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Cycling behaviour in car-dominant societies: a survey of the UK population

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Introduction

We investigated whether socio-cultural norms have an adverse effect on behavioural levels of cycling in the UK. The findings suggest that the UK is an example of a culturally 'car-dominant' society. As social marketers, we have worked with professional agencies to design communications that sought to create more positive cultural norms.

Methods

The authors commissioned a large UK based market research agency, YouGov, to generate a stratified random sample of 3,885 nationally representative people in GB aged 16-64. These were interviewed by means of an online questionnaire.

Results

Principal components analysis revealed the presence of 7 retained components explaining a total of 55% of the variance. Cronbach Alphas for these factors were generally reasonable, ranging from .811 to .663. The factors were given names that reflected the nature of the scale items. These were: 'car vs cycling', 'disposition to cycle', 'cycling role models', 'cycling is normal and cool', 'motoring myths', 'self image and cycling', and 'cyclist user image'.

Discussion

The UK's car dominance has created some attitude clusters which coalesce to form anti-cycling cultures amongst some non-cyclists. These can lead to in-group and out-group effects. There were also positive signals of new, pro-cycling cultures emerging. Social marketing communications were commissioned accordingly.



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