

Energy Survival: entertainment as a resource for local energy actions

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Abstract

In 2005, SenterNovem, the Dutch Broadcasting Corporation, a publishing company and a consortium of local authorities launched '*Energy Survival*'; a renewing energy marketing strategy for children to create a demand for local energy actions. New elements are powerful branding and the use of cross media techniques through national TV, internet, local events and primary education. Through entertainment, *Energy Survival* influences children's attitude towards energy consumption and its convincing relation with the environment. It aims at qualifying children to become 'energy ambassadors' in their own local environment: family, school and neighbourhood.

Energy Survival has become a well tested energy game-concept for children in whom public and private partners cooperate under one brand name and with a clear division of roles and interests. However, the backbone of the concept is the local approach: local actions in municipalities and in primary schools, supported by television and internet where children learn to deal with the upcoming energy challenges of the planet they will inherit. By providing an internet-based teaching method, especially primary schools will be an effective multiplier to reach children. Broadcasting the energy game on national TV on the one hand, and local events and preliminaries on the other hand, ensure opportunities for widespread 'duplication' of the concept, adapted to local policy priorities regarding sustainable energy because each municipality is permitted to choose its own themes.

Despite the fact that the project is still young and that the partners consider it as a 'long term-investment', the first in-



dependent monitoring results indicate that Energy Survival so far is quite successful. Ratings of the first TV-series show a national market share of 20 % in the age group 6-12 years and significantly more interaction between children and their parents on energy related issues. The website attracts thousands of visitors and already more than 300 primary schools applied for the digital teaching programme. Encouraged by these results, from 2007 the concept will be promoted at all primary schools in The Netherlands. The project partners also started negotiations with potential private partners in order to generate extra funding for a national programme.

Introduction

In 2005 the Dutch public broadcasting corporation KRO, internet education specialist Codename Future and the Dutch Municipality-branch of the International Climate Alliance, started a renewing *national concept strategy* for children between 6 and 12 years old, in order to create a demand for sustainable energy behaviour among young families. The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs has commissioned SenterNovem -the Netherlands Agency for Energy and the Environment- to draw up this ambitious programme for municipalities who want to set up a local climate policy aimed at their young inhabitants. SenterNovem supports the project partners mentioned above and advises the municipalities on putting local children programmes into practice, making use of the national brand name Energy Survival. Key elements in this unique partnership are the introduction of powerful branding and cross media techniques, based on target group knowledge. This in order to develop an active pedagogic and entertaining energy marketing concept that targets children simultaneously on their own 'platforms' which they know and enjoy: on TV, on the internet, at school and in their local community.

Therefore, the Energy Survival is constructed as a game surrounding to present the energy topic in three simultaneous activities in early spring each year: a national energy school competition on TV, an internet based teaching method for primary schools and exiting energy preliminaries during municipal energy events. All three activities support each other in order to create synergies, adapted to local and regional conditions and themes.

From an energy policy point of view, Energy Survival aims at forming positive attitudes regarding energy and environmental issues. By combining different media under one concept and one brand name, it aims at making sustainable energy an engaging and interesting subject for children. In a short term perspective, the goal is increased knowledge of RES, RUE, transport and consequences of energy use and high awareness of the concept in the target groups. In addition we strive to reduce energy use in school buildings, homes and reduce CO₂ emissions by teaching children efficient use of energy, RES and transport. This will be done by increasing knowledge of these subjects and building attitudes in the target group in accordance with the global energy challenges.

The long term perspective is making children qualified to act in a desired manner: becoming an eager and able *energy ambassador* in their own social environment. This through forming positive attitudes towards energy and environmental issues in connection with energy use and CO₂ emissions, thus promot-

ing a sustainable energy future. Getting children both eager and able is important to create engagement and a lasting interest and pave the way for good energy choices and solutions when the decision makers of tomorrow grow up. The project partners consider this as a crucial precondition for the ultimate long term result: reduced energy use in schools and homes.

HOW TO READ THIS PAPER (BOOKMARKER)

This paper is not an ordinary presentation of a 'traditional' project and based on extensive scientific research. This project is mainly based on the experiences and examples from our Norwegian colleagues from ENOVA (who served and still serve as our shining example) and the result of simple Dutch experimenting, based on 'trial and error'. Therefore, the focus in this paper is not about scientific results, containing figures and tables or lots of other specific effect data. Instead, this paper tries to describe the good practice and focus on successful and innovative implementation of energy policy through marketing at local and regional level, aimed at forming sustainable energy communities.

Therefore the first part of this paper only briefly describes the 'theoretical' background of the project by highlighting the most considerable aspects, explaining the choice to develop this youth programme with a national dimension, but based on specific local and regional activities.

The second part of the paper is the main part and will focus on ECEEE's central theme of Panel 3: the good and innovative practice of Energy Survival to demonstrate the significant success as a result of local and regional 'close to the action' youth-activities in the Netherlands.

The oral presentation at the ECEEE-conference itself will be punctuated with visual elements such as TV-promo's, screenshots of the website and digital images of the preliminaries etc.

Background of Energy Survival

Revealing marketing research: remarkable target group knowledge

In 2004, SenterNovem experienced a growing need for research and mapping social and cultural changes as a basic condition for successful implementation of energy policy through *marketing segmentation* and activities at local and regional level, aimed at assisting and forming sustainable energy communities.

It was clear that, as a result of individualisation and democratisation of society, traditional socio-economic and socio-demographic variables, have lost much of their significance. Choices made by the contemporary consumers are to a large extent based on individual values and convictions. In other words, norms and values are a more binding factor between people, brands and media than socio-economic factors. In the norm and value research, consumer behaviour is perceived as a means to distinguish oneself. This approach derives from authoritative socio-scientific theories, such as those by Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias. Education (the process of socialisation) makes people adopt systems of speech, style and values belonging to the community we grow up in. These systems are decisive for the behaviour of the individual. Consumers live, so to speak, in a web of values by means of which they distinguish

themselves from and identify with others in respect to their own lifestyle and opinions.

Instead of living in a hierarchical society made up of rigid social strata and generally accepted norms and values, we now live in a dynamic and fragmented network society. In addition, the level of affluence and education has also increased considerably in the last few decades. People have therefore become far more independent in deciding upon the way in which they want to live their lives. Norms and values play a decisive role in this process. For instance, the consumption of luxury products as a means to distinguish oneself ('conspicuous consumption') is no longer the privilege of an affluent top layer in society, but the expression of large segments in Dutch society that consider luxury and status to be important values.

SenterNovem selected a revolutionary research model, called *Mentality*, which primarily forms communities in terms of their attitude to life and their social norms and values. This model offers a welcome addition to traditional segmentation based on socio-economic variables that is increasingly losing its value in explaining a complex and changing society. By including norm and value data into the statistic analyses, the results offer a more substantial 'explained variance' when analysing consumer behaviour, than is the case when mere sociodemographic criteria are applied. The result for energy marketing; target groups and media strategies can thus be mapped with greater precision and marketing communication budgets can be implemented with greater focus.

Remarkable outcomes of the Mentality-marketing research

Mentality identified the community 'young families' with children between 9 and 12 years old -so called '*tweens*'- in the social middle and higher classes, as a favourable target group for realizing policy goals regarding energy efficiency (RUE) and the use of renewable energy sources (RES). These young families, representing about 20 % of the national population in The Netherlands, are an important 'audience' for communication on energy efficiency and renewable energy, because they represent a relatively large part of the population and are considered to be 'heavy users' of household energy. The partners believe that now the time is right to change the perception of young parents and encourage action, because this community starts realizing that energy security is not for granted anymore and today's energy choices will affect their children's future.

Mentality also pointed out that the chances for growing energy awareness and energy action among the parents can best be realized in an indirect way: by communicating through their tween-children. Important societal developments in The Netherlands that support this outcome are:

- Dutch tweens have a rapidly increasing influence in Dutch modern family consumption behaviour. This influence has by now developed far beyond 'traditional' issues as the choice of sandwich filling, fun-fairs and vacation destination. Nowadays children also influence issues like the choice of food, clothes, family car, music equipment and other consumption issues. Some marketing experts even state that this process already starts at the age of 6 years old.
- Dutch tweens adopt more and more behavioural consumer patterns that traditionally belong to adult consumers. Already at the age of approximately 10 years old, Dutch

'tweens' start revealing themselves as a young adult and become a full member of the household with own consumer (brand) preferences. From a marketing point of view, this development already resulted in the emerging of a new marketing phenomenon; kids marketing.

- The growing influence of branding among Dutch tweens. Branding is all about making something visible, recognisable and to reinforce wanted associations. Children of today live in an international reality where they daily are introduced to a vast number of impressions. They have become media savvy consumers and know how to relate to brands and label associations. They have grown up in a world of brands and labels in another way than earlier generations.

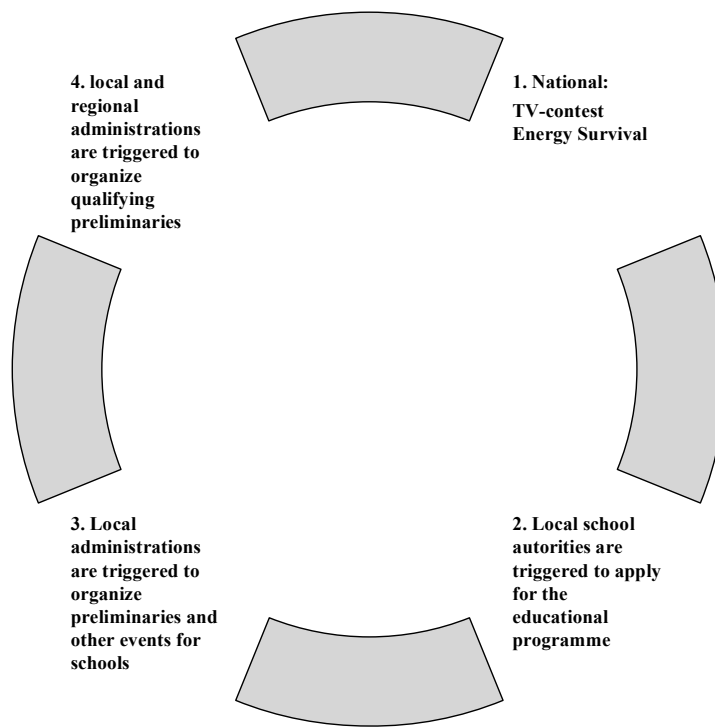
Finally, Mentality concluded that communicating with these tweens can also be considered to be an investment for the long term. Children and young adults are the decision makers of tomorrow. The partners believe that today's children will be more receptive to change their energy behaviour in the future, if they retain good memories of energy efficiency from their own childhood. So, by targeting the decision makers of tomorrow, we also pave the way for good energy choices and solutions in the long term.

When these societal developments can be 'used' in the right way and related to energy marketing, children can be a much more effective 'energy ambassador' than for example massive public advertising campaigns. The outcome of this marketing research formed the basis for Energy Survival's national concept strategy for 'tweens', introducing elements of branding and modern cross media techniques, using 'platforms' which children know and enjoy: television, internet, school and local communities. Especially the branding-principle is important. We want to introduce a brand that captures both the hearts and minds of children. This will be done by a consistent use of logos, activities, and attitudes in a national frame. Thus the branding will contribute to make both the image and the content of Energy Survival be recognised in each municipality. Ignoring these modern instruments and tools also used by other commercial and non-commercial actors, would mean disregarding the reality today's children live in.

- To ensure maximum reach and frequent contact with the target group, Energy Survival uses several 'approach routes', each leading to a place where children like to stay: in front of the TV, on the internet, in school and at local events in their hometown. Then all children will be able to recognise parallels and become part of an energy movement with the same goal: a sustainable energy future.

Towards a sustainable energy community concept

Although Energy Survival is not a sustainable energy community itself, it serves a basis for local and regional administrations to create one. Energy Survival is a universal applicable energy specific pedagogic and entertaining marketing tool for children, based on creating a common universe for children. The partners believe that is possible to transform this fundamentally low-interest item into a contemporary and popular item for children, based on both reality and adventure. By stim-



ulating a sense of unity and shared experience, it can also be possible, for energy related and environmental issues, to learn by having fun and let children educate their parents.

The common universe for children is transformed in a national concept strategy for implementing local energy actions through local and regional administrations. School management and local authorities are recognised as important 'distributors' of the concept. Involvement of these parties in the project is the backbone for Energy Survival. By means of a modern Energy Survival-teaching method to ensure implementation, teachers are considered to be an effective multiplier to reach children. Local authorities are also crucial to ensure recourses for widespread implementation of the concept (qualifying preliminaries, as explained below) adapted to local circumstances. In return these local authorities provide themselves with a unique opportunity to disseminate their own energy policy activities to their own (young) inhabitants.

The project thus aims at making children qualified to become an 'energy-ambassador' in their own local social environment. In order to create an exciting setting round energy efficiency (RUE) and renewable energy (RES), both elements are communicative transformed into an adventure for children; an enervating and valuable survival by children who realize that today's energy- and climate challenges can no longer be postponed. The children have to take action themselves and they decide to go on a mission in order to learn more about sustainable ways to deal with future global energy challenges. Energy Survival stresses the importance of a sustainable energy future in a way that is both renewing and visual inspiring. In this way, Energy Survival is ambitious, but not pretentious. The partners realize that energy issues are also for most children an item of low interest and that changing attitude and behaviour needs more time than just one year.

The concept of Energy Survival is built up out of the following activities that are closely related to each other:

- An entertaining national 'energy school competition', broadcasted on public television;
- Qualifying preliminaries among schools at the local and regional level through participation in educational programmes and local 'energy challenges' (school tournaments).

Energy Survival is not a 'classical' educational concept, but a renewing cross media-approach in which not just one party, but several parties cooperate under one and the same brand name ('seamless switching'). The first base of the concept is the creating of a 'strong' and appealing brand name with a national reach: Energy Survival. From here, the crux is to gear all activities to one another in order to reinforce the effect on each other. The figure above illustrates this in four steps.

One of the most innovative elements to be presented in this paper is the way the local and regional elements are integrated into the national context. Local school management authorities and local and regional administrations consider it a great incentive that local children can qualify for the national TV-energy contest by participating in the educational programme of the same name. In the next section of this paper, all four pillars will further be described.

BASE 1: TV-CONTEST ENERGY SURVIVAL (NATIONAL)

"The future is at stake, our mission starts now!" This 'pay' off marks Energy Survival, a children's reality-based TV-show, developed by the Dutch broadcasting corporation KRO in co operation with Norwegian partners. Energy Survival is an exciting format where children between 9 and 12 years old (tweens) deal with the upcoming energy challenges of the planet they will inherit. Representing their primary school or hometown they compete each other in a both physical and intellectually demanding energy tournament.

Energy Survival is not a traditional educational TV-programme or a reality show with 'usual' conflicts and intrigues. It

is a real survival in eight half-hour-episodes, filled with spectacle, challenge, excitement (both joy and disappointment), relationship and awareness. In the Netherlands, Energy Survival is the first reality-docu aimed at children. Another new feature is that there is no TV-presenter; the children present the show themselves. This stresses the image of a confident youth that takes the initiative for a sustainable energy future. Last but not least is the direction and editing of the show that gives the show an appearance of a tense movie. The chosen surrounding is also unusual and magic; high up in the Norwegian mountains where trolls live, where the water is crystal clear and where even in August can be freezing cold. There, the children will live for one week in traditional tents at the riverside. There is no electricity, just the sun, wind and water.

The TV-format is renewing in several ways. In the first place, Energy Survival is the first great reality-show aimed at children. A second renewing element is that the children themselves take care of the presentation of the contest show. This strengthens the establishment of the image of a mature youth that cares for a sustainable future. As said before, the participating teams represent their local community in order to stimulate the educational carry-over in primary education.

The TV-contest will be broadcasted at least three times each year on the national children's television in 8 episodes of 25 minutes each. The TV-contest is also available on DVD and on the internet for educational use at the primary schools.

The main role assigned to this instrument, is to draw the attention of the target group (children and their parents) and to trigger their awareness by showing them that sustainable energy is crucial for future generations. The creative play ensures that the viewers actively undergo the reality-based competition to find it attractive and get involved. Although the TV-instrument contains a great deal of information, this instrument has no specific task regarding information and education on energy efficiency en renewable energy. This to ensure that the format stays attractive filled with challenge, excitement, relationship and a great deal of awareness.

BASE 2: LOCAL SCHOOLS APPLY FOR THE ENERGY SURVIVAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

As said before, Energy Survival is a national concept strategy, with a strong basis of implemented local energy actions through local and regional actors. In this project, local school management authorities are recognised as favourable 'distributors' of the concept. Involvement of these parties in the project is the backbone for Energy Survival. By means of a modern Energy Survival-teaching method to ensure implementation, teachers are considered to be an effective multiplier to reach children.

The educational school programmes are supported by the website www.energysurvival.nl, developed and hosted by the internet education specialist Codename Future. This website contains a 'built in' teaching method for primary schools. The cooperation between the public broadcasting corporation and the internet education specialist has resulted in a unique and advanced digital play and learn-website for primary schools. The website is especially designed to inform, to learn and to practise (educate), both for use at home but primarily for use in educational programmes at school.

Through registration, primary school can apply for the education programme, which is closely linked to the items that

were also on national television. Registration, tailored educational material and follow up activities are also available on this energy website.

However, the website does not only contain educational programmes for primary schools. It is also a national energy website for children that serves as an independent energy information platform for children and a follow up channel for the competitions on the national level (TV portal) as well as on the local level (municipal portal). This way the website is the unifying element for the whole concept.

The mutual link between national television and internet (educational website) is an interdependent and reinforcing one and therefore has strong cross media elements. This to ensure that children will recognize the brand name, logo and the visual expression from the TV-show, when they visit the website at home or during their lessons at school. Short teasers on national television and on the website prior to each TV-episode, keep the energy message alive. However, for reasons of flexibility, primary schools are not bound to interact with the show on national television (mostly during December and January). Teachers are free to choose another period to start the educational programme, because the TV-show is also 'available' on the internet.

BASE 3 AND 4: LOCAL AND REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIONS PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOOL COMPETITIONS

As for local school management authorities, Energy Survival considers also local and regional administrations to be favourable 'distributors' of the concept. Involvement of these parties in the project is the backbone for Energy Survival. Local authorities are crucial to ensure recourses for widespread implementation of the concept (qualifying preliminaries) adapted to local circumstances. In return local duplication of the concept gives these local authorities a unique opportunity to disseminate their own energy policy activities to their own (young) inhabitants.

The local energy competitions among schools, organized by local and regional administrations, are wrapped in entertainment to create enthusiasm and ownership. These events include local energy education, exhibitions, tasks and a local energy-tournament. Registration, tailored educational material and follow up activities will be issued through the website.

As for the educational programme, the local and regional preliminaries are also supported by the website www.energysurvival.nl and therefore part of one and the same cross media-approach. This to ensure that children will recognize the brand name, logo and the visual expression from the TV-show, when they participate the local energy competition. Short promos are on national television and on the website prior to each TV-episode, keep the energy message alive.

Since the end of 2006, an 'official' Energy Survival pre-qualification school competition for local and regional administrations has become part the total concept. This school tournament is being organized and prepared by the Dutch branch of the International Climate Alliance, under the supervision of the national broadcasting company KRO. The International Climate Alliance was funded in 1992 and now counts for more than 1.200 climate-active municipalities across Europe.

Success indicators: good practice with a significant success?

The implementation of successful energy policy requires wide-spread actions at local level. Since November 2006 the Dutch branch of the International Climate Alliance is promoting this sustainable energy community-concept among the local and regional administrations. And although Energy Survival is still a relatively young initiative, independent monitoring research showed the following encouraging results:

National TV-contest

The first series of the Energy Survival on national television, the ratings show an average of approximately 200.000 viewers, mostly children with their parents. In terms of market share, Energy Survival is reaching a market share of approximately 20 % in the age group 6 – 12 years. Another remarkable result is that not just children watch the show, but also parents are attracted by the interesting, informative and above all fun way in which tough children meet these energy challenges. In other words; the TV-show turned out not to be just a children's show, but also a family show. Because of this success, the National Board of Public Broadcasting Corporations recently decided to produce a new series in 2007.

Further independent research showed significant differences in attitude between the viewers of the TV-show and the people that did not see the show. The most important ones are that children, who saw the show, significantly discussed more about energy issues with their parents, developed more understanding of the subject and discussed more with their parents about their conduct regarding energy efficiency.

Educational programme

Since the beginning of the project, already 300 primary schools all over the country applied for the digital teaching programme.

Local and regional actions

By now already 20 local and regional administrations decided to participate in the project and promote the Energy Survival among and their inhabitants. Among these local administrations are big cities like Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Tilburg and Eindhoven. Through these local administrations, the project Energy Survival already 'reaches' about 1,5 million inhabitants, about 10 % of the total Dutch population.

Future considerations: ensuring private recourses for continuing widespread implementation

Despite the fact that Energy Survival is only for a few months in full operation, Energy Survival has developed into a well tested national energy entertainment-concept for children and is now entering a phase of growth in order to reach full size and ensure recourses for widespread local and regional implementation. However, the scope of the concept is not meant to be an exclusively public one. The partners believe that the project will gain strength by combining *public and private sponsoring activities*, aimed at providing harmonized and clear information for children in their own local community to change perception and encourage energy sustainability.

Therefore, besides the goals mentioned above, the strategic aim from a financial point of view is to develop a business-model that ensures both public and private recourses for continuous implementation and self preservation of the activities. The scope of the concept is not meant to be an exclusively public funded one. We believe that the project will gain strength by combining *public and private campaign activities* for the future, aimed at providing clear information for children in their own local community to change perception and encourage energy sustainability. Therefore, a crucial new activity in this respect is the formation of a public private partnership in which not only public partners, but also large private partners sponsor the project, respecting the conditions of cooperating under the same brand name and with a clear division of roles and interests. In compliance with legal possibilities and meeting specific social, ethical and environmental requirements, the future expansion of the project is highly dependent on further public and private sponsoring in order to establish a national network of energy actors that operates locally and regionally within the frame of the same concept approach and goal.

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Survival is beginning to become a successful energy marketing concept in The Netherlands, where public and private partners cooperate under one brand name and with a clear division of roles and interests. The 'source' for this success however does not come from The Netherlands, but has a Norwegian origin. I wish to thank Turid Helle from ENOVA SF and Liv Randi Lindseth from NEE very much for inspiring us and allowing us to transform their basic ideas to our national conditions as described in this paper. Turid and Liv, thank you very much!

