The case for improving energy consumption information

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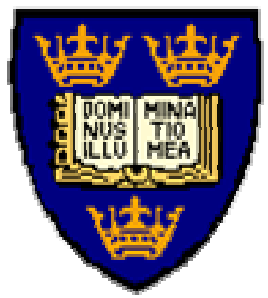


Why improve information?

- control of energy use is only possible with accurate information
- clear information promotes trust between utility and customer
- joint effort between producers and consumers to reduce demand, for a sustainable society

Historic feedback and savings

Savings demonstrated by studies (all incomes), 1975-2001

Fuel savings (%)	**Billing/similar**	**Direct**
20% +		3
10 - 14%	1	5
5 - 9%	2	6
0 - 4%	3	2
Unknown	2	

[Comparative feedback – very few figures. Perhaps 5% savings]

Effective information – *requirements* and possibilities

- *accuracy* – basis in real meter-readings
- *frequency,* especially for heating fuel
- *specificity* – the customer's own circumstances
- historic feedback – compare with self over time
- comparative feedback – compare with similar users
- disaggregation of consumption by end-use
- disclosure – fuel sources, environmental impact

‘The consumer’ can be …

- a traditionalist – energy is a service, not a product
- a customer – more demanding, interested in new products and services at competitive prices
- a citizen – energy consumption has social, strategic and environmental aspects to be considered and discussed
- a co-provider – *produces* energy as well as consuming

(see van Vliet, 2004)

UK survey: given the choice of fuel mix and the information …

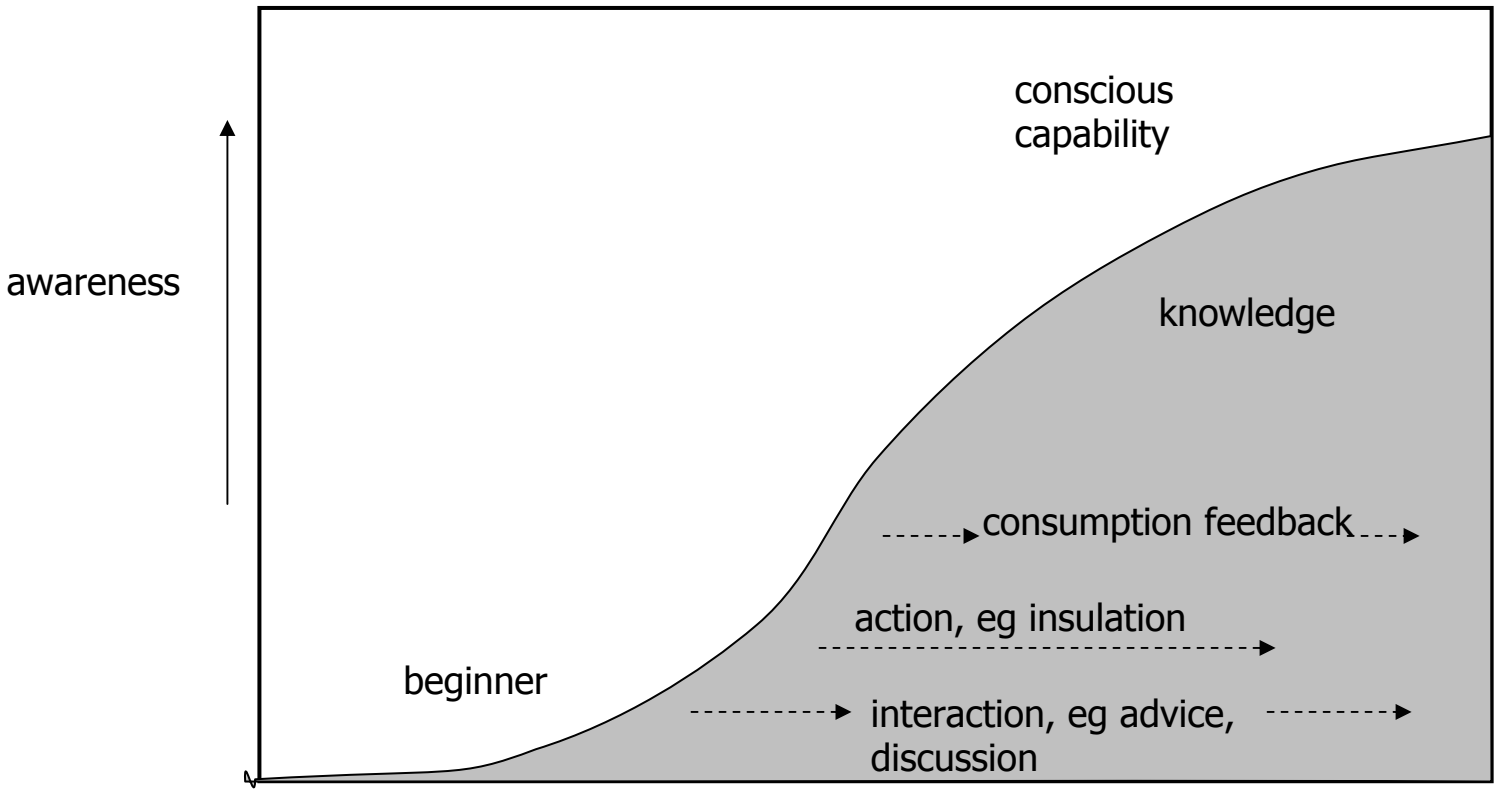
- 57% would buy the cheapest electricity on offer
- 74% would choose low levels of nuclear waste
- 87% would choose low impact on climate change and no nuclear waste
- 13% don't care about environmental impact of their electricity
- 50% don't want to buy imported electricity

Source: telephone survey data, 4CE project.
http://www.electricitylabels.com/project.html

Suppliers are a significant source of energy information: figures from Oxfordshire householders who remembered a single source of information

Information Source	Number of householders
Fuel supplier	26
Energy Label	20
Installer/heating engineer	9
Friend	6
TV	6
In-home adviser	2
Other adviser	2
Other source	2
Total	**73**

A 'conscious capability' model: three related and reinforcing ways of learning about energy



One thing leads to another: energy-related plans and alterations per household vs no. of information/advice sources

No of sources	Alterations, past 6 yrs	All alterations	Plans for next 2 yrs	All plans	% planning solar thermal panels
0 (n=110)	0.5	1.8	0.4	0.9	6
1 (n= 73)	0.8	2.5	0.4	1.1	19
2 (n= 25)	0.7	2.7	0.5	1.1	28
3+ (n= 24)	1.6	3.7	0.7	1.6	50

Low incomes, literacy and numeracy issues

- 14% of UK households use prepayment meters
- 15% of adults in the UK report problems with basic skills[1]
- low-level skills = low confidence, trust and participation[1]
- adults on benefits 5 x as likely to have low literacy as those not on benefits[2]
- 75% from linguistic minorities do not have enough English to deal with everyday life[3]

[1] Bynner and Parsons, 1997; [2] Parsons and Bynner, 1999; [3] Carr-Hill et al, 1996. All published by the Basic Skills Agency

Synergies

- Connect advice with billing history and meter-reading
- Possible synergies between billing and tariffs
- Online billing = linkage of information
- Annual energy reports can provide disclosure + feedback + offers of home audits & advice + offers on insulation and appliances