

US consumers ignore sustainability

US grocery shoppers do not consider the issue of sustainability when choosing products and are far behind their European counterparts in this regard according to new research.

The Big Picture, a design agency, carried out a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with consumers in the US, the UK, Italy and Germany, focusing primarily on the laundry and tea/coffee categories.

It found that US consumers were failing to select products with sustainable credentials for two main reasons, one educational and one practical.

First of all, there was a general lack of knowledge among US consumers about the benefits of sustainable production. Secondly, sustainable items in US supermarkets tend to be isolated in separate aisles, requiring consumers to make a conscious effort to seek them out.

The agency said these findings could have implications for major FMCG marketers including Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola and Unilever, which have signed up to lead an international effort – the Sustainable Consumption and Value Chain Initiative – to deliver sustainable consumption by 2050.

Stuart Costley, senior vice president and head of The Big Picture's New York office, noted that mainstream US consumers were starting to engage with organic produce, but said "they have little or no desire to lead a more sustainable lifestyle".

He attributed this in large part to "a lack of direct marketing by government and business to consumers, and the price premium often involved".

Brands needed to educate consumers, said Costley, adding that "there is also a need for recognizable logos that identify sustainable brands". He felt that a partnership approach between brands, industry groups and other interests could help develop this.

Among the three European countries surveyed, consumers in Germany were found to be the most sustainably focused, with a core of "ethical-elites", followed by the UK and Italy.

The issue of sustainability featured heavily in the recent Admap Prize, which asked if brands could be a force for good at the same time as maximising profits.

Freya Williams, of Publicis Kaplan Thaler New York, argued that marketers had consistently over-estimated the degree to which sustainability was relevant to the mainstream consumer and said that for most people, sustainability was nice to have, but secondary to the benefit they were seeking.

Marketing, she said, was often guilty of trying to target a mainstream consumer with a message that was only relevant to a "super-green niche".

Fonte: Warc [Portal]. Disponível em: <http://www.warc.com/LatestNews/News/US_consumers_ignore_sustainability_.news?ID=31939>. Acesso em: 16 Sep. 2013.