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Consumer Power

**How an understanding of psychological motivations
can help us mainstream lower-carbon behaviour**





Context

- Individuals' energy use in their homes and for transport = 44% of UK CO₂ emissions
- Beyond the 'environmentally-inclined' many people don't take action
- Mainstream consumers have either not been the target of or have not responded to climate change communications and policies



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Uptake of lower carbon behaviour beyond the environmentally-inclined is critical



‘Consumer Power’

An investigation designed to identify the communications approaches and policies needed to facilitate uptake of lower-carbon behaviours by the mainstream



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Made possible by...

- **Funders:** Coca Cola, Energy Saving Trust, JMG Foundation, Pilkington Energy Efficiency Trust and the Sustainable Consumption Institute
- **Donating their time:** Pat Dade, Cultural Dynamics and Andrew Long, Ten.



Our starting point

- Knowing and segmenting one's audience is a precondition of success
- Socio-economic segmentation only goes so far
- Different people have different values and different psychological motivations



‘Values Modes’

- Psychographic segmentation
- Maslow’s hierarchy of psychological needs
- Developed by Cultural Dynamics Strategy and Marketing Ltd.
- Users include Shell, Unilever, the BBC



3 broad motivational groups

- Pioneers
 - ‘Inner directed’ needs
- Prospectors
 - Esteem or ‘outer directed’ needs
- Settlers
 - Sustenance-driven needs



3 broad motivational groups

- **Pioneers** The traditional target
 - ‘Inner directed’ needs
- Prospectors
 - Esteem or ‘outer directed’ needs
- Settlers
 - Sustenance-driven needs



3 broad motivational groups

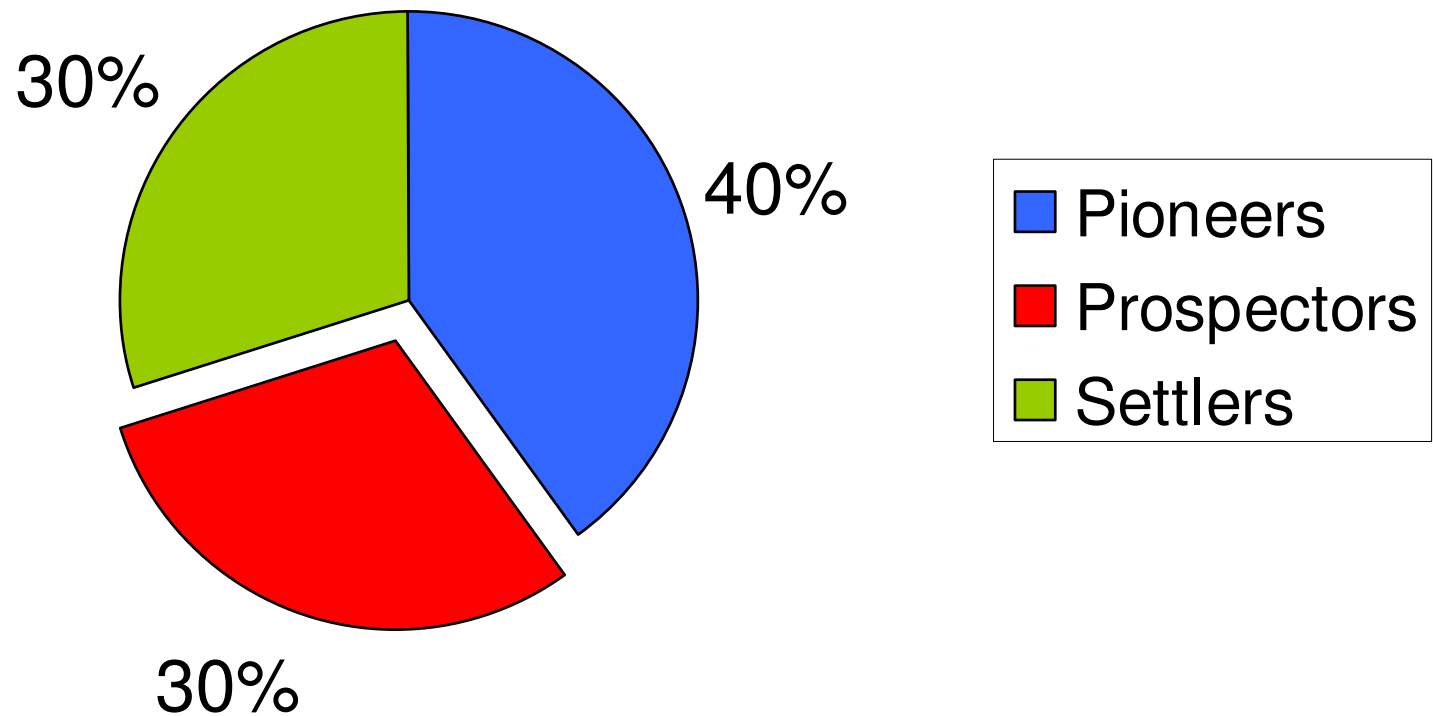
- **Pioneers** The traditional target
 - ‘Inner directed’ needs
- **Prospectors** Our target
 - Esteem or ‘outer directed’ needs
- **Settlers**
 - Sustenance-driven needs



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Prospectors: 'Now People'

- Seek psychological rewards in the esteem of others, often from status, fashion & success
- High level of motivation to consume
- Prominent position within social circles
- Drivers of fashions and trends



A choice in approach

- Marketing-based approach
 - finding and creating synergies between the values people hold and lower-carbon behaviour
- Other approaches seek to change peoples' values to ones more driven by sustainability
- Either/or? Or both?



Methodology

6 'consumer choices' targeted:

- 'In the home'
 - Energy Monitors
 - Heating Controls
 - Solar Panels
- 'On the go'
 - Energy-efficient vehicles
 - Taking holidays in the UK
 - Travelling on holiday by train



Qualitative approach

- 6 deliberative workshops across the country with 7 participants in each
 - Series of discussions and exercises
 - Not framed around climate change
- 10 interviews and observations of home energy assessments in London



RESEARCH FINDINGS...

- **Perceptions of climate change and lower-carbon behaviour**
- Perceptions of specific lower-carbon choices



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High awareness of climate change

- Polar bears
- Ice caps
- Noticing the weather being different



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Some positivity about ‘doing your bit’ ...

“I think it makes people feel good if they can do it.”

(Male, London, with children)



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... and a dislike of waste and pollution

“ I do think cutting down on fuel emissions is good, regardless, because of the pollution.”

(Female, London, without children)



‘Climate Fatigue’

- depressing
- boring
- ‘faddy’
- ‘trendy’
- gimmick



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“We’re getting the green thing rammed down our throat all the time – and it’s just getting really boring.”

(Female, London, with children)



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Some climate change scepticism...

“Whilst I appreciate we may influence things... how much is it just the planet is going through it’s own natural cycles and what would have happened anyway?”

(Male, Bristol, with children)



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**... but more prominent was
scepticism about government and
businesses' motivations for action**

*“I find it all a bit schizophrenic when they
open new airport terminals”
(Female, London, without children)*



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“If they’re really serious about doing stuff why don’t they just tax the green-issue things?”

(Male, Bristol, with children)

“It’s a form of stealth tax to some extent. I do think people genuinely feel as if it’s another excuse to tax us.”

(Female, London, with children)



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Widespread concerns about the effectiveness of acting

– *What about the “free-riders”?*

“You wonder how much impact it has, don’t you, if everybody else isn’t doing it.”

(Female, York, with children)



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“You hear that one state in America produces more than all of Europe, and you think, “Does it actually make a difference?”.”

(Male, Bristol, with children)



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Resentment about feeling guilty

“(I) don’t want to be made to feel guilty for my choices... We live in a house probably too big for us. It’s warm because we heat it. We both work very hard and buy really nice things for our home... I’m living the life I want to live.”

(Female, London, without children)



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Negative perceptions of environmentally-friendly people

“There’s somewhat of a smugness of [Smart Cars] ... “I’m being environmental and practical, and look at me because I have this titchy witchy car and I’m so amazingly environmental”.”

(Female, London, without children)



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Cost is a barrier to action...

“Much as I’d like to be good to the environment, my wallet is more important... I mean, I am conscious of the environment but, you know, people’s pockets are more important to them.”

(Female, London, without children)



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... but cost is also a motivator

“With the credit crunch I’m on a real drive to save money, and I’m going around the house turning the lights off after people.”

(Female, York, without children)



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“Obviously with the way things are going at the moment with electricity and gas suppliers putting your bills up, you want to do what you can to bring your bills down.”

(Female, London, with children)



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But saving money doesn't motivate everyone

[Referring to the energy monitor]

“There's nothing joyous or happy... you'll have in your mind how much you are prepared to spend in a month and ... you'll be so boring.”

(Female, London without children)

More for 'dad' and 'old biddies'



Research Findings:

- Perceptions of climate change and lower-carbon behaviour
- **Perceptions of the specific lower-carbon choices**
 - In the home
 - On the move



In the home

- Energy monitors
 - Generally positive; some thought boring/annoying
- Heating Controls
 - Not very positive; didn't understand the additional functionality they offered
- Solar Panels
 - Unsure of effectiveness; price is prohibitive; but generally positive particularly about insulation from fluctuating energy prices



Messengers

- Trust issues with energy suppliers
- Preference for lower list celebrities (e.g. Tess Daly and Vernon Kay) and people they could associate with as peers



On The Move

Energy Efficient Vehicles

- Colour and aesthetic very important
 - “Trainer on wheels”
- Must be the right ‘image’



On The Move

Taking Holidays in the UK

- The weather; high cost; want to ‘get away’; very positive about some areas in the UK

Taking holidays by train

- “The holiday starts at the airport”; very positive about Eurostar



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RECOMMENDATIONS...

For communications



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Don't focus on climate change

*“It’s one of those things you think about for a few minutes, get depressed, and move on to the next.”
(Male, Bristol, with children).*



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Focus on saving money now

*“The reason we are so mindful of energy at the moment is not through real environmental reasons – that’s not the mitigating factor. It’s cost....”
(Female, London, without children).*



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Being in control matters

[Referring to solar panels]

“You’re not having to bend over to whatever company and pay whatever bills when they decide to hike their prices up.”

(Male, Bristol, with children)



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Make it desirable and fun

[Referring to the energy monitor:]

“It’s very boring whatever it is. I’m not attracted to it. I can’t eat it. I can’t wear it - why would I want it?”

(Female, London, with children)



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Use messengers that ‘keep it real’

[Advert for the solar panel]

“We didn’t want to put a celebrity on it because then that makes it look like as though only people with money can afford it or would benefit from it.”

(Female, York, with children)



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Preference for lower list celebrities (e.g. Tess Daly and Vernon Kay) and people they could associate with as peers



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Beware the ‘rebound effect’

“ If I was to build a house tomorrow, it would have everything energy saving that I could possibly ram in it - and then I could have my Audi TT.”

(Female, York, with children)



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Satirise high carbon behaviours (and leave room for self expression)

“There’s far too many [SUVs] in Richmond and Ham, and it’s a very small town. It’s not the Serengeti - it’s only Richmond Park.”

(Female, London, with children)



Use the right language

- X CO2 emissions or carbon dioxide
- ✓ Carbon pollution
- ✓ 'Waste' and 'wasters'
- ✓ 'Dirty' pollution

"I think the whole idea of cutting down on fuel emissions is good, regardless, because of the pollution."

(Female, London, without children)



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Avoid guilt and the ‘environmental’ label

Guilt breeds resentment...

Environmentalists and ‘green’ products
are seen as ‘smug’ and ‘self-righteous’.



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**BUT COMMUNICATIONS ARE NOT
ENOUGH**

**STRONG GOVERNMENT POLICY IS
ESSENTIAL**



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Avoid sending mixed signals

1. Government must ensure that the messages and policies it adopts are consistent

... otherwise it will feed cynicism and mistrust, reducing the impetus to act



Send the right price signals

2. Use the taxation system much more effectively as a means of encouraging lower-carbon behaviour

... but make sure changes are introduced transparently



Make the right thing affordable

3. Provide further financial assistance to increase the uptake of household renewables such as solar panels

... subsidies, discounts on stamp duty, low- or zero-interest loans, on-bill repayment



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Make it visible and normal

4. Climate-proof all new houses, with demonstration homes in each locality



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Make it desirable

5. Put in place policy frameworks to ensure innovation in the design of lower-carbon products and services to attract mainstream consumers



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