



Sustainable and affordable home for everyman



 www.selficient.nl

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COMMUNICATION NARRATIVE

University of applied sciences Utrecht
Solar Decathlon 2017



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1. INTRODUCTION

Selficient began as a small concept developed by four engineering students of the University of Applied Sciences of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Sjors Peeters Weem, one of the cofounders, has been raised in a traditional family with a mediocre income. While growing up he experienced the lack of affordable technological and sustainable innovations. Armed with a mission and by the help of the passionate engineering students Jason Hoogerbrug, Thijs Morel and Robin Stuiver, Selficient was born. Currently the Dutch team consists of 33 students from different studies of the University, joined by 3 lecturers. The name might already give away the concept: a self-sufficient house. A house that is able to provide itself from resources by using nature. But there is more than what meets the eye. To explain the full story, we created a stage.

Communication of Selficient has the objective to reach people at a regional, national and eventually a global level. It is almost needless to say that the implementation of reaching out to the media consists of various steps. Two strategies are used to unfold a marketing campaign focused on achieving brand awareness and branding: *the branding strategy* accompanied by *the brand activation strategy*. Main reasons to raise awareness are to inform and influence the target audiences to achieve interaction. Selficient's concept and sustainability within the building industry are the main messages to communicate. Social media, traditional media, offline media, guerilla marketing and events are used to distribute the marketing campaign messages, which are integrated in a cross-media manner.

To create a strong company brand, we need to go beyond the product, the logo, the name and even visual materials. Instead of selling the product like an old-fashioned company, we put emphasis on our story and our purpose. We intent to let people know why we exist and how they can become part of the green movement that we are creating. By implementing the branding strategy, we aspire to create a top of mind position. People need to know what we stand for and experience our project as inspiring, innovative and intriguing. To achieve a top of mind position, several steps were taken to ensure a comprehensive execution of our branding.

All internal and external communications are led by seven principles: purpose, consistency, emotion, flexibility, employee involvement, loyalty and competitive awareness. These principles will be used to generate and deploy content via engaging platforms and external platforms. The content of the messages is mainly to inform and engage with the target audience. To complete the branding strategy, several key messages were formulated.

2.1 KEY MESSAGES

Our message is quite simple. The world has been going through multiple changes, including changes that are dramatically destroying our planet. To communicate the necessity of reducing the use of fossil fuels and fight climate change, we created the following messages, in order of importance:

- 1) Why to solve issues such as global warming, deforestation and extinct animals, selficient is called into life
- 2) How at a reasonable price, within a flexible (modular) and comfortable environment, everyone can live green
- 3) What Selficient is a self-sustainable, modular, circular and affordable house for everyman that will change the building industry permanently

2.2 TARGET AUDIENCES

2.2.1 GENERATION GREEN

Generation Green can be described as a young generation of Dutch people, aged 18 to 33 with an interest in sustainability. They are in the early stages of life, which means that they started their first serious working job and are ready to move to another home. They feel responsible for leaving a minimum footprint on the earth but do not have the income to afford an expensive self-sustainable house. Geographically they are located in the Netherlands, where they also work and live.

2.2.2 BUILDING INDUSTRY

Besides Generation green, the building industry is a main target group on a long-term basis. They are located in The Netherlands and are considerable companies within the building industry. They visit construction related events, read construction related magazines and show an interest in innovative projects.

2.3 GENERATING AND DEPLOYING CONTENT

Our content is recognizable by being informative and highly visual but concise. We believe in the power of less is more. Our messages are original, in-depth and topical. They include *purpose* and *emotion* and are *consistently* posted on communication outlets while being shared by our own team members.

3. BRAND ACTIVATION

Brand activation allows our team to communicate beyond promotional materials, where communication can be presented on a profound level. Building a self-sustainable house is the first mission, selling our story the second. Our story will include our mission, vision, core competences and core values. To express our purpose, we created alternative stories, for example our slam poetry and our guerilla campaign (See Appendix). All of our actions included the following DNA messages:

3.1 SELFICIENT DNA

3.1 MISSION STATEMENT

We build houses with modular, circular (re-use) and self-sufficient elements

3.2 VISION STATEMENT

To reduce the human footprint, create the new building standard and make green living affordable for everyman

3.3 CORE COMPETENCES

Modular, circular and self-sufficient

3.4 CORE VALUES

Environmentalism, innovation

3.2 #FOOTPRINTCHALLENGE

Besides our guerrilla action, the brand activation strategy is also reflected in our social media challenge 'To reduce our footprint challenge'. Several months ago, a lot of videos went viral where the floor was lava. The purpose of these videos is to get your feet off the floor as quickly as possible. We also wanted to do this but with a reference to reducing the footprint. With the house we build, Selficient wants to leave a footprint as low as possible on earth. Team Selficient is not the only one who wants to reduce her footprint. The other finalists also have this as a goal. This is something that the finalists connect.

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Instead of being the floor lava, the floor is a big footprint in our challenge. Because every finalist of the Solar Decathlon wants to leave the smallest footprint as possible, we hope our colleagues will participate in this challenge.

To ensure that there has already been a first form of interaction (and collaboration) between the teams before the game actually starts, we wanted (team Selficient) to invite others to participate in the footprint challenge. Through this action we want to challenge the finalists to reduce the footprint and to ensure a better climate. In addition to the fact that we feel that there is already some contact between the teams, we hope that our colleagues will learn more about Selficient. It's also our way of showing that we have the other teams (and countries) in our mind. We reach out on an international level.



3.3. GUERRILLA ACTION

With the brand activation strategy, we want to ensure the meaning behind our brand. To reach out to an audience beyond our own network, we tried to contact the (local) press. This was harder than we thought. After a number of attempts to get a hold on the press we made the decision to use a guerrilla action to gain news value for Selficient. With this action, the chances are high that the press would be interested in the project and our team. This guerrilla action would not be successful if we only tell who we are and what we do. We had to take a risk to get exposure. We wanted to shock people and create a buzz where everyone would think and discuss about.

3.3.1. HOW

To do so, we stickered in different cities in the Netherlands. The stickers had the following text: 'Let op! Over 10 jaar kun je hier alleen nog maar zwemmen...' (Pay attention! In 10 years, you can only swim here....) These stickers were placed in crowded places in the cities. If we keep taking the same route as we do now, a large part of the Netherlands will be flooded. We want to change it. We need to change it. So to create more awareness, we used banners in addition to these stickers. The banners had the following text: 'Let op! In 2030 zal het water tot hier komen...' (Pay attention! In 2030 the water will be

here ...) These banners were hung high on buildings and busy places in the city. We have chosen places with the right height to indicate the impact of where the water will be. The water will get so high that you can only swim.

The Netherlands has a great defence for water, but it won't hold if we don't change our habits. The Dutch should know better, and we've let them know. For years we take dry land for granted, even though a lot of our land is beneath the waterlevel. It is not just about getting wet feet, it's also the complication that so much water can inflict. With our action, we want people think about the future. The banners and stickers are made in the colors of Selficient. We did not linked our name immediately. The subject had to get impact before we linked our name to this action.

Within a day we've placed the stickers and banners. A day later, the first article was written. That was our cue. The next day we've posted our press release and explained ourselves. This made clear who we are, what we do and what the purpose of this action is. The Dutch press release on our guerrilla action can be read here. Because we are dealing with Dutch media, the press release has been written in Dutch. This action brought

us various calls from the press, a radio interview and various articles on news sites. A few days later, we've sent a press release containing information that the house is ready to be shipped to Denver. This press release can also be read here, but is again in Dutch. This has also been picked up by different media.

3.3.2. RESULTS

Our guerrilla action has been a great opening to get in touch with the press. In this way we made sure that we can reach people outside our network. An extra benefit from it, is that more people know about Selficient as well. We can create a better climate together and realize a new building standard. We are pleased with the outcome of our action and hope to reach more press and make the Netherlands proud of our participation in the Solar Decathlon.

Links to articles (fully in Dutch)

- Duic -
- AD -
- HU -
- RTV -

4. ENGAGING WITH AUDIENCE

Selficient aims to reach Generation Green and the building sector. Generation Green can be described as a young generation. They communicate mainly via electronic devices at a high-speed level and strongly values the opinion of others

4.1 PLATFORMS & METRICS

Since the profile of Generation Green shows a clear pattern in the way of their communication, the marketing campaign is primarily based on online platforms. With over 7.000 impressions and a fast-growing community, our Facebook, which started at zero in November 2016, turns out to be the fastest growing community amongst all media platforms of the Solar Decathlon finalists.

The second communication outlet is our website, which reaches 647 unique users every month. An average session lasts 2 minutes and 49 seconds, which shows that our owned content is informative and intriguing enough to engage the audience for a longer period. The website enables visitors to gain knowledge about Selficient, sustainability and to receive an update of the process of our project such as events and milestones. It also stimulates the visitors to check other owned social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, which are all used consistently to reach out. With over 10,400 impressions, Twitter functions as an informative platform which allows followers to directly interact with our team.

Our distribution point is Facebook. The entire platform is used to share updates regarding the house, our team, facts and figures and articles with Selficient as a subject posted by newspapers, television shows or other external media. Instagram, which also started at zero, counts a total of 700 impressions and has an everyday growing community.

To reach the building industry, we used our LinkedIn profile which gained 4300 impressions. Besides events, we placed various on- and offline articles in magazines and newsletters distributed by considerable construction related platforms. To target the building industry even more, we invited building companies to our social media. We had meetings with the bigger building companies to set up collaborations, organized events to welcome them to our team and made sure that we kept them up to date by sending them newsletters and promotional videos. As being the first team from the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences and the only Dutch team, it is our goal to create the biggest community on Facebook and Instagram in the Solar Decathlon competition 2017. As mentioned before we organized guerilla campaigns throughout the big cities of The Netherlands and organized an interventional challenge 'The Floor is Footprint' challenge to accomplish our mission.

4.2. COLLABORATION

In collaboration with the University of Applied sciences HU and The Green Office Utrecht, the Selficient prototype will be built and exposed at the University campus during the sustainability tour for and by students. This allows 50.000 students to be confronted with a sustainable way of building and simultaneously offers prospective buyers to experience the house at its finest, since the prototype is welcoming everyone.

Currently our team has spread out the Selficient story at multiple conferences such as Smart Sustainable Cities to raise awareness and to improve innovation within the education offered in The Netherlands.



5. OUTRO

Obviously, we are proud of Selficient and its story. We realize that being the only University of Applied Sciences, with only 33 students presents tremendous challenge. That building a house and being the only team to ship it over 7.700 km, is a challenge. We realize, that being the first students to break the status quo within our education, is a challenge. We know, that starting at zero and from there reach the level of the other finalists of the Solar Decathlon 2017, definitely is a challenge. A challenge, which we eagerly accept.

Now we challenge the world, to join Selficient.