

Chapter 7

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE- INFLUENCING TRAVEL DEMAND THROUGH SOCIAL MARKETING

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INTRODUCTION - NO SMOKE WITHOUT IRE

A remarkable thing happened on 1 July 2007. The ban on smoking in public places in England came into force without any obvious fuss or bother. The pro-smoking organisation FOREST held a "Freedom Dinner" at London's Savoy Hotel on the eve of the ban to express their opposition. But apart from this low-key protest, the ban attracted almost no adverse publicity.

The ban on smoking in public spaces marked the culmination of over 30 years coordinated and sustained efforts by public agencies to change behaviour in relation to smoking. The initial focus of these efforts was to address the behaviour of smokers to reduce harm to themselves, given the growing evidence of a link between smoking and a wide range of avoidable illness and early deaths. Attention subsequently moved to addressing the behaviour of smokers in order to reduce harm to other people, in the light of growing evidence of the dangers of passive smoking.

These efforts have been remarkably successful. The proportion of people smoking in the population has fallen from 45% in 1974 to 25% in 2004. This reduction has not been uniform across the population. Both men and women in manual occupations, for example, are 50% more likely to smoke than those in non-manual occupations. But overall, the clear public policy focus on reducing harm due to tobacco use has produced impressive results.

The lack of fuss regarding the ban on public smoking suggests that as well as a change in behaviour, there has been a significant shift in public attitudes to smoking. Groups of smokers huddled outside office doorways, pubs and restaurants are one sign of the broad acceptance that it is unreasonable for smokers to impose their habit on others. And the change in

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behaviour and attitudes are clearly linked. The growing unacceptability of smoking increases the incentive to give up, thereby reducing the number of people still smoking and so on.

The campaign to reduce smoking has been led by national governments of both political parties and a range of public agencies. National politicians, academics, thinktanks and others are increasingly interested in how far similar campaigns can be used to address other social policy challenges, from childhood obesity to climate change. Transport is not immune from this trend. Concerns about the environmental and other impacts of growing mobility are prompting questions about how far it is possible to encourage people to adopt more sustainable patterns of travel.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CAMPAIGNS TO CUT SMOKING

It is important to understand the attributes of the efforts to reduce smoking to establish how far these could apply to other efforts to encourage what the Royal Society of Arts has characterised as "pro-social behaviour".

First, there is a clear and long-established scientific consensus regarding the harmful consequences of current behaviour (illness/premature deaths due to smoking); the benefits of changed behaviour (reduced illness/premature deaths); and the nature of the behaviour change required (reduced levels of smoking in the population and/or switching to less harmful behaviour via lower tar cigarettes).

Second, smoking cessation has not been a party political issue. There has been a clear commitment by governments of all persuasions to encourage the desired behaviour change and an agreement that government (and its agencies) has a leading role to play in achieving this aim.

Third, a multi-dimensional approach has been adopted, using all the tools in the public policy toolkit. This has included price (via increased taxes on tobacco products); regulation (eg mandatory and increasingly lurid health warnings on tobacco products); information and promotions (public awareness campaigns in a number of media); help/advice (counselling and helplines); and "exit" options (offer of free nicotine patches on the NHS).

Finally, these efforts have been sustained over an extended period, a product both of the consensus regarding the benefits of the desired behaviour change and the non-partisan nature of the politics surrounding smoking cessation.

The extent to which attempts to influence travel behaviour share these characteristics will be examined below. But first, it is useful to set the context in which this question is being addressed in London.

MEETING LONDON'S TRANSPORT CHALLENGE

London faces a significant transport challenge over the next 25-30 years. The city's population is forecast to grow by around 800,000 by 2025, with the number of jobs rising by almost a million over the same period. Ensuring that the transport system can meet the social and economic needs of a growing population and workforce is a major priority for the Mayor of

London, Transport for London and the London boroughs. Analysis forming part of Transport for London's *Transport 2025* project suggests that the total number of trips being made in London will rise by 4 million a day, from 27.2 million to 31.2 million, by 2025. The Mayor has made a commitment to reducing the total number of trips made by car over the same period. This represents a major challenge in terms of increased travel by tube, bus, rail, walking and cycling.

TfL's *Transport 2025* programme has three strategic objectives. These are:

- ❑ **Supporting economic development** - by improving public transport and managing the road network to reduce traffic congestion;
- ❑ **Tackling climate change and enhancing the environment** - by reducing CO₂ emissions, improving air quality, reducing noise and improving the urban environment; and
- ❑ **Improving social inclusion** - by making transport more accessible and secure for users.

These objectives make clear the need to adopt a strategic approach that supports London's continuing economic development while also tackling social exclusion and reducing transport's environmental impact. In particular, there is a growing focus on reducing CO₂ emissions from London's transport sector. Cars, motorcycles and road freight currently account for around three quarters of London transport's CO₂ emissions. The revisions to the Mayor's London Plan set a target of reducing London's total CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2050. While part of this will be achieved through reducing CO₂ emissions by residents and businesses, there will need to be a significant improvement in the environmental performance of London's transport system.

Transport for London is adopting a multi-strand approach to meeting the economic, social and environmental challenge facing transport in London. This has three main elements:

Renewal and efficiency

It is vital that London's stations, tunnels, roads, buses and trains are brought up to and maintained in a good state of repair. A central component of TfL's five year £10 bn Investment Programme is therefore the renewal and maintenance of the city's transport infrastructure and assets. In addition, it is essential that for any given level of capacity, the road network and public transport system operate as efficiently as possible. This includes use of technology for traffic management, provision of real-time information, implementation of the Traffic Management Act, better coordination of streetworks, improving signalling on the Underground and giving customers and passengers the information they need to make the best transport decisions.

Encouraging smarter travel

As suggested above, there is growing interest in the scope for influencing consumer behaviour to achieve public policy outcomes. Encouraging people to reduce energy or water use and to re-cycle more are examples, as are campaigns to increase levels of physical activity or eat more fruit and veg. A similar issue arises in relation to transport, i.e. whether and how it is possible to influence people's travel behaviour to reduce the "transport intensity" and environmental impacts of any given level of economic activity. TfL is engaged on a major programme of this sort as part of its wider investment and operational improvements, the details of which are explored below.

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Providing new capacity

It is vital that London's transport system is brought up to a good state of repair and that it operates at maximum efficiency. But even if these goals are achieved, supporting London's continued economic growth and reducing social exclusion will require a substantial increase in transport capacity. As mentioned above, the objective of reducing the absolute number of car journeys by 2025 means that this increase in capacity will need to focus on the public transport network, walking and cycling. Major capital projects such as Crossrail and improvements to the Underground and Overground rail networks are vital. These will need to be accompanied by continued improvements to the bus network and increased opportunities for safe and convenient walking and cycling trips.

CAN WE CHANGE TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR? YES WE CAN!

Uniquely among world cities, London has achieved a 4% modal shift from private vehicles to public transport, walking and cycling between 1999 and 2005. This represents a major change in behaviour. The reasons for this change in behaviour bear interesting comparison with those underlying the change in behaviour relating to smoking outlined above. These include:

- a reasonable degree of consensus regarding the transport challenges facing London (e.g. congestion, poor air quality, unreliability due to historic under-investment) and the solutions (e.g. sustained investment in public transport, efforts to improve the reliability and safety of the transport system);
- a clear priority given to tackling these problems, including introduction of the Congestion Charge, creation of a £10bn Investment Programme, significant investment in the Bus network and increased opportunities for walking and cycling;
- use of a range of complementary policy and operational interventions over an extended period. These have included investment in both infrastructure (e.g. DLR extensions) and operational improvements (e.g. bus service improvements); pricing (e.g. the congestion charge, free bus travel for under 16s); regulation (e.g. licensing of private hire vehicles and drivers); information and marketing (e.g. road safety campaigns, smarter travel measures); use of new technology (e.g. Oyster); and changes in priority in the use of street space (e.g. extension of the bus lanes network, part-pedestrianisation of Trafalgar Square).

The scale of the challenges facing London's transport system make it vital to continue to use the full mix of available policy, investment and operational tools. But what role does promoting smarter travel via the use of social marketing have in this mix?

TfL has one of the largest smarter travel programmes in Europe, if not the world. This programme works with and supports other programmes across the organisation to support and enable travel behaviour change. The overall aim of the TDM programme is to make London a better place through smarter travel, in particular by encouraging and enabling people to:

- Travel less and/or less far;
- Travel by public transport, walking or cycling rather than by car where appropriate;
- Travel on foot or by bicycle rather than by public transport where appropriate;

- Travel outside the most congested parts of the road network and the public transport system where possible in term of location and/or time of day; and
- Adopt more sustainable patterns of car ownership and use.

To achieve these objectives, TfL's smarter travel programme is divided into a number of workstreams. These are:

- School Travel Planning: Working with schools and boroughs to adopt and implement school travel plans to help reduce use of the private car for the school run;
- Workplace Travel Planning: Working with employers and other institutions (e.g. NHS trusts) to develop workplace travel plans to reduce car use and encourage more sustainable patterns of travel amongst both employees and customers;
- Personalised Travel Planning: Engaging with individual households to identify current patterns and explore the potential for more sustainable travel, e.g. replacing short car trips with walking/cycling;
- Travel Awareness: Marketing and information campaigns to raise awareness of the economic and health benefits of more sustainable travel;
- Sutton Town Centre Pilot: A three-year project in the London Borough of Sutton involving all the workstreams identified above;
- Car Clubs: Removing market barriers to the development and uptake of car club membership in London;
- Building travel plans into new developments: using the development control process to include the adoption of a travel plan as a condition of planning permission for major new developments; and
- Green Driving: Campaigns to encourage the uptake of more fuel-efficient vehicles, new technology and more efficient patterns of driving.

The TfL programme has achieved some important results. In 2006/7 these included:

- adoption of over 500 new School Travel Plans, with the result that over half the schools in London now have a travel plan;
- reported average reductions in car use for school travel of 5-6%;
- 57 firms with over 250,000 employees signing up to deliver Workplace Travel Plans;
- assessment of 40 major development proposals by TfL and resulting adoption of travel plans, in addition to over 500 travel plans being secured by boroughs supported by TfL funding; and
- nearly 60,000 households contacted through Personalised Travel Planning.

Estimates vary as to the potential impact of smarter travel measures on travel behaviour. Research commissioned by the Department for Transport indicated that the potential provided by a significant expansion of smarter travel measures could be:

- A reduction in urban peak and off-peak traffic of around 20% and 13% respectively;
- A reduction of non-urban peak and off-peak traffic of 14% and 7% respectively; and
- A nationwide reduction in all traffic of about 11% [1].

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Smarter travel measures need to be seen as one element in the wider range of policy, investment and operational interventions being undertaken by TfL in meeting London's transport challenge. It is useful to map these interventions in order to understand how they impact on and influence travel behaviour, both on their own and in combination. This can be done on two dimensions.

The first dimension relates to whether the interventions are "hard" or "soft", ie whether they relate to changes in the physical conditions for travel or whether they seek to influence other aspects of the people's travel choices, such as price or information. For example, the construction of a new DLR line such as the recent extension to City Airport can be characterised as a "hard" intervention, in the sense that it is a new piece of infrastructure. By contrast, a marketing campaign to promote cycling or reduce road casualties is a "soft" intervention.

The second dimension relates to whether the intervention is a "carrot" or a "stick", ie whether it seeks to encourage or discourage certain behaviours. Free travel for under-16s on London's buses provides a positive incentive for bus use in that group. Introduction of a bus lane on the other hand restricts the use of that part of the carriageway by private cars.

Combining these two dimensions creates the matrix set out in Figure 7.1.

Soft	Congestion Charging	Under 16s go free on buses Travel Awareness Campaigns
	Parking Restrictions	DLR Extensions New Bus Services
Hard	Pedestrianisation	
	Stick	Carrot

Figure 7.1 Mapping Different Transport Interventions

The experience of smoking cessation campaigns cited above suggests that the use of one or more interventions in combination will produce greater change in behaviour than any used on their own. The example of Congestion Charging confirms this. A change in the price facing people driving into the central zone during operational hours (i.e. a charge for something that had previously been free) was accompanied by the provision of reliable alternatives (e.g. bus service improvements) and widespread marketing and advertising information campaigns.

There is evidence that the impact of smarter travel measures on travel behaviour is similarly increased if they are used in combination with other interventions rather than on their own.

Research by Socialdata in Germany, for example, suggests that improvements to rail services accompanied by smarter travel campaigns produce more than double the increase in rail usage than service improvements on their own.

TAKING SMARTER TRAVEL FORWARD

The evidence suggests that smarter travel measures based on social marketing techniques have an important role to play as part of wider, integrated efforts to change travel behaviour. TfL is now taking forward its existing smarter travel programme in a number of ways. These include:

- ❑ **Understanding consumer behaviour and travel behaviour:** In order to maximise the benefits of smarter travel measures, these need to be based on the best available understanding of how consumers make consumption decisions. This applies to consumer behaviour in general and to travel behaviour specifically. Key insights from both the private and public sectors and from disciplines such as marketing, social psychology, sociology and anthropology need to be pressed into service to develop the best possible understanding of how people make travel decisions and how these can be positively influenced.
- ❑ **Focusing efforts on key people and places:** With resources inevitably limited, it is vital to focus effort on those people, cohorts and locations where changes in behaviour are most likely to occur. This means, for example, targeting efforts to increase the uptake of cycling on groups in the population who are already more prone to cycle than the average consumer. It also means focusing smarter measures on places where there are other things going on in relation to transport, such as the opening of a new railway line or an improved bus service.
- ❑ **Integrating with wider operational and investment activities:** TfL is engaged on a major, long-term programme of continued improvements to London's transport system. It is vital that its smarter travel programme is used to complement this programme. This could mean using smarter travel measures to help relieve congestion on particular parts of the road or rail network. Or it could mean integrating smarter travel measures as part of wider marketing campaigns supporting new transport services.
- ❑ **Developing robust metrics:** In order to compete on an equal footing with more traditional approaches to transport planning, those involved in smarter travel measures need to develop robust metrics of their activities and their outcomes. This includes, for example, close monitoring of the number of London employers at different stages the development of workplace travel plans and the changes in employee travel that result. TfL's innovative i-trace monitoring database is a key part of this process.

IS MOVING LIKE SMOKING? A REALITY CHECK

The above analysis suggests some parallels between the experience of smoking cessation campaigns and those aimed at encouraging more sustainable patterns of travel, including the use of smarter travel measures. But this analogy should not be pushed too far. There are some important differences between smoking and moving that suggest a degree of caution in drawing comparisons between these two policy areas.

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Firstly, while many (though by no means all) smokers enjoy their habit, it is difficult to characterise smoking per se as a social good. Mobility, on the other hand, is generally regarded as a social good. That mobility rises in line with both household and national income is one indicator of this. Mobility is generally seen as a "good thing" and something that should be provided for in the most economically and environmentally efficient way. The challenge underlying TfL's *Transport 2025* programme is how to provide for the increased movement arising from the growth in London's population and jobs while meeting wider social and environmental goals.

Secondly, there is a clear and direct relationship between smoking and harm to yourself and others. If you smoke, there is a high and predictable risk that you (or someone near you) will get seriously ill or die prematurely. The relationship between mobility and either personal or social harm is more complex. In the case of climate change, for example, the link between current travel decisions and future risks to the global environment are seen by many as diffuse and indirect. This is one reason for emphasising the personal benefits of adopting more sustainable patterns of travel when trying to influence travel behaviour (e.g. the health benefits of walking rather than driving for short trips).

Thirdly, there are many more technical "fixes" for the adverse consequences of increased mobility than is the case for smoking. New vehicle technology, smarter fuels, telematics and "smart" fleet management all have a part to play. Even low tar cigarettes will get you in the end.

Despite these differences, however, comfort can be taken from the success of efforts to reduce the harm due to smoking when considering how to manage the consequences of rising mobility. The key issues are:

- ❑ A combination of different interventions is likely to have a larger impact on consumer behaviour than any given intervention on its own;
- ❑ The greater the degree of agreement over the behavioural outcomes being sought, the greater the likelihood of the interventions being successful;
- ❑ The greater the understanding of the consumers whose behaviour is being influenced, the more likely the interventions are to succeed;
- ❑ Continued commitment over time to achieving a set of desired outcomes and to use of the measures needed to achieving them, is vital; and
- ❑ Promotion of smarter travel using social marketing techniques is a very important part of the policy mix, but this needs to be undertaken as part of a wider programme.

REFERENCES

I Smarter Choices - Changing the Way we Travel, Goodwin, Cairns et al, 2005