

CCW – Lessons Learned

One size doesn't fit all – obvious or not?

Climate Change West (CCW) has been rather like a long train journey from Bristol to Newcastle. On the way you plough through some beautiful countryside, industrial heartlands and run down estates – but you get a good picture of the lives people are leading.

What this project has done is convince me that the journey to a low carbon economy, certainly in the next 10 years, will need different mechanisms and messages for different people. George Monbiot and others are adamant that 'you can't save the world by shopping' and like many of the 'dark green' movement they have a vision of a future society made up of people acting, thinking and behaving like them.

The question is how easy this societal shift is, and what role consumerism has? Given that we live in a consumer society which has actually created the problem of global warming and associated climate change, clearly there is potential for consumerism to cut emissions and combat the problem i.e. by choosing lower impact products and services. The CCW project specifically targeted a group of people uninterested in green issues, and rather than dismiss them as too hard to engage, it attempted to find out what behaviours they may be prepared to adopt and the marketing required for this to happen.

The project has shown that there is some friction between the finger-wagging of the green movement and the opinions of most people. We cannot expect everyone to become an earthy eco-campaigner, would we want them to? The rich tapestry of life relies on the differences between people and their ability to perform different roles and functions. So we therefore need to envisage a low carbon society that provides a variety of imaginative and aspirational lifestyles that people are willing to buy in to and more importantly enjoy!

To reach a wider audience we shouldn't simply dismiss the role of shopping as George Monbiot has done. Informed shopping has a role to play. For example, a Nintendo Wii is both an aspirational product and uses a tenth of the energy of a Play Station 3 or an Xbox 360. Teenagers and indeed adults want games consoles and are unlikely to start listening to Radio 4 on their wind up radios, so let's make sure they buy the right one and then maybe Sony & Microsoft will think hard about their own offerings.

The Stop & Talk mechanism – The 100 ideas house

CCW had always planned to speak to shoppers about climate change in retail centres, it quickly became apparent that you need a 'stop and talk' mechanism to speak to busy focussed shoppers. The '100 ideas house' (www.100ideashouse.com) was the end product of the Value Modes based

research¹ performed by Chris Rose, Cultural Dynamics Strategy Marketing, and KSBR to identify the best mechanism for engaging. The house included 50 energy saving ideas with a competition asking people for their ideas to help us reach 100, the winner will receive a £2,000 energy efficiency makeover of their home.

The house was designed to sit in a retail environment and one indicator of success that also formed a barrier, was the public's immediate perception that we were selling something – quite often kitchens!

We have now spent several weeks in two of the busiest retail centres in the Avon area. We have seen a broad spectrum of the UK's population - 'warts and all' - and gauged their reaction to the aspirational '100 ideas house' packed full of 'energy smart' ideas to help them become 'climate cool'.

The three Needs Groups – Inner Directed (IDs), Outer Directed (ODs) and Sustenance Driven (SD) have all visited the house and all interacted with it to varying degrees.

Our target group was the ODs, for whom shopping is leisure and consumerism is king. I have therefore dealt with their reaction first.

The Outer Directed, so-called 'Prospectors'

The research into the ODs was split into the two largest values modes groups, the Now People and the Golden Dreamers. Whilst I can't necessarily give an accurate distinction between how these two groups interacted with the house, there is one clear distinction between the ODs that have children and those that don't.

One thing that surprised us for both OD groups was the lack of interest in the large energy saving recommended (ESR) television. Most of the ODs owned a 32"+ TV or had recently bought one.

The ODs without children

The ODs without children weren't sceptical of the existence of climate change. The scale of the problem and threat seemed to them over hyped' but, based on their own observations of changing seasons and weather patterns, they agreed it was happening in their lifetime. They weren't interested in the science or forthcoming with the counter arguments. Whilst they thought the motivations behind the house were laudable they didn't necessarily buy in to the 'climate cool' ethos.

They were already taking small steps and were interested in the low cost technical solutions like low energy light bulbs; however, they wanted to see

¹ http://www.campaignstrategy.org/articles/behaviourchange_climate.pdf

others take action first before they made large sacrifices or high cost investments i.e. councils and countries doing their bit first.

This group tended to home in on one or two ideas that you can purchase, ask where they can purchase them and proceed to head off in that direction. The top items were the Brabantia washing line (the most popular item in the house and loved by all value modes), Shaun the Sheep, the Wattson device, the halogen-style low energy bulbs, and the Tefal Quick Cup kettle.

The best example was that of the Estée Laude promotion girl who wandered past the house and saw the Brabantia washing line and exclaimed:

“Where do you get those, that’s amazing, that’s the best thing I have ever seen, I want one! I never thought I’d be interested in something like that, a washing line, but the one in my garden looks really ugly. Now I live in my own house I have to think about washing.”

This could be the single most outer directed reaction we encountered, I told her they sold it at John Lewis and off she ran to buy it. Her reaction typified this group, I like that item – I will go away buy it and use it.

They loved the look and feel of the stand. In particular the kitchen was very aspirational (we had several people photograph it and measure up to use as a plan for their own home). The wallpaper in the lounge that I thought was disgusting was actually very popular, highlighting why inner directed people working in NGOs and Quangos aren’t always well placed to design campaigns aimed at the OD or the wider general public. We trusted an interior designer to know more than us about design trends and guess what, they did!

The ODs without children were reluctant to enter our competition (except late teens), the 50 ideas we already had were more than sufficient and their ideas wouldn’t be good enough. They thought the bags looked good and promised to look through the ideas at home, but a free gadget or light bulb would have increased their impact and given them currency for this group.

So did it work for them – Yes, if you want them to consider two to three specific actions.

The ODs with children

The ODs with children also felt that climate change was real and often cited the summer’s high rainfall and / or flooding in Gloucestershire as evidence. They were more aware of the scale of the challenge but also less optimistic about our ability to meet the challenge climate change poses. Their children gave them an excuse to stop and explore the house i.e. they were doing it for their kids. The children also provided moral support:

"What do you think sweetheart, have you got any ideas?"

This group were more inclined to spend time in the house and search for the ideas on offer. Whilst they also tended to enquire about the hot products listed previously, they were pleased to discover that they were already doing a number of the ideas in the house already. For example, a several ODs with children mentioned that they have recently fitted an 'A' rated boiler which they saw as both a home improvement measure and an energy saving measure. A win/win investment.

They also liked the gadgets on show that turned things off for them or highlighted wastage i.e. the Eon Powerdown, the Radiplug (remote controlled plugs) and the Wattson. Whilst the Wattson was an attractive product it was often too expensive at £100; however, for the more prosperous ODs it seemed a relatively cheap feature they could add to their home.

As identified by the research their interest in climate change and any actions taken to mediate it are often linked to their children's interest or future. However, the rising cost of energy was a definite concern that made them think about their finances and associated energy use more sustainably. Interestingly, in a few cases, one partner acted as a climate champion and complained bitterly about the lack of interest and action from their partner and children. This transference of guilt empowered them to talk to an energy expert about the energy use in their own home.

They were more inclined to enter the competition and often volunteered a new idea during conversations with our advisors. The trick was to spot this idea and then remind them how clever they were when asking them to answer. These encounters were the most rewarding for our staff as we genuinely talked to people we hadn't engaged previously and felt we gave them knowledge they didn't previously own.

Shaun the Sheep helped draw kids onto the stand. Their parents loved the bags and their look and feel. The washing powder was useful and there was plenty for the kids to do.

So did it work for them – Yes, they went away feeling a bit greener and more open to the next offering i.e. when their energy supplier drops an insulation offer through the door.

The Inner Directed

The IDs seemed often to be divided on both climate change and the 100 ideas house. The majority of IDs that visited the house thought climate change was very real and very serious. They were fully aware of the science and the plethora of actions that they may be able to take to mitigate its impacts. There was a minority group of IDs who thought that climate change either wasn't real or seriously over-hyped for the direct benefit of a company or organisation.

For the IDs the house was like Marmite, they either loved it or hated it.

The Transcenders were more inclined to come up with lifestyle barriers (often time related) for their own negative behaviours i.e. driving – it's just too far to walk, the buses aren't regular, the buses are expensive or the buses are dirty. The council needed to solve these issues or improve the services for them, then they would happily change the way they behaved.

The concerned ethical's on the other hand were more prepared to take actions that involved time and effort. Recycling plastic was something you did and made allowance for, rather than citing the council's lack of service as a barrier (which both the ODs and Transcenders often did).

Transcenders

The majority of the IDs fitted the Transcender profile and absolutely loved the house. It looked and felt like somewhere they would like to live and they wanted to explore and find all the ideas they already did and note those they could do.

The Transcenders were more inclined to own a multitude of appliances and often already owned a large flat screen television. Interestingly this was often LCD as they knew it used less energy than a similar sized Plasma television.

The competition allowed them to buy into the house. They often entered multiple times in an attempt to make it the 100 ideas 'darker green' house. Once the house became an earthier environment it could truly be their home and somewhere they could plan their bid to save the planet.

Concerned Ethicals

The concerned ethicals probably formed the smaller proportion of IDs visiting the house, and whilst half of them loved the house (also understanding its role to reach an unengaged audience), the other half found some of its features discomfoting. So what did they dislike?

- the house had two televisions
- the house had a dishwasher
- the size of the fridge
- the electric hob
- wind turbines in general

The advisors were generally able to win them round by highlighting the green credentials of each idea i.e. the thermocouple hob and the efficiency of a full 'A' rated dishwasher. The issue of wind power; however, was a step too far for some of the more passionate concerned ethicalists.

So did it work for them – Yes, it worked for the majority but they were doing most the actions.

For some it didn't work and symbolised much that's wrong with the world.

The Sustenance Driven, so-called 'Settlers'

The settlers were intimidated by the house and formed the smallest proportion of visitors. The house looked too big, too modern and too expensive. Those settlers that visited the house generally had a child of the war mentality to 'reduce, reuse and recycle'. There was a small group of older visitors who felt climate change was just one example of an ongoing degradation of society i.e. immigrants, single mothers, the NHS and much more.

'The war children'

For 'the war children', the issue of climate change was another problem facing mankind. In the past we had managed to overcome these problems but there was a sense that the 'young-uns' today were fundamentally too wasteful to meet the challenge.

They thought the house was a good idea and the more practical and common sense the idea the better. They recycle, use low energy bulbs, cook with a three-tier steamer, turn the lights off, and turn the television off standby (mobility permitting). Saving precious money was an every day issue that underpinned their lifestyle, many of the actions were consequently too expensive or unattainable e.g. the full range of light bulbs was only available online.

So did it work for them – No, the majority of settlers didn't engage with the stand, those that did were pleased they weren't wasteful and happy to do their bit.

Finding the Golden Bullet in the Fog

The varied reactions to, and interactions with the 100 ideas house have proved that there is no Golden Bullet to solve climate change. We can't simply develop a cure all campaign to radicalise the population into a society of 'Green Fundamentalists'.

We need to develop a range of solutions that encourage people to be 'energy smart' and become 'climate cool'. In terms of the target group of ODs (and to some extent the Transcenders)², these solutions need to be both hassle free and have tangible benefits i.e. an attractive payback and / or adding value to their home.

Interestingly the EST is currently trialling a green concierge service which offers fuel rich households a hassle-free service; however, this is unlikely to be cost effective on a national scale. In Germany fuel rich households pay €40 for a home audit with tailored advice on the actions they can take, if marketed correctly is this something we could offer in the UK.

The Prime Minister's Speech on Climate Change on the 19th November indicated that the EST would provide a Green Homes service through the role out of the EST Advice Centres (ESTACs). This describes the already planned extension of advice to cover transport, renewables and water. The mechanism for delivering this advice and the degree of handholding involved is still unclear.

The provision of a more holistic hassle-free solution will require a change to the current framework of policies that facilitate the delivery of energy saving measures. EEC-2 and the proposed Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) both encourage energy suppliers to offer householders discounted energy saving measures to able to pay householders and no cost measures to low income householders. Whilst the scale of CERT will ensure that many OD householders are targeted, our research has shown that cost effective insulation measures do not currently interest them.

So how could one facilitate the provision of a package of measures?

A future Supplier Obligation (post-CERT) may be a cap-and-trade system i.e. suppliers have their emissions capped and must reduce them accordingly. CSE has produced an informative report³ on the winners and losers in this system; however, one attractive option will be retaining their 'fuel rich' low emissions customers via reward and acquiring and/or retaining their 'fuel rich' high emissions customers. In such a system energy suppliers might agree long term relationships with customers whilst providing packages of measures as a service.

² The ODs often look to this group to establish the trends and behaviours that are fashionable
³ <http://www.cse.org.uk/pdf/pub1085.pdf>