



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Development of a Framework on the Communication of Biodiversity: The Case of Australian Food Companies

BAHRAM FAZLI KHOSROSHAHI, CHRISTINA BANTLE

University of Kassel, Dept. of Agricultural and Food Marketing, Germany

Abstract

Ecosystems are exploited to supply the increasing global demand for food in recent century. This had a negative impact on biodiversity. Food industries can play a prominent role in biodiversity conservation by reducing their unsustainable activities and communicating it to their consumers. Australia is a biodiversity-rich country and follows the “Strategy 2010-2030” to preserve its biodiversity by engaging industries, especially food industries, to raise public awareness in this issue. There is little information in the scientific literature on the communication of biodiversity. This study had the aims of providing scientific information regarding the current communication activities of Australian food companies and proposing a conceptual framework on the communication of biodiversity.

Data was collected from the websites of 169 Australian top-ranked food companies which were listed in database of IBISWorld market research organisation. Qualitative and quantitative content analyses were used to analyse web content and company reports. A category system was defined in accordance to the research aims for analysing the messages. An innovative scoring system was developed to show the degree of which companies communicate on biodiversity. An inductive and exploratory approach with consideration of “elaboration likelihood method” and “response hierarchy models”, was taken in this study to develop the conceptual framework.

Results showed that 24% of the sampled companies had at least one message regarding biodiversity. 5% of the sampled companies communicated on biodiversity at a high level. Agricultural and fishing companies communicated the biodiversity issue most in detail. Food companies communicated on their own projects regarding biodiversity conservation. Messages were formulated mainly by use of positive appeals and they had the theme of hope, joy, health, greenness and freshness. Companies had problems in visibility of, ease of access to and preciseness of biodiversity messages, and usage of emotional and rational appeals.

The developed framework helps companies to involve a wide range of audiences from unconcerned public reviewers to interested recipients and experts. It aims to attract low-involved recipients by emotional appeals, lead them to detailed information, increase their knowledge and motivate them to take action. It satisfies high-involved recipients by rational and informational appeals and detailed messages.

Keywords: Biodiversity communication, food companies, message analysis, qualitative content analysis, raising awareness about biodiversity

Contact Address: Bahram Fazli Khosroshahi, University of Kassel, Dept. of Agricultural and Food Marketing, Steinstraße 19, 37213 Witzenhausen, Germany, e-mail: bahramfazli@yahoo.com