

Food for thinking:

“Changing consumption behavior with regard to hazardous substances in various products – the role of knowledge, values, feedback and incentives”

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Point of departure

- What should be the approach of a public campaign on hazardous substances?
 - “The hazardous substance free household”
- Target substances: Phthalates, BPA, Alkylphenoles, PFOSs, heavy metals in household chemicals & appliances
- Target group: non-professional user of chemicals at home and in private life
- Products: Body care, baby care, cosmetics, cleaning agents; toys; household appliances; paint/renovation materials; furniture; textile
 - Some products should be avoided completely, the use of others should be reduced

Knowledge alone might not be enough to trigger a change of behaviour



When do we use certain hazardous substances?



[source: www.hausjournal.net]

The chemicals basket

- Households use a wide range of chemicals in a large variety of products and articles, but do not know where to suspect hazardous substances
- The quantitative amount of the used hazardous substances might not be obvious to most people as they constitute a “small” share of the final product
- Knowledge is needed about ingredients and applications to take an “informed choice” – and, potentially, cease certain products



The good housekeeper

- There are strong social norms on cleanliness in the household, influenced by sales promotion
- “The cleaner, the better” - disinfecting products are used unnecessarily
- Great expectations: Clean rooms should smell like a blooming lemon tree
- Skin has to be cared for with a wide variety of products
- There is an oversupply of products



From easy substitution to sufficiency

- Some products can be easily substituted by their ecological counterparts (e. g. shower gel)
- Some products can be completely avoided without any loss of functionality or convenience, but social norms might have to be overcome (e. g. disinfecting detergents)
- The substitution or avoidance of some products might result in a less convenient use or in the loss of a certain feature of the product



The myth of the expensive ecological product

- Consumers compare the price of an ecological product on-to-one to a regular one
- The fact that less products and a smaller amount of a specific product is needed is neglected
- Consumers expect products in the shelves to be harmless
- Responsibility is strongly assigned to public / state stakeholders




Routines and planned consumption

- Reducing the use of HS means talking about a **wide range of products**, articles and materials – some are bought routinely, some are planned carefully
- **Routine behaviour**: unconscious, without reflection, always the same pattern – especially regularly performed activities without greater expenses like e. g. buying washing powder
- **Planned behaviour**: consciously reflected, one-time or non-regular activities – e. g. furniture



Frontrunners and laggards

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- Some people do not know anything about hazardous substances in household products or their “chemicals footprint”
 - Some people do now about it, but do not act accordingly
 - Some people think about and plan a change of behaviour but did not take any action yet
 - There are people who took first steps and are open to further change



The role of knowledge

Hypothesis: Knowledge does not translate into action automatically, but regarding chemicals, knowledge plays a more important role than in other environmental campaigns

- There is a basic awareness about the possible hazard of using chemicals
- The link between action and effect on the environment is easy to understand
- Avoiding products with hazardous substances gives a personal and immediate benefit
- A lot of products can be substituted by ecological ones



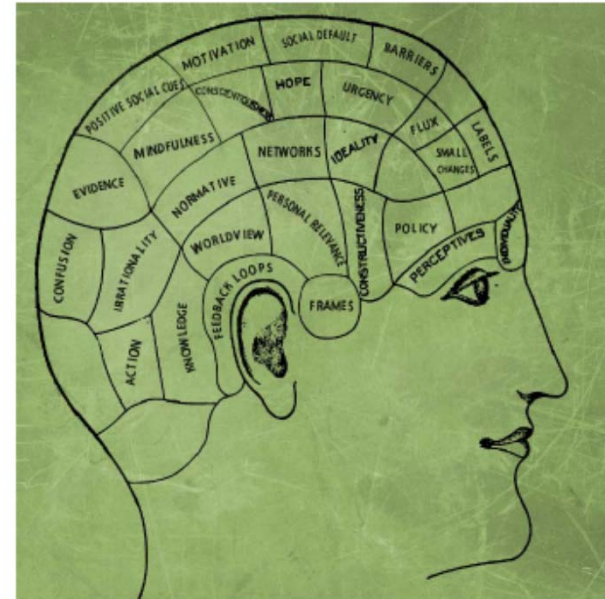
What do we have to do?

- Illustrate the significance of private consumers for the emissions of chemicals and the wide variety of chemicals product everybody uses
- Our target groups is not homogeneous: take the individual current level of awareness as starting point, try to involve frontrunners and spread the news
- Question social norms: argue against conventional notions of cleanliness, create social networks, make the use of ecological products the social default
- Make change easy: supply, infrastructure, easily accessible information, reduce the perceived costs, emphasize the convenience of skipping products



What do we have to do?

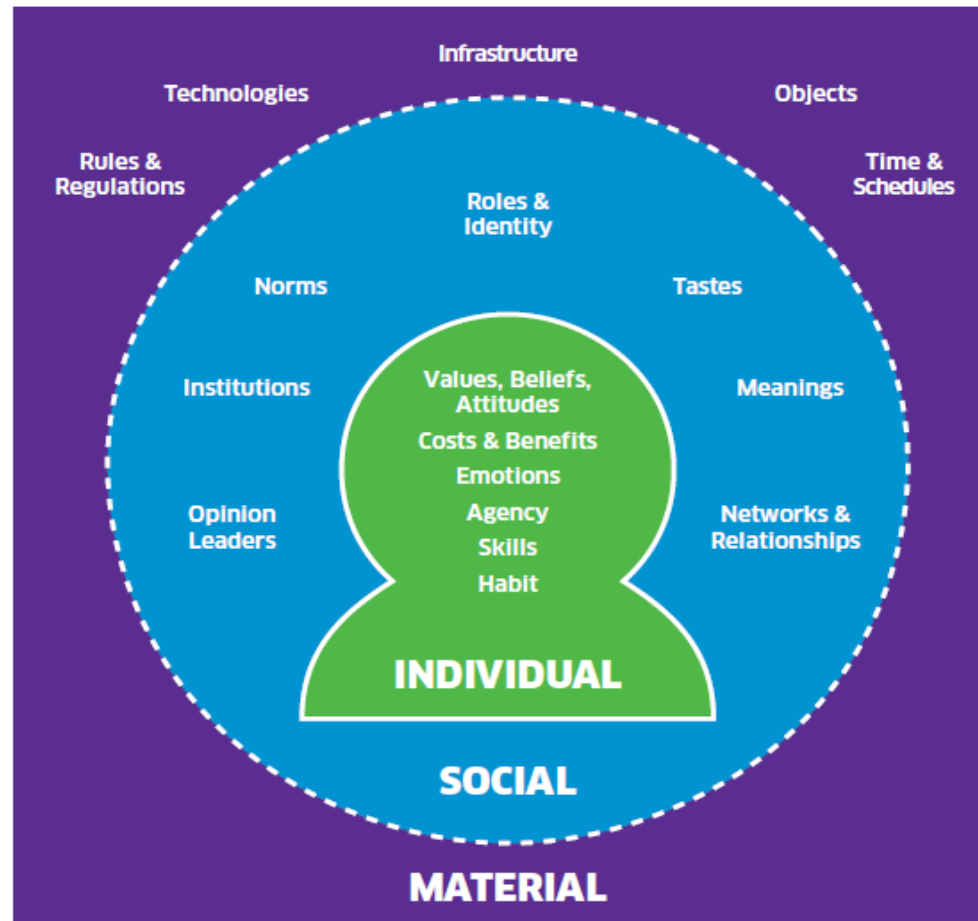
- Emphasize personal relevance and personal benefits (self-efficacy)
- Choose a step-by-step approach: from low-effort substitution to advanced action
- Prepare strategies for interrupting routines (and creating new ones) as well as strategies for influencing planned consumption behaviour
- Try to follow-up the changed behaviour and prevent a relapse



[Manning 2009]



The ISM (individual-social-material) model of behaviour change



[Darnton et al. 2013]



Thank you for your attention!



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