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Social Research Institute

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Ofgem
Consumer First Panel

RESEARCH TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFGEM'S RETAIL MARKET REVIEW CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

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Contents

Introduction

In September 2013, Ipsos MORI ran the third and final wave of this year's Consumer First Panel on behalf of Ofgem. The second half of each workshop focussed on the development of Ofgem's forthcoming Retail Market Review consumer engagement campaign.[1]

Ofgem's RMR consumer engagement campaign, set to launch in 2014, will aim to

- inform consumers about key changes to the energy market that are designed to make it simpler, clearer and fairer, and
- prompt consumers to engage with the energy market.

Panel research was conducted to gather feedback on ten possible statements that can inform the campaign's development. This report outlines the findings from the analysis of spontaneous and considered views to ten potential statements.

About the Consumer First Panel

Ofgem carries out a wide range of research with consumers to understand their views and behaviour, and to include their voice in the regulatory policy making process. Since 2007, it has run the Consumer First Panel. The Panel consists of around 100 domestic consumers who meet 3-4 times a year to discuss issues relating to the energy market. Over the year Panellists build their knowledge and understanding of energy related issues, and offer Ofgem their views to help inform key policy decisions. Panel participants are fully refreshed every year.

[1] Research findings from the first half of each workshop will feed into Ofgem's review of Guaranteed and Overall Standards of Performance (GOSP), and are published separately.

Background

Retail Market Review (RMR) – Ofgem's RMR has led to it introducing a package of consumer-centred reforms that aim to create a simpler, clearer and fairer energy market. It is hoped the reforms will encourage and enable more consumers to secure a better deal, and that this in turn will increase the competitive pressure on energy suppliers to deliver good customer service at efficient cost.

The RMR aims to make the market:

Simpler: by making it easier to compare tariffs by limiting the numbers suppliers can offer, and by simplifying and standardising both tariffs and any discounts that are offered.

Clearer: by ensuring consumers are provided with better information by improving communications from the supplier such as bills and annual statements to ensure they include personalised and helpful information to use when comparing tariffs.

Fairer: ensuring suppliers treat consumers fairly by introducing Standards of Conduct requiring suppliers to act fairly when they deal with consumers.

Objectives

Ofgem wants to ensure that consumers are made aware of these changes and are encouraged to review their energy options. To achieve this it believes a consumer engagement campaign using a range of communications channels is required.

In this context the research objectives were:

- To test a number of early draft campaign messages to understand and explore
    - whether particular messages/words/phrases are more impactful and/or motivational than others?
    - what, if anything, do consumers say they would do if they received these messages?
    - the importance of which organisations are behind the messages?
- To gather views or suggestions on what the campaign might be called.

Findings from this research will be made available to any appointed communications and creative agencies that assist Ofgem in further developing and delivering the campaign.

Approach

A qualitative approach was considered the best way to allow participants to assess and deliberate on the messages. Deliberation allows participants the freedom to express the issues that are salient to them and develop their views in the light of discussion.

In September 2013, workshops were conducted with members of the Consumer First Panel, which is made up of a broadly representative cross-section of GB energy consumers. These were conducted in six different locations and were three hours long, 90 minutes of which was devoted to discussion of Ofgem's RMR Communications Campaign. This allowed Panellists enough time to express their initial impressions of each message, and consider what impact, if any, they might have on their engagement.

A range of approaches were used to examine the potential effect of each statement on energy consumers, namely:

Spontaneous and considered reaction: Panellists were presented with each message and then asked which were most attention grabbing. During the workshops, Panellists were encouraged to think about how they might react if they saw each statement in a real communications campaign.

Individually choose top 3 that are most impactful: After it was explained that the messages are part of the development of a communications campaign, which Ofgem hopes will engage consumers in the energy market, Panellists were asked to review all messages and decide which three would be most likely to prompt them to engage.

Possible campaign names: At the end of the workshop Panellists were shown Ofgem's suggested campaign names and asked to decide which one most effectively communicated Ofgem's RMR work, and was attention grabbing and might stimulate interest. Panellists could also suggest an alternative campaign name if they disliked Ofgem's initial suggestions.

Sampling and re-contact

The Panel workshops involved 93 Panellists from different backgrounds across six locations (Birmingham, Dundee, London, Morpeth, Southampton and Wrexham). All Panellists had taken part in the previous round of workshops in January or April, and most had taken part in both.

Panellists were recruited to broadly reflect the adult population of Great Britain, taking into account a number of key criteria that are likely to influence their views on the most salient issues. All participants were solely or jointly responsible for their household's energy bills.

In addition, the following recruitment variables were used:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic group (SEG)
- Housing tenure
- Fuel poverty
- Long-term condition/disability
- Supplier
- Electricity only vs. gas and electricity
- Payment type
- Employment status
- Family status
- Urban/rural

Sampling and re-contact (2)

In order to ensure Panellists broadly reflected energy consumers in Great Britain, the quotas set within these variables corresponded to national demographic figures derived from the 2011 Census figures and other relevant data sources. It was necessary to up-weight some quotas to ensure the following groups were represented sufficiently for sub-group analysis:

Ethnicity – black and ethnic minorities (BME) were up-weighted to ensure that these groups were represented in each workshop location.

Rural – over-recruiting those living in rural areas, including those living off the gas network to ensure we could capture their views, as they can often have different experiences to those living in urban locations.

Tenure – over-representing those living in social and privately rented accommodation, as they can often have different experiences to those who own their properties.

Understanding potential effect on different consumers

To ascertain the potential impact of each message on different energy consumers, descriptions were read out of three types of energy consumer, and Panellists were asked to position themselves along a 'spectrum'. This was supplemented by…

- Researcher's knowledge of Panellists based on things they said in previous sessions, and
- Probes to encourage participants to join the appropriate group: 'hands up who knows what tariff they are on?'

Each segmented group (outlined below) was assigned a researcher who asked for initial reactions to each statement, and asked Panellists to outline what effect, if any, if they thought each message would have on them if they saw it outside the workshop. This helps Ofgem understand which messages are mostly likely to prompt engagement amongst customers with different levels of engagement currently.

Engaged group

- Mix of backgrounds e.g. age, ethnicity, gender
- Typically higher social grade
- Confident making purchasing decisions

Non-engaged group

- The largest group in each location
- All demographics
- "Dabbled" in the market but see little incentive to engage
- "Low hanging fruit" as possibly easier than disengaged to shift up into the engaged group

Disengaged group

- Typically lower social grades
- Low trust but also low confidence in their ability to navigate the market
- Almost all had not switched tariff or supplier in previous two years

Section 1

Key findings

This section summarises key findings revealed through analysis of initial and considered reaction to each message

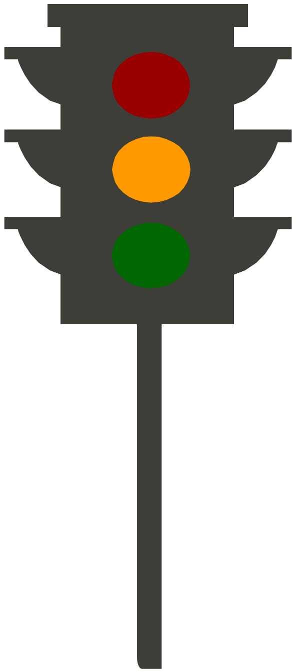
The ten messages tested during Panel workshops

All messages were developed and categorised by a communications expert, in collaboration with Ofgem. Across all workshop locations the order in which messages were presented was rotated to avoid order bias.

Message wording	Message category
1. Are you paying too much for your gas and electricity? 2. Could you save money on your gas and electricity?	**Savings messages**
3. Last year 000s *[insert region]** households successfully switched their gas and electricity suppliers *(*region in which workshop held)* 4. Mary's next door neighbour pays less for her gas and electricity	**Behaviour change messages**
5. Compare energy with confidence 6. The easy guide to comparing your gas and electricity 7. How often do you look for better gas and electricity tariffs? 8. Too difficult to compare your energy tariff? When was the last time you checked? 9. Simpler, clearer, fairer…we've made changes to the energy market 10. The energy market has changed, isn't it time you took control of your gas and electricity?	**Market improvement messages**

Each statement assigned a traffic-light rating

During analysis each potential message was assigned a traffic-light rating based on findings from the 'top three' exercise (i.e. spontaneous reaction). The traffic-light rating shows Ofgem at a glance how attention grabbing each statement is for different types of energy consumer.



In section 2 of this report, statements are ordered based on popularity among non-engaged consumers. Ipsos MORI suggests this group may be the campaign's key audience.

While the rating is helpful to illustrate reaction to potential messages, further consumer research could help with further message development.

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international standard for Market Research, ISO20252:2006

Key findings for different consumer types

Engaged

- This group were likely to ‘switch off’ if they felt the message was not relevant to them (i.e. because they are already engaging with the market).
- They often want more information about ‘change to market’ messages e.g. “what sort of change?” They are sceptical about change but more positive about current market than other segments, typically saying they don’t pay too much.
- Tested messages potentially will have limited impact among this group, but perhaps this is less of a concern to Ofgem as long as messages don’t lead them to disengage.

Non-Engaged

- This group have the potential to engage. After hearing a message they often want instructions about what their next step should be.
- Often they want extra information about a change. However, they are highly sceptical about what the change encompasses.
- Negative or challenging messages often a turn off as their confidence is easily deflated.
- They ask for ‘facts’ but can be critical and sceptical when they are given (e.g. doubtful about regional switching figure). Specifically, this group perceived figures as “spin” or “gloss”.

Disengaged

- Again, these customers are highly sceptical that anything will change for the better, but welcome it in principle.
- They will only believe change has occurred when they see improvements.
- They were turned off when negative language is used, or when a rhetorical question elicited a negative response.
- They reacted well to positive language.

Key findings on the message categories (1)

The findings summarised below helps Ofgem understand what kinds of messages are most likely to stimulate interest among energy consumers.

Savings messages

Perceptions and/or experience of the market diminish the persuasiveness of these messages for all but the engaged. The belief that suppliers are “much of a muchness” leads many to be sceptical of these messages. As a result, they need to see evidence of savings before they can be convinced switching is worthwhile.

When asked, the level of saving people required to make considering a switch worthwhile varied from £50 to £300 annually. The less engaged someone is, the more they would need to engage.

People struggle to see how numbers can be made relevant to them. Almost all disliked the numbers e.g. “The consumer in the “advert” must use less than energy than me”. Similarly, other research conducted on behalf of Ofgem has revealed how important it is that consumers believe information is relevant to their circumstances.[2]

[2] Consumer Views on Tariff Comparison Rates – Findings from the Ofgem Consumer First Panel and new participants: Fourth workshops (held in August 2012)

Key findings on the message categories (2)

Behaviour change messages

These seemed to be the least salient to consumers as they raised too many questions: either Panellists could not see relevance (e.g. see below message about 'Mary') or were sceptical about the information (e.g. regional switching figures). However, behavioural theory suggests if these messages work it might be on a subconscious/unconscious level and therefore you would not necessarily identify it in a research setting.[3]

Market improvement messages

These have the potential to encourage consumers to at least think about their energy options, but only if consumers can see evidence and details (for instance on the communication channel itself) of potential market improvements. Some suggested that the communications campaign should explain to consumers (in layman's terms) that RMR should make it easier for consumers to make tariff comparisons and identify where savings can be made as they felt this would make increase the likelihood of them engaging.

[3] For example, see Daniel Kahneman (2012) Thinking, Fast and Slow. In his book Kahneman argues that human brain function is underpinned by a dual process: System 1 and 2. He suggests that under System 1, people's mode of thought is fast, automatic and impressionistic. System 2 thought tends to be triggered where people are invited to rationalise a question or problem. People in a research setting are likely to be answering questions with System 2 thinking, whereas when faced with messages outside a research environment System 1 thinking will also influence behaviour. Behaviour change messages are thought to impact more strongly on System 1 rather than System 2 thinking, and consequently their impact is unlikely to be accurately established in a research environment.

Key findings on the message wording

Rhetorical questions (e.g. are you paying too much for your gas and electricity?) potentially backfire for less engaged consumers as their 'answer' affirms their negative views of the market.

Where messages had **two clauses or two sentences** (e.g. too difficult to compare your energy tariff? When was the last time you checked?), the less engaged tended to react to one or the other and did not engage with the overall message.

Many customers **misunderstood the 'change' message** (e.g. the energy market has changed, isn't it time you took control of your gas and electricity?) and think it will result in lower (or higher) prices; while others were turned off by its ambiguity. Change alone is therefore not perceived to be a good thing.

Some consumers had a literal interpretation of certain message wording. Consumers presume several of the messages heralded the launch of **independently administered tariff comparison tools** (e.g. the easy guide to comparing your gas and electricity) and would welcome this. Further message development will need to consider the potential impact on consumer expectations.

Given the lack of trust in the energy market **Ofgem** is often **viewed as best placed to deliver** the messages. Some would value hearing from suppliers themselves, with Ofgem's backing. However, others said they distrust messages from suppliers.

Section 2

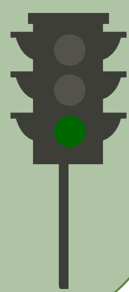
Reaction to Ofgem's RMR messages

This section examines the extent to which each statement might impact on the attitudes and behaviours of different types of energy consumers

The easy guide to comparing your gas and electricity

Very popular, but most presumed there would be an actual "how to" guide, either physical or digital.

Concern that easy is not the same as clear, and in "dumbing down" the guide could over simplify the process.

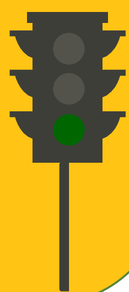



Engaged

As engaged i.e. presume it's a "how to" guide, but they also expect to be taken through switching process (e.g. independent advisor) or at least signposted to a better deal.

Presumption of the guide suggests a call to action.

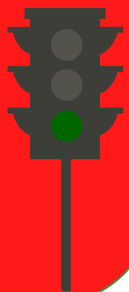
Some queried whether an easy guide could be easy enough to follow, and wanted to know who would write it.

Non-Engaged

As non-engaged, plus they wanted someone to take them through the process.

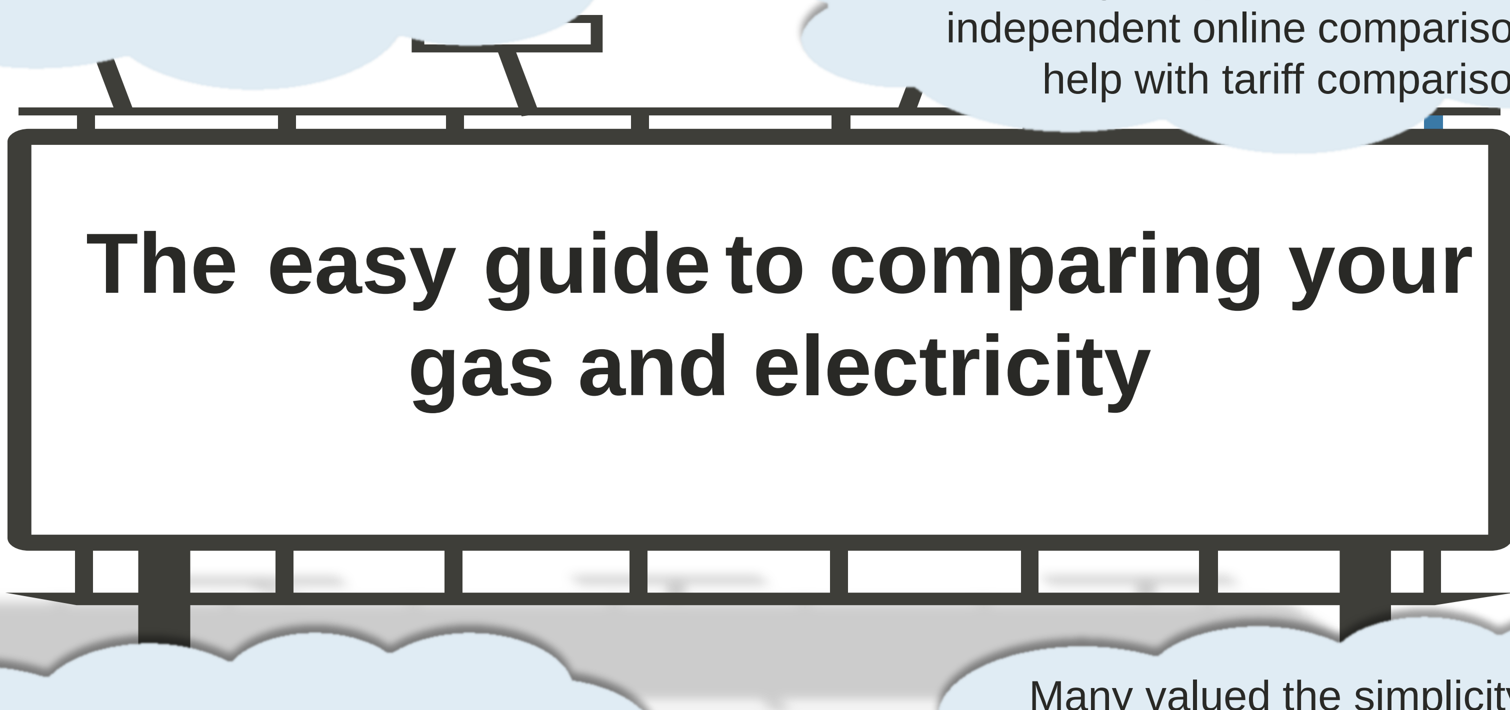
Some doubted a guide could be easy enough for them to understand.

Disengaged

‘Easy’ was salient to many. Resonated with those with poor experience and negative perception of the market.

Widespread appeal because most thought it was introducing an Ofgem guide **(i.e. easy guide)** to tariffs or bills or an independent online comparison tool to help with tariff comparisons.



Important that this **(i.e. easy guide)** came from Ofgem or another independent organisation. Consumers sceptical of information on ‘biased’ comparison sites.

Many valued the simplicity of the message. Others would want more information; in particular instructions on next steps / where to get the **‘easy guide’**.

Are you paying too much for your gas and electricity?

Many had this message in their top three.

Many liked the directness and brevity of the prompt.

A few said it was not memorable and so lacking as a marketing tool.

Eng.

A very popular message.

Valued the directness of the prompt and less accusatory than other messages.

Financial focus encouraged them to think about their tariff.

Although some frustrated that the message stopped short of offering a solution.

A few thought about supplier profits.

Non-Eng.

'Yes' or 'probably' were the common responses.

Valued the honesty.

Some answered 'I don't know' and wanted Ofgem or an independent body to tell them what they should be paying.

Some asked "What do I do next?"

Dis-Eng.

This work was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the international standard for Market Research, ISO20252:2006

Most people's first instinct was to answer the question.

In many 'top threes' but more criticism in discussion i.e. no solution offered.

It doesn't do enough to make them think or look as people need more information than is included on the statement at present.

Are you paying too much for your gas and electricity?

Some valued brevity and directness.

Huge variety in saving consumers wanted to see. From 10%-15% to 30%-50%. Others gave numeric values of £2, to £10s to £100s. But problem of average as seen as meaningless.

Recognition that with varied usage a specified level of saving would be misleading.

Simpler, clearer, fairer…we've made changes to the energy market

ofgem

Liked its positivity and welcomed change albeit strong scepticism.

Some presumed the changes would not be as substantive as they would like.

Curious about specifics of change but critical of vagueness.

Want more detail so could, at a glance, quickly decide if further action needed i.e. "is my tariff out of date?" Want signposting to find out more.

Eng.

Seen to be responding to consumer needs, but triggered follow-up questions:

- What changes?
- Will it be cheaper?
- Who is the message from?

Some want to be told what to do next.

Others sceptical and would need to 'see it to believe it'.

Non-Eng.

Widespread appeal.

It is what many said that consumers want to hear.

Question mark over call to action without evidence of change.

Confusion about change: it must be tariffs or a comparison tool or pricing?

Liked the brevity and positive tone.

Dis-Eng.

Ipsos

Simpler, clearer, fairer …we've made changes to the energy market

Hard to unpick but possible Panel effect may account for some of the resonance of **simpler, clearer, fairer** as these terms have been used in passing in previous Panel sessions.

Widespread appeal as said to be what consumers want to hear.

One of the most well-remembered across all locations.

'**Simple, clear, fair**' was suggested.

The '**we've**' was generally presumed to be Ofgem (given it was an Ofgem Panel). Most less likely to trust the message if came from suppliers.

Some speculated **changes** related to tariffs. Others expected an Ofgem (or other independent) comparison tool.

However, a minority presumed the message would come from suppliers and valued that the message was 'straight from the horse's mouth'. Some said they would value a supplier message co-sponsored by Ofgem or a consumer body.

Many want evidence of **change** before they could believe it.

The energy market has changed, isn't it time you took control of your gas and electricity?

Again many questioned its relevance.

"Control" was salient but only in the sense that it might encourage others rather than themselves.

The nature of 'the change' was too ambiguous for some.

It was not clear that change was for the better.

Eng.

A popular message.

It was seen as empowering as it challenged consumers to do something.

Liked its direct, 'positive', 'confident' wording.

However, many were unclear what 'taking control' meant in practice and wanted more information.

Non-Eng.

Dismissed because the idea of control was difficult to believe given perception of market and low confidence in making purchases.

Unless see evidence of change it is unconvincing.

Change appealed to some and they wanted more information.

Dis-Eng.

Don't have time to compare the market.

Seen as ambiguous. **<u>What has changed?</u>** Has it changed for the better? Will it get cheaper? Price hikes?

<u>Who changed it?</u>

The energy market has changed, isn't it time you took control of your gas and electricity?

Some felt it was long-winded.

Is it true? Many need proof due to poor perceptions / experiences.

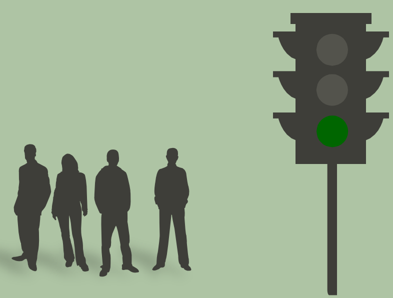
<u>'Control'</u> is emotive. Some felt empowered by the word. For disengaged end of spectrum it highlighted their feelings of a lack of control in the current market.

Many wanted a guide (either online or leaflet) as to **<u>how they could take control</u>**.

Could you save money on your gas and electricity?

Viewed positively by those who already do tariff comparison.

Some found it to be too generic "like the standard sales advert in every TV, paper, online…"



Eng.

Often in 'top three' as most spontaneously agreed with message.

Attention grabbing but effect diminished by the perception that potential savings are 'not worth the effort'.

Some liked the personal tone of the message.

Seen as a generic 'standard' message.

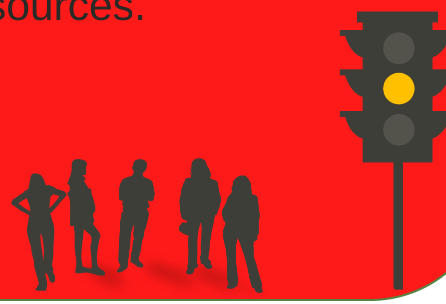
Non-Eng.

It made some think about their tariff.

Instinct to agree with the message may explain why rated relatively highly in the 'top three' exercise.

Many felt the 'could' was too passive: 'are they asking or telling?'

Many want guidance alongside the message – supplier and Ofgem mentioned as possible sources.



Dis-Eng.

Could you save money on your gas and electricity?

'Could' is seen as weak. 'Can' or 'will' seen as more convincing.

Directness of the **'you'** and **'your'** in the statement was a strength.

Some prefer positive **'save'** message over similar, but more negative, **'paying too much'** message.

Some said it'd be more impactful if **'could' and 'you'** were switched.

Some thought it was about energy efficiency.

Some would expect to see an Ofgem online comparison site.

Attention grabbing but impact is diminished due to the perception that possible savings are minimal.

Resonates with people who are "feeling the pinch" and looking to reduce household expenditure.

Some said it might be powerful if tagged to one of the messages about the market having changed.

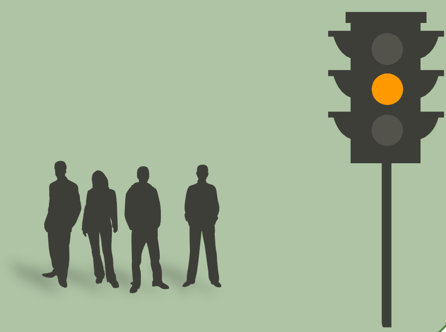
How often do you look for better gas and electricity tariffs?

Didn't see relevance (i.e. not target audience) so didn't engage with message.

Others said it affirmed their behaviour but nothing else.

Few chose it in their top three.

Eng.



Triggered the response of "rarely" due to perceived hassle.

Some liked its directness as it made them think of a possible saving.

Made some feel guilty about their apathy.

But need to know about next steps.

Non-Eng.

Most answered "never": because they feel they don't know where they should look or think that it's not worth it.

Turned off: patronised or belittled by the message.

Most felt it was not persuasive nor attention grabbing.

Dis-Eng.

How often do you look for better gas and electricity tariffs?

<u>'Often'</u> seen as irrelevant when some don't ever look.

Consumers wanted to know where and when they should **<u>look</u>** and wanted Ofgem to tell them.

Some saw **<u>'look for better'</u>** as a welcome challenge to the consumer.

The message disengaged people on fixed tariffs.

People across Ofgem's target audience (i.e. non and dis-engaged) responded 'never', 'rarely' to the rhetorical question. This tended to curtail engagement with the message.

Negative perceptions and poor experience in the market limit the persuasiveness of the message.

Too difficult to compare your energy tariff? When was the last time you checked?

Seldom in top 3s and critiqued during discussion.

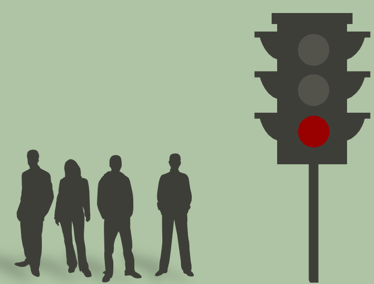
Dislike tone.

People felt chastised and said it was aggressive.

Suggestion that it created worry and doubt.

Some turned off because they don't think its difficult, and check regularly.

Eng.



Seen as a negative message.

'Difficult' was a turn off unless accompanied with 'we can help you do this by…'

Reinforces rather than challenges the belief that comparisons are difficult.

Liked that it recognises the difficulty of making tariff comparisons and for a few it did work as potential 'perception-buster'.

Non-Eng.

As non-engaged, plus most likely to answer rhetorical question with 'never', 'don't know how'.

Message should offer a solution to the 'don't know how' conundrum.

'Too difficult' seen as much valued empathy while others saw it as admitting defeat.

Dis-Eng.

Negative start. Some felt ‘defeated already’. Suggested improvement was posing it as a question **‘Is it too difficult…’**

Too long and confusing for some.

Disengaged people on fixed tariffs.

Too difficult to compare your energy tariff? When was the last time you checked?

Second statement is not persuasive enough, meaning the **‘difficult’** message is not sufficiently challenged.

Expect **guidance on how to compare**, or ideally a comparison tool.

Many reacted to either statement but not overall message. Those that did respond to message overall were more positive.

Mary’s next door neighbour pays less for her gas and electricity

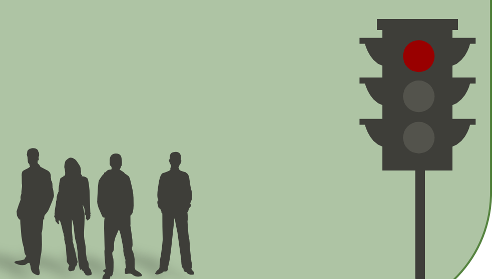
Spontaneous reactions were:
- Who is Mary (or her neighbour) and why should I care?
- Their usage is different to mine.

Struck a chord with those who described themselves as “competitive” consumers.

Disbelief – fairly sure they’ re on the best tariff for them.

Seen as overly convoluted.

Eng.



Spontaneous reactions as engaged, plus said it would be more impactful if it said ‘…and here’s how you can save too’.

Some found it attention grabbing and liked that it brought it down to the individual.

Was voted for more frequently than in other groups.

Non-Eng.

Disliked for similar reasons. Disbelief stemmed from very low trust. Some found it “gossipy”.

Some said it made them ask “why” but most presumed neighbour’s usage would be different and said they didn’t care.

Dis-Eng.

Seen as convoluted – why **Mary's neighbour** not Mary herself or 'your neighbour'.

Some answered as though Mary herself pays less.

One of the most well-remembered in all sessions.

One of the most unpopular messages. "It doesn't matter to me what Mary does".

Behavioral theory suggests this type of message works at the subconscious level so qualitative research might not be the best way to evaluate its potential effectiveness.

Compare energy with confidence

Generally positive reaction.

Though problem of perceived ambiguity; confusion over what it was selling.

The underlying principle (i.e. confidence) appealed.

Compared to other messages less ‘sales pitchy’.

Brevity also seen as a strength.

Eng.

Not seen as persuasive.

Without extra information and/or instruction, the message left people frustrated.

Valued for being simple and clear and liked the notion of becoming more confident.

Most felt it promised a lot but delivered little.

Non-Eng.

Confidence was the key word as it brought to the fore their own lack of it.

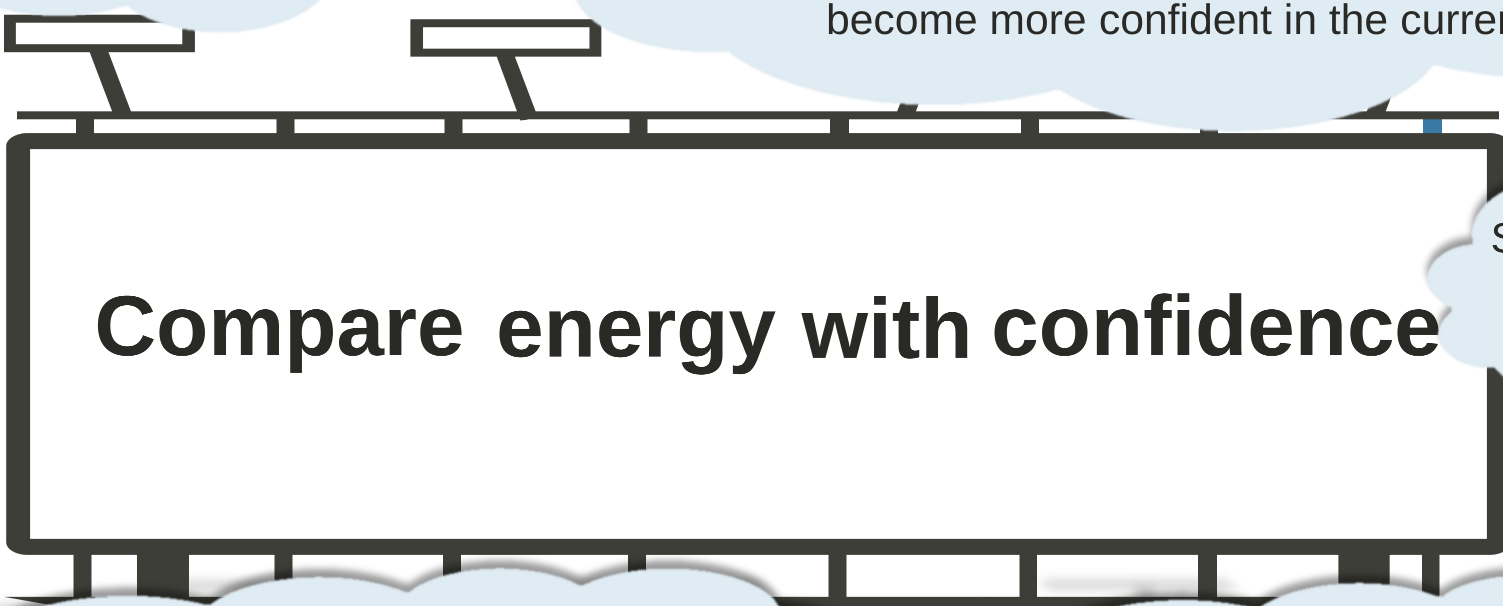
Some felt disengaged by this but others were interested to find out how to become more confident consumers.

Whereas some didn’t know what to think or do with this statement.

Dis-Eng.

‘Compare’ – want to be told how to compare, or what site to use.

Confidence was key to this message. Where people viewed it positively they were either confident already or wanted to become so. Some were disengaged by it because it highlights their own failings and they don’t believe they can become more confident in the current market.



Sounds like it comes from someone independent.

Very small number confused by energy. **What is being compared?** Renewables vs. non renewables. Suggested: ‘compare energy prices…’ or ‘compare tariffs…’

Simplicity was liked but others were confused about the point of the message.

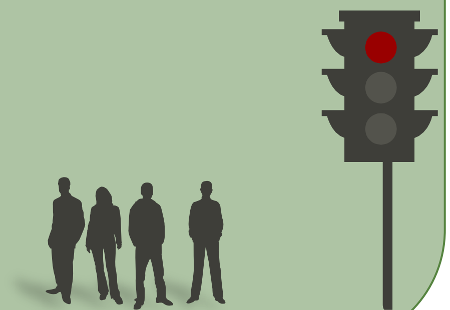
Last year 000s [insert region] households successfully switched their gas and electricity suppliers

Level of regional switching is meaningless unless presented as % of regional population or attempted switches.

Many asked if those households saved money.

Why did they switch – was it poor service?

Conscious rejection of the ‘nudge’ i.e. ‘I don’t care what everyone else does’.



Eng.

As engaged, plus wanted to know which companies people had switched from and to.

Some said that the numbers are impersonal.

A few reflected that the figure might suggest the process is easier than they thought.

Non-Eng.

As engaged, plus a stronger scepticism about the switching figure.

Did not tally with their experience ‘I don’t know anyone who switched last year’ so rejected.

Perception of low price differential in the market led many to reject.

Liked by a few because of the large number stated.

Dis-Eng.

Most disliked seeing a **number of residents** and wanted to know context.

A minority liked the local slant, though what other people in their area do was considered irrelevant to most (i.e. different usage).

Last year 000s [insert region] households successfully switched their gas and electricity suppliers

Raised doubts: what does **success** mean? Did they save money? And how many were **unsuccessful?**

Overall an unpopular statement, however, behaviour change messages often work on the sub-conscious level which it is not possible to evaluate through qualitative research

Section 3

Views of possible communication campaign names

This section provides reaction to Ofgem's suggested communication campaign names and illustrates alternatives suggested by Panellists

Naming the campaign once the messages were explored

your needs your energy

take control of your costs

clearer fairer

energy-ease

clear-gy

energy 4 u

energy tariffs and bills made simple

energy pricing made simpler

energy your way

empowering the people

energy switch

simple energy

Simpler, Clearer, Fairer,
Energy Made Simple
were by far the most popular

energy go compare

compare prices and save money

comparing re-energised

be energy wise

your energy, your choice

an energy deal for you

energy - understand it!

easier energy

fairer energy choices

switching over? switch on to power!

energy bills made simple

Section 4

Conclusions

This section provides conclusions to help inform the development of the RMR communications campaign

Conclusions

This wave of Panel research[4] revealed there are key factors which shape the lens through which messages are seen and received. **It is important to understand this context so changes happening in the energy market can be communicated effectively to energy consumers** but it does mean that engagement is unlikely to be achieved quickly, or through a single campaign.

A key finding was there is a very limited understanding of Ofgem's RMR work, so, without more information about changes to the market (perhaps positioned below the statement for example), messages typically are not enough to persuade consumers it is worth doing anything different e.g. making a tariff comparison. **Consumers are positive about the idea of the market becoming simpler, clearer and fairer but to have an impact the campaign needs to provide evidence and tangible examples of how this is happening.**

A lack of trust in the energy market permeates into consumers' feelings about figures contained in the messages as was observed in the scepticism around regional switching levels. Because consumers often question the accuracy and relevance of figures, and especially level of saving, the implication is that Ofgem should consider carefully whether figures should be included. However, **statements that have a "financial focus" (e.g. are you paying to much for your gas and electricity) do appear to grab attention therefore have the potential to be developed further.**

[4] It is important to note this research was conducted before any RMR changes have come into effect and it is possible that once these start to filter through it will be easier to communicate and potentially engage. However, while media coverage might help to raise awareness of the changes, the fact that no Panellists mentioned Ed Milliband's proposals to freeze energy bills would suggest this cannot be guaranteed.

Conclusions

Similarly, widespread distrust of energy suppliers combined with a perception that independent organisations are more trustworthy, suggests messages which are delivered by Ofgem may be more impactful. Therefore, **the "we" in the "we've made changes" message might convince more that change was in the interests of consumers, and subsequently prompt engagement, if it was communicated "Ofgem has made changes…"**

The perception that the market is confusing and does not function how consumers would like it to can often result in consumers being very sensitive to any statement that appears to convey a sense that it is their fault that they have not engaged in the energy market. Consequently, **messages would ideally be framed as empathetic and supportive as consumers say this is more likely to resonate.**

Finally, analysis of customers with different levels of engagement revealed that the same messages do not work for each audience. Therefore Ofgem may wish to consider prioritising consumer types. While both disengaged and non-engaged consumers are likely to need evidence of market improvement before they engage, it may be easier to convince the non-engaged as they tended to be more open to the idea of switching (by definition). Therefore, **campaign development could consider taking into account the messages that were more salient with the non-engaged consumer group.**