

Institution: University of Exeter
Unit of Assessment: 17a (Geography & Environmental Studies)
Title of case study: Social Marketing for Sustainability: influencing policy and practice for citizen engagement
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research undertaken by Dr Barr and colleagues at Exeter has examined pro-environmental behaviour policy and notions of behavioural change for environmental sustainability. This body of research has resulted in three main types of impact: it has informed public policy making, it has promoted product development, and it has informed public debate on the issue of sustainability. These impacts have been achieved through: reports for DEFRA that relate to UK behaviour change policy, collaboration with social marketing businesses that has resulted in mobile application development for UK and EU travellers, and informed public debate around issues of consumer behavioural change and flying. The latter has been achieved through citation by journalists and the instigation of debate in national (UK) and international media outlets.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The EU and the UK Government has committed itself to a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020. Achieving this will necessitate both corporate and individual behavioural change. In this context, a number of recent national policy agendas, for example, DEFRA's 2008 Framework for Pro-Environmental Behaviours and its 2012 Sustainable Lifestyles Framework have sought to promote behavioural change as a way of tackling CO₂ emissions, largely through individual carbon emission reductions. Although there has been recognition for some years within national policy frameworks concerning the role of behavioural change, the methods deployed to understand the intricacies of environmentally-related practices, and the sustainable mechanisms for change, have only recently emerged as a key political concern. This has been largely spurred on by evidence that conventional 'information deficit' models of change do not achieve their goals. Accordingly, the impacts outlined in this case study arise from research that has been influential in reframing policy agendas for behavioural change in central government, changed business practices, and provoked public debate on the role that individuals can have in reducing carbon emissions.</p> <p>The research on sustainable lifestyles and notions of behavioural change that underpins these impacts has been undertaken within the Environment and Sustainability Group at Exeter, and directly supported by funding from two RCUK projects (ESRC-funded, 2001-2003, Gilg, Ford and Barr; 2008-2010, Barr), a British Academy grant (2007-08, Shaw, Barr and Coles), and a DEFRA research project (2005-06, Barr, Gilg, and Shaw). Intellectually, the research aimed to explore and critique current Neo-liberal framings of 'pro-environmental behaviour' and notions of behavioural change that underlie contemporary policy making on the environment. Specifically, the research sought to offer a critical perspective on the growth of 'choice architecture' as a means of promoting behavioural solutions to tackle global climate change amongst 'citizen-consumers' through the use of techniques like nudge theory and social marketing, which form the basis of the ongoing work of the UK Cabinet Office's Behavioural Insights Team.</p> <p>These research projects utilised quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the ways in which environmental practices are constructed and the social contexts within which such practices develop. Based on empirical studies in the South-West of England, the research employed large-scale social surveys as well as focus group discussions, on-street survey research, and in-depth interviewing. The research provided a critical appraisal of a number of dominant academic and policy logics surrounding pro-environmental behaviour change. First, the research de-constructed the notion of information-deficit models as the most effective means of predicting behavioural change, demonstrating the complexity of environmental practices and challenging the dominant social-psychological approaches to understanding environmental behaviours (Barr, 2004). Second, the research identified the ways in which environmental practices are contingent on a range of influences that reflect behavioural settings and consumption contexts, in particular the role that geographically-distinct sites of practice play in shaping practices (Barr, 2011; Barr, Shaw, & Coles,</p>

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2011a; 2011b). Third, the research critically evaluated the role of segmentation, social marketing and other constructions of 'choice architecture' to demonstrate the limitations of applying such approaches within the context of promoting behavioural change to combat global climate change (Barr, Gilg, & Shaw, 2011a; 2011b).

Key researchers:

Dr. Stewart Barr, Research Fellow (2001-03), Lecturer (2003-2007), Senior Lecturer (2008-2012), Associate Professor (2012-), University of Exeter.

Prof. Andrew Gilg, Reader in Countryside Planning, University of Exeter (1995-2005), Professor, Countryside and Community Research Unit, University of Gloucestershire (2005-2008), Honorary Fellow, University of Exeter (2008-).

Prof. Gareth Shaw, Professor of Human Geography (1997-2005), Professor of Tourism and Retail Management (2005-), University of Exeter.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Evidence of the quality of the research that underpins this case study is provided through the following peer-reviewed publications and grants secured through competitive funding sources.

Barr, S. 2011. Climate Forums: virtual discourses on the sustainable lifestyle. *Area*, 43, 14-22 (DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-4762.2010.00958.x).

Barr, S. 2004. Are we all environmentalists now? Rhetoric and reality in environmental decision making. *Geoforum*, 35, 231-249 (DOI 10.1016/j.geoforum.2003.08.009)

Barr, S., Gilg, A., Shaw, G. 2011a. Citizens, consumers and sustainability: (re)framing environmental practice in an age of climate change. *Global Environmental Change* 21, 1224-1233 (submitted to the REF 2014) (DOI: 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.07.009).

Barr, S., Gilg, A., Shaw, G. 2011b. 'Helping People Make Better Choices': exploring the behaviour change agenda for environmental sustainability. *Applied Geography* 31, 712-720 (submitted to the REF 2014) (DOI: 10.1016/j.apgeog.2010.12.003).

Barr, S., Shaw, G., Coles, T. 2011a. Times for (Un)sustainability? Challenges and opportunities for developing behaviour change policy. *Global Environmental Change* 21, 1234-1244 (DOI: 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.07.011).

Barr, S., Shaw, G., Coles, T. 2011b. Sustainable Lifestyles: sites, practices and policy. *Environment and Planning A* 43, 3011-3029 (submitted to the REF 2014) (DOI: 1068/a43529).

Research grants (in ascending chronological order):

- Barr, S. and Shaw, G. Social Marketing for Sustainability: developing a community of practice for co-creating behavioural change campaigns. ESRC Follow-on Fund Grant. November 2011 – October 2012. £79,123.84.
- Shaw, G. and Barr, S. Using new technologies for promoting sustainable behavioural changes. Higher Education Innovation Fund Business Voucher to work with CAG Consultants. February 2011 – July 2012. £3,000.
- Barr, S. and Shaw, G. Social Marketing and its application for encouraging increased household waste recycling in the Middle East. Higher Education Innovation Fund Business Voucher to work with Strategic Social Marketing. December 2010 – February 2011. £3,000.
- Barr, S. Promoting Sustainable Travel: a social marketing approach. ESRC Grant. January 2008 – July 2010. £198,111.84.
- Shaw, G., Barr, S. and Coles, T. E. Low Cost Airlines and Climate Change: a behavioural perspective. British Academy Small Research Grant. November 2007 – April 2008. £6,247.
- Barr, S., Gilg, A. W. and Shaw, G. Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles: a social marketing approach. DEFRA Research Grant. September 2005 – August 2006. £21,000.
- Gilg, A. W. and Ford, N. J. Environmental Action in and Around the Home: linking attitudes and behaviours. ESRC Grant. October 2001 – September 2003. £109,918.00.

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4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The underpinning research described here has resulted in three types of impact, relating to changes in **government policy, product development, and informed public debate**. Clear relationships are demonstrated between the underpinning research and impact at a range of scales, from engagement with and influence on UK Government and business, to influences on the knowledge and modes of thought of a range of publics world-wide.

Impact from this research commenced prior to the current REF assessment period in 2005 (DEFRA Good Practice Guide – Targeting Specific Lifestyle Groups, 2006 – evidence **item #1**), but the most significant impacts (which we cite here) have arisen since 2008. In particular, major contributions to two key reports by the Social Marketing Practice Andrew Darnton Associates (Darnton & Sharp 2006a; 2006b – evidence **items #2 and 3**) formed the basis for DEFRA's 2008 Framework for Environmental Behaviours, in which the segmentation research developed at Exeter was used as evidence for the development of DEFRA's social marketing approach to behavioural change (evidence **item #4**). The Framework for Environmental Behaviours is the key strategic document that governs UK behaviour change policy for the environment, and research by Barr, Gilg, and Shaw formed a significant part of the evidence base for shifting away from 'information-deficit' models of behavioural change towards more socially-sophisticated frameworks for behavioural shifts. This research has thus been instrumental in **shaping and influencing policy** made by government, and the continuity of impact resulting from this contribution has been confirmed through written correspondence from DEFRA who note that the work "has been very significant in shaping pro-environmental behaviour policy and strategy within DEFRA" (see evidence **item #5**). Specifically, this identifies the main impacts of the research being the adoption of a segmentation-based approach to understanding behavioural change and the communication of behavioural change theories to policy makers within DEFRA (see evidence **item #5**). As an expert advisor to Brook Lyndhurst (an independent research and strategy consultancy focusing on sustainability), Barr also contributed to a further DEFRA-funded project (Exploring Catalyst Behaviours, 2009) in which he advised on ways of using policy to promote behavioural change across different sites of practice, research that was subsequently used in a summary report that emphasised the importance of focusing on behaviours that share similar domains of practice, such as recycling and re-use of materials in the domestic context (DEFRA, 2011 – evidence **item #6**).

The research has also been used to promote innovation in social marketing business practices through developing an innovative community of practice (consisting of major social marketing businesses, including, Strategic Social Marketing, Hyder Consulting, CAG Consultants and Uscreates) to discuss the use of new social media and communications technology for the development of behavioural change products. Working with one of these businesses (Uscreates) and key stakeholders from the UK travel industry (including Virgin Trains, Snowcarbon, Loco2, Seat 61, Travel Foundation and Green Traveller), Barr, Shaw, and Gilg **co-designed a new mobile application, Trainaway**, to promote and inform consumers about the availability of low-carbon travel options (Uscreates, 2012a; 2012b – evidence **items #7 and 8**), with the aim of discouraging and reducing the number of short-haul flights taken within the EU. In so doing, this innovation has demonstrated the influence of the research in the **development of a new product**, an impact that has been corroborated by written correspondence from Uscreates (see evidence **item #9**). Furthermore, and as a result of this work, Barr was invited to address Scottish Government analysts and policy makers to discuss policy implications of the work and the low-carbon travel options product (evidence **item #9**). These activities have been supported by funding from the ESRC's Business Voucher Scheme and an ESRC follow-on grant for Barr and Shaw (2011-12).

Finally, research funded by DEFRA and the British Academy has been cited in many popular media outlets within the UK and internationally, including, The Telegraph, The Age (Australian newspaper), and Phys.org, a popular US science website. Additionally, three articles in very significant media outlets (2008-2010) have **stimulated public debate** through challenging modes of thought (evidence **item #10**). This is demonstrated through **online debate** resulting from articles in The Guardian ('Green idealists fail to make grade, say study' – 132 comments), The New York Times ('Jet-Setting Greens' – 57 comments) and Mother Jones, a popular US magazine ('Flying's moral dilemma: your family or your climate?' – 55 comments). Barr (2011) discusses the impact of

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the online discussion in the Guardian, examining the impact of this article outside of an academic context. These examples provide a clear demonstration of impact on individuals on an international scale.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

#1. DEFRA, 2006. Targeting Specific Lifestyle Groups. Behaviour Change: a series of practical guides for policy makers and practitioners (DEFRA, London).

#2. Darnton, A. and Sharp, V. 2006a. Segmenting for Sustainability Report 1: Commentary (Andrew Darnton Associates for The Social Marketing Practice).

#3. Darnton, A. and Sharp, V. 2006b. Segmenting for Sustainability Report 1: Supporting Evidence (Andrew Darnton Associates for The Social Marketing Practice).

#4. DEFRA, 2008. A Framework for Environmental Behaviours (DEFRA, London). See Appendix K.

#5. DEFRA. 2012. Letter corroborating the continuing impact of the research on DEFRA policy.

#6. DEFRA, 2011. Exploring Catalyst Behaviours: summary report (DEFRA, London)

#7. Uscreates, 2012a. Co-design Workshop: reducing short-haul air travel. Summary slides of a workshop held with UK travel industry representatives, July 2012 (Uscreates, London).

#8. Uscreates. 2012b. Letter corroborating impact relating to design of a mobile application *Trainaway* for green travel.

#9. Letter of invitation to a meeting with the Environment Social Research Team of The Scottish Government.

#10. Media coverage and debates: Mother Jones. 31st May 2010. 'Jet Blues – Flying's moral dilemma: your family or your climate?'; The Guardian. 24th September 2008. 'Green idealists fail to make grade, says study'; The New York Times (Tierney Lab Blog). 29th September 2008. 'Jet-Setting Greens'.