily commute time.

### Example:

An advertisement featuring an image of family life or friends could be set in an apartment in the heart of the city or in a suburban block of flats.

## Classification of representations

- **TO BE PROMOTED** Pleasant urban housing, multi-family dwellings, surrounded by vegetation that reflects urban biodiversity
- **TO BE LIMITED** Suburban detached houses  
Large country houses

## Examples

- **TO BE PROMOTED**  
Attractive urban dwellings with natural spaces.



- **TO BE LIMITED**  
Rural or suburban housing that feeds the clearly resource-intensive detached house fantasy.





## Do the garments worn reflect the season represented?

### Description of stereotype

The choice of garments in everyday ads, particularly those worn indoors, tends to be disconnected from their suitability for the season, especially outdoor temperature. Such representations are out of touch with the seasons and promote increased use of air conditioning and heating.

### Issues

In addition to fast fashion, clothing styles raise the question of energy consumption related to their suitability for the season. Heating accounts for the bulk of energy consumption in the housing sector, amounting to some 70% of total consumption in 2015. Dwellings with air conditioning systems, while still in the minority (5%), could climb to half of overall consumption by 2050 due to climate change. The widespread use of air conditioning, while it may provide additional comfort, is also responsible for additional GHG emissions<sup>(4)</sup>, and during a heat wave actually increases urban outdoor temperature.

Wearing seasonal clothing, both in summer and winter, is a good way of curbing energy needs and their impacts. It should be noted, however, that the seasons represented may differ from the season in which the ad comes out (next season's fashion, holiday promotion, etc.).

### Transformation drivers

In order not to encourage the excessive use of heating and air conditioning and to suggest the natural variability of the weather during the year, ads could promote adaptation of the clothing worn by models to the season represented:

- warm clothing in winter conditions;
- light clothing in summer conditions.

### Example:

In an obviously business environment during summer, employees wear lighter outfits than a suit and tie or a skirt and jacket, such as those depicted in Japan's "cool biz" campaigns.

## Classification of representations

### ● TO BE MAINSTREAMED

Warm clothing in winter conditions  
(sweaters, long sleeves, etc.)  
Light clothing in summer conditions  
(short sleeves, etc.)

### ● TO BE AVOIDED

Light clothing in winter conditions  
(short sleeves, etc.).  
Warm clothing in summer conditions  
(sweaters, long sleeves, etc.)

## Examples

### ● TO BE MAINSTREAMED

Representations of warm clothing adapted to the season represented, in this case the festive season in winter.



### ● TO BE AVOIDED

Short sleeves associated with a winter landscape implying the prioritisation of heating over warm clothing even in stationary positions.



7 /



## Are the destinations and types of leisure represented far away and resource intensive?

### Description of stereotype

Similar to the consumption-driven happiness stereotype, this stereotype expresses the idea that holidays or leisure activities are more likely to be considered a success if they take place in distant destinations or deploy substantial means (vehicles, equipment, etc.).

### Issues

While tourism and leisure activities contribute to economic and social development, they also generate many types of pollution. Indeed, they are both energy and resource intensive. Tourism accounts for 5% of France's GHG emissions, and is all the more polluting as the destinations are far off and the stays short.

### Transformation drivers

To limit the impact of this sector on the environment, advertisements could showcase holidays and activities with limited environmental impact, including the promotion of:

- nearby destinations highlighting local landscapes;
- responsible tourism (ecotourism);
- recreation and leisure activities with a low environmental impact (hiking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking, theatre, etc.).

### Example:

A sunscreen advertisement could represent a Brittany beach rather than one located at the other end of the planet.

### Classification of representations

#### ● TO BE PROMOTED

Travel by train, bus, car  
Local landscapes

#### ● TO BE LIMITED

Over-representation of holidays in remote destinations  
Illustrations of heavenly beaches and islands  
Weekend flight promotions

#### ● TO BE AVOIDED

Polluting leisure activities (jet ski, cruises, motorised activities, etc.)

## Examples

### ● TO BE PROMOTED

To showcase its Clio, the Renault Group decided to represent two friends catching up. The settings used for this advertisement promote holidays whose environmental impact appears to be limited:

- the places represented are English landscapes, i.e. a nearby holiday destination;
- due to the proximity of the holiday destination, trips are made by bus and car;
- the leisure activities are simple (swimming, photography, etc.) and therefore low polluting.

Leisure activities and recreation with limited environmental impact: hiking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking, etc.

*Renault UK commercial:  
30 years of the Clio - 2019*

Video available on:

[http://www.culturepub.fr/  
videos/renault-clio-30-years-  
in-the-making/](http://www.culturepub.fr/videos/renault-clio-30-years-in-the-making/)



### ● TO BE AVOIDED

Polluting leisure activities (jet ski, cruises, etc.) or landscapes that suggest a long flight.





## Does advertising spread the idea of happiness through (over)consumption and possession?

### Description of stereotype

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the fantasy of achieving happiness through the consumption of goods has been a major advertising ploy.

### Issues

The belief that consumption of goods and services is a source of happiness contributes to resource depletion and increased waste. It also generates a sense of frustration among consumers that runs counter to its original promise. Similarly, the depiction of competition among individuals (e.g. neighbours) is a classic advertising technique to encourage consumption that meets not a need, but a desire for display, even superiority.

### Transformation drivers

To offer alternative success and happiness fantasies to possession, other options could be showcased by advertisements:

- moments of sharing and conviviality, of personal fulfilment, etc.;
- reasonable and sensible consumption. Rather than promoting the purchase of new products, advertisements could illustrate repair and exchange practices;
- happiness in simplicity and restraint: sensible consumption (buying goods and services that meet our needs);
- buying services that make life pleasant rather than material goods (cultural events, sports experiences, nature outings, personal care, etc.).

### Classification of representations

● TO BE MAINSTREAMED

Sensible consumption of goods and services

● TO BE PROMOTED

Representation of moments of sharing and conviviality  
Re-use, reutilisation, sharing and rental of goods

● TO BE LIMITED

Assimilation of happiness and success with the possession or abundance of goods

● TO BE AVOIDED

Competition among individuals (buying not out of need, but to prove superiority over others)

## Examples

### ● TO BE PROMOTED

Joyful moments illustrated through sharing, conviviality and sport, not competition.



*Zenith – Icons - 2021*

Via its Zenith Icons corporate publicity campaign, the watch-making brand highlights the second life offered to its rare and iconic vintage watches. Three themes seek to underline the watches' quality and reassure buyers about their complete traceability: acquisition, restoration (in particular with the help of a vast inventory of original spare parts), and certification.



Representation of scenes of happiness based not on consumption, but on convivial moments and sharing.



### ● TO BE LIMITED

Accumulation of personal goods (clothing, accessories, equipment, food, vehicles, etc.) in quantities that clearly exceed individual needs.



9 /



Ever faster

## Is a faster pace of life being promoted?

### Description of stereotype

The ability of individuals to constantly renew everything, to make more efficient use of their time, and to deny ageing is presented as a badge of social success, indeed a requirement to maintain their place in society.

### Issues

The fast pace of our lives is driven by the development of new technologies and the accelerating pace of consumer product renewal, which allows people to move about, produce and consume ever faster. But this faster pace, driven by injunctions to fill every waking moment of our lives and the fragmentation of our time, is increasingly seen as a cause of stress and of deterioration in our quality of life.

Changes in the relationship between the French and their food illustrates this decline in quality of life. According to a study by Insee<sup>[5]</sup>, the average daily time spent cooking has decreased from 71 minutes in 1990 to 53 minutes in 2010, as a result of the switch to convenience foods. The increase in screen time associated with the growth of digital technologies also contributes to the sense of saturation of time.

### Transformation drivers

To slow down our lifestyles and consumption as well as promote higher quality consumption practised with restraint, advertisers could use several techniques to promote:

- thoughtful and non-impulsive buying;
- getting around on foot or by bicycle;
- only one activity at a time;
- time for creative, cultural activities.

### Classification of representations

● TO BE MAINSTREAMED	Slow food, slow travel
● TO BE PROMOTED	Consumption based on reflexivity Only one activity at a time
● TO BE LIMITED	Fast "one-click" consumption Life in constant motion

## Examples

### ● TO BE PROMOTED

Moments of relaxation, rest, including strolling and quiet activities such as reading.



Portrayal of walking as a way to illustrate people who do not rush around.



Slower lifestyles that involve cooking, whereby we take the time to select ingredients, shop, cook and eat with the family, and playing board games.



### ● TO BE LIMITED

Promotion of quick, instant consumption that does not necessarily meet a real need and can, as a result, lead to overconsumption.



10 /



## Does nature appear to be domesticated or an object of conquest? Is access to wilderness areas encouraged?

### Description of stereotype and challenges

The relation to nature in contemporary societies is ambiguous even paradoxical:

- on the one hand, the dominant tendency is to depict nature as over-domesticated, sanitised or even absent, and an environment entirely controlled by humans. This representation of nature as an object to be mastered or even dominated can jeopardise biodiversity protection by encouraging construction in natural spaces. For an individual, such a representation can engender a false idea that a "clean" garden is one that is free of insects and wild grass ("weeds");
- on the other, the opposite approach of glorifying natural, pristine and idyllic spaces can paradoxically produce a similar effect by enhancing the attractiveness of these areas and accelerating their occupation by humans. In showcasing this type of nature, advertising encourages access to

wilderness and unspoilt natural areas, and consequently man-made pollution with its adverse effects on the environment. The expansion of tourism in a number of historically difficult-to-reach natural areas (Antarctica, etc.) causes global (GHG) as well as local pollution (waste, etc.). In some cases, it has become necessary to introduce quotas and restrictions on access to protect natural sites from crowds.

### Transformation drivers

To reconnect people with nature in a sustainable way, advertisements could highlight:

- nature that is within reach and a feature of daily life;
- acceptance of the diversity and inherently spontaneous and even wild aspect of nature.

### Classification of representations

#### ● TO BE PROMOTED

Nature that is nearby,  
accessible in daily life, local and diverse  
People's reconnection with their environment

#### ● TO BE LIMITED

Domestication of nature  
Denial of nature  
Conquest of natural spaces

## Examples

### ● TO BE PROMOTED

For over 14 years, Guerlain has placed nature conservation at the heart of its actions. In doing so, the brand seeks to protect bees, which have been its emblem since the 19th century. Their conservation is the core purpose of the brand and several partnerships and meaningful initiatives have been dedicated to it. A number of its campaigns aim to raise awareness of the conservation of local biodiversity and of the important role played by local bee species in pollinating the world's wild flowers.

*Guerlain campaign:  
"Women for bees" programme  
in partnership with UNESCO*



*Photo Credits: Nicolas Gouhier,  
all rights reserved. Guerlain*

Illustrations of nature in the city, where the domesticated environment does not preclude any natural, spontaneous growth.



Realistic representations of nearby nature, where the opportunities offered by it are enjoyed in a non-destructive manner, while enabling a fulfilling personal experience.

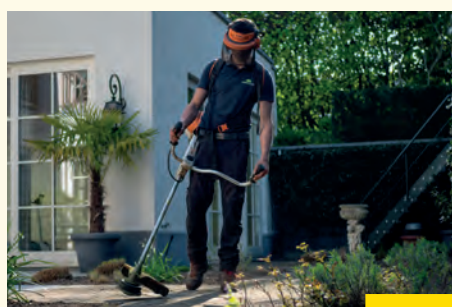


### ● TO BE LIMITED

Representations of cars reinforcing the stereotypes of conquest of vast wilderness areas by man and technology, and undermining contact between man and nature.



Representations of natural spaces as objects to be mastered and controlled.



## Recommendations for operational use

To apply the guidelines suggested in the list of stereotypes, advertising companies and agencies have several tools at their disposal.

### 1 Identification and assessment of stereotypes

The 10 stereotypes mentioned above are those considered the most impactful on the environment from a societal perspective. They lay the groundwork for an ad campaign assessment matrix which measures the recurrence of some representations promoting non-sustainable behaviours.

They can, of course, be supplemented with items more specific to an organisation's activities as well as incorporated into existing practices and tools, particularly those dealing with social, gender and diversity stereotypes.

Identifying stereotypes helps prioritise the actions to be promoted and maximizes their effectiveness. This exercise may take different forms. For example, it can consist of the ex-post analysis of campaigns in order to obtain a quantitative inventory of the stereotypes inherent in the organisation.

It can also be the result of collaborative work (visual analysis, panel, focus group) involving internal and/or external stakeholders. This work can then help bring new subjects to the fore, shed light on what may have been unconscious biases, open discussions and develop a collective momentum in the creative process of an advertising campaign.

At a later stage, it may facilitate discussion with artwork, marketing and communication teams, customers and providers as well as advertisers, agencies and the media on the responsibility of advertising messages and the role of brands in supporting changes to consumer behaviour.

### 2 Team training

To promote representations that support the ecological transition, it is important that parties first understand the issues at stake. To do so, staff, particularly artwork and sales and customer relations teams in each sector, require proper training.

Many awareness-building tools are available to promote a green transition (see "Documentation Resources"). They vary according to whether they target the general public (The Climate Fresk, etc.) or specific profiles (AACC-sponsored MOOC, ADEME guides), and according to how they are used and what themes they target.

The convening of in-house workshops is also an opportunity for agencies to assess their own advertisements and what they say about lifestyles. Among creative, communication and marketing team members, such workshops can help raise the issue of biases and stereotypes that might pervade the creative process, and the effect of advertising on the construction of representations and stereotypes. The stereotype list is a first step towards starting those discussions.

### 3 Management tools

With few dedicated tools and feedback available on this topic, sharing best practices is crucial. Traditional management tools, however, can be brought to bear on these tasks:

- definition of objectives and voluntary commitments;
- reporting system to track progress against objectives and communicate with internal and/or external stakeholders;
- ecosystem mobilisation: signing of charters or inclusion of specific criteria in invitations to tender to enable customers and suppliers to move forward.

## Contributors and acknowledgements

### 1 Companies

The following companies participated in the preparation of this guide during work group meetings.

- |               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| • ADP Group   | • LVMH             |
| • AIR FRANCE  | • MICHELIN         |
| • BNP PARIBAS | • PUBLICIS         |
| • EDF         | • RENAULT          |
| • HAVAS       | • SNCF             |
| • KERING      | • SOCIÉTÉ GÉNÉRALE |
| • L'ORÉAL     | • TOTALENERGIES    |

Also to have participated in the working group:

Sophie Dubuisson-Quellier, sociologist, CNRS research director and deputy director of the Centre de sociologie des organisations (CSO)

Mathieu Jahnich, researcher, University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines

Stéphane La Branche, sociologist, scientific coordinator at GIECo-IPBC

### 2 Stakeholders

A panel of stakeholders was convened at three key stages in the guide's preparation to provide critical insights and express opinions and recommendations.

- |                                            |                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • 4D, Marc Darras                          | • IDDRI, Mathieu Saujot                                                   |
| • ADEIC, Julie Vanhille                    | • INDECOSA-CGT, Christian Khalifa                                         |
| • ADEME, Valérie Martin                    | • La Fabrique Écologique, Géraud Guibert                                  |
| • Afep, Nicolas Boquet                     | • Les 150 (Citizens' Convention on Climate Association), Sylvain Burquier |
| • ARPP, Magali Jalade                      | • On est prêt, Yasmina Auburtin                                           |
| • CNAFC, Nicolas Revenu                    | • Pour un réveil écologique, Léa Falco                                    |
| • Entreprises et médias, Alexandre Telling | • Utopies, Cécile Le Pan De Ligny                                         |
| • FNE, Rita Fahd                           |                                                                           |
| • HOP, Ronan Groussier                     |                                                                           |

## Documentation resources

### On advertising, lifestyles and the ecological transition

UDM's Guide FAIRe on "La représentation de comportements écoresponsables en publicité" (The representation of eco-responsible behaviours in advertising):

<https://uniondesmarques.fr/nos-services/actualites/article/2021/02/09/D%20%20couvrez-le-guide-des-representations-des-comportements-%20co-responsables-en-publicite%20>

WBCSD's Good Life 2.0:

<https://www.wbcd.org/Overview/News-Insights/WBCSD-insights/Why-don-t-we-Redefine-the-Good-Life>

### On advertising and the ecological transition

Responsible advertising site:

<https://communication-responsable.ademe.fr/>

ARPP Recommendations on sustainable development:

<https://www.arpp.org/nous-consulter/regles/regles-de-deontologie/developpement-durable/>

Quelle publicité pour un monde sobre et désirable ? (What advertising for a restraint-driven and desirable world?)

Thierry Libaert, May 2017, Fondation pour la nature et l'homme

[https://www.fondation-nicolas-hulot.org/sites/default/files/pub\\_et\\_transition.pdf](https://www.fondation-nicolas-hulot.org/sites/default/files/pub_et_transition.pdf)

Advertising and ecological transition, Géraud Guibert and Thierry Libaert, Report submitted to the government on 5 June 2020:

<https://www.vie-publique.fr/rapport/274683-publicite-et-transition-ecologique>

## About EpE

---

Entreprises pour l'Environnement (EpE), a French association set up in 1992, is a forum for dialogue between business leaders and environmental managers and policymakers who share the vision of the environment as a driver of transformation, progress and opportunity, exchange their best practices, and work together to better factor the environment into their strategies and operations.

EpE publications are available on:

<http://www.epe-asso.org/en/documents-and-reports/>

---

This brochure is the result of a study carried out by a group that met between late 2019 and 2021. EpE thanks the representatives of member companies that have shared their experience and participated in work meetings. EpE also thanks the external experts, scientists and representatives of public authorities and associations for their contributions and for stimulating corporate discussions and actions. Thanks are also due to Annie Aujon-Aleksy (octobre-novembre agency), Laura Azoulay, Sylvie Gillet, Léa Maisonneuve and Jean-François Mathieu for their contributions. EpE thanks David Laurent, Head of the Climate & Ocean Department, who coordinated these studies and is the main author of this guide, as well as Govind Bhinder of FEAT who carried out the English translation.

**Claire Tutenuit,**  
Managing director of EpE

Cover photos: ©Shutterstock / octobre-novembre  
Interior: ©Unsplash  
Except p. 15A ©Alf Ribeiro/stock.adobe.com  
p. 16 et 17A ©Andrey Popov/stock.adobe.com  
p. 17B ©Gorodenkoff Productions/stock.adobe.com  
p.25A ©Rawpixel/stock.adobe.com  
p. 25D ©damrong/stock.adobe.com  
p.29B ©Artinun/stock.adobe.com

# User guide for advertisers

## Lifestyle representations and the ecological transition

