

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR CHANGE WORKBOOK Workbook to accompany SHIFT – A review and framework for encouraging ecologically sustainable consumer behaviour

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SHIFT Sustainable consumer behaviour change workbook

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ISBN 978-952-347-045-3 (paperback) ISBN 978-952-347-046-0 (PDF) www.sitra.fi

Erweko, Helsinki 2018

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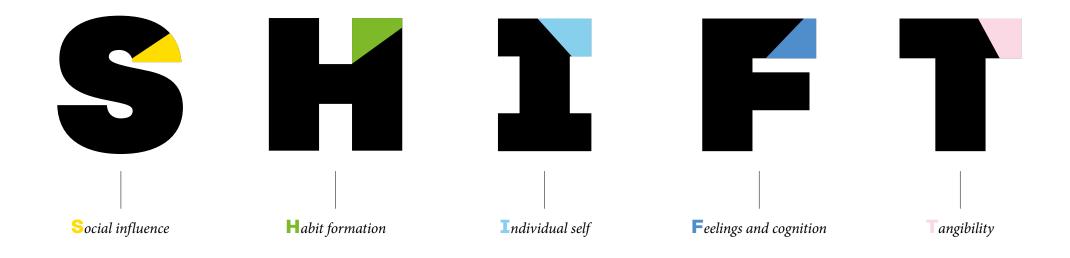
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A

# Introduction to the workbook

In this workbook, we will outline the **SHIFT FRAMEWORK**, which is drawn from a systematic review of the academic literature on encouraging ecologically sustainable consumer behaviours. In the accompanying paper, we synthesise the literature in a meta-analytic fashion and outline a set of principles drawn from behavioural science (marketing, psychology, economics, etc.) that can be leveraged to shift consumer attitudes, choices and behaviours towards ecologically sustainable outcomes. Our analysis reveals a set of factors that reliably predict sustainable consumer behaviour. We organise these key factors based on the acronym SHIFT. People are more likely to change negative (and maintain positive) sustainable consumer behaviours when these factors are effectively considered and leveraged: Social influence, Habit formation, the Individual self, Feelings and cognition, and Tangibility. This workbook presents the framework as a set of tools that practitioners can use to foster ecologically sustainable consumer behaviour. Please note that for a more in-depth look at the different concepts that are highlighted by the SHIFT framework you can refer to the paper itself.



B

Understanding the process of using the SHIFT framework

The steps to using the SHIFT framework are highlighted in Figure 1. Note that the first three steps involve setting the stage to be able to think about and implement the SHIFT framework. Before you can think about what specific tools to employ you must have an in-depth understanding of the context and the behaviour you wish to change, the target market and other elements such as the key barriers and benefits. It is important to remember that no single consumer behaviour change tool works "best." Rather, the most effective strategy is to consider the specific consumer behaviour you wish to change, the specific context and the intended target segment, as well as the barriers and benefits associated with changing the existing behaviour and adopting a new sustainable consumer behaviour. This is key to using the SHIFT framework to effect positive sustainable consumer behaviour change.

### FIGURE 1. SUMMARY OF THE STEPS IN THE SHIFT FRAMEWORK



STEP	Clarify the context	Think about the context, your goals and the behaviour		Select – and apply the tools	Take SHIFT tools that reflect your context, target, barriers and benefits
STEP	<ul> <li>Select the target segment</li> </ul>	Identify your target market	STEP	_ Test your strategy	Pilot your strategy. You may need to return to a previous step
STEP <b>3</b> –	_ Determine the details	Determine the specific needs, barriers and benefits	STEP	_ Implement your plan	Implement your plan and evaluate outcomes

# STEP

**IN THIS STEP** it is important to think about the sustainable consumer behaviour you wish to accomplish. Be **specific** about what sustainable consumer behaviour you wish to influence. Rather than saying "*I want my* customers to be sustainable", you might say "*I want my* customers to purchase our new technology", "*I want my* customers to use this product more effectively" or "*I want my* customers to bring back the packaging, so it can be repurposed". Be clear on what your objectives are. In addition, consider the context in which the behaviour will take place. Is it public or private? Do you want to encourage short-term changes or long-term changes? Think about the full nature of the context in which the desired sustainable consumer behaviour will occur.

A) What are your (or your organisation's) higher-level goals and objectives for the behaviour change plan? Why are these important?



**B**) What is the specific sustainable consumer behaviour that you wish to promote? Does it fit with your higher-level goals?



C) Are there other elements of the situation or context that are important? Are there regulatory factors or other contextual factors that are relevant here? What characteristics does your focal sustainable behaviour have (e.g., is it public or private, is it short-term or long-term, is it low-involvement, or high-involvement?). Is it possible to measure the behaviour you wish to influence? Can you monitor changes in the behaviour over time?



D) Has your organisation or have other organisations tried to influence similar behaviours in the past? Were past efforts successful? Why or why not? Are there any insights from this analysis? Who else do you need to talk to before moving forward?



Select the target segment

STEP

2

**IN THIS STEP** it is important to think carefully about the specific group of consumers you wish to influence or appeal to. Why have you chosen this group? Consider the characteristics of your selected consumer segment. What are they particularly motivated by? What specific needs and wants do they have? Are there specific types of messages that would best resonate with them? Specific research might be done to better understand your target segment and their needs, as well as what they see as key barriers and benefits (see Step 3).

A) What specific group of consumers do you wish to target and why? Consider if there is a particular segment that might be relevant in terms of being accepting of your particular message, product or service. It could also be worth considering whether a given target will make a bigger impact based on their behaviour change.





**GIVEN WHAT HAS BEEN** uncovered in Steps 1 and 2, you should consider the specific barriers to behaviour change (as well as potential benefits to behaviour change). Why wouldn't consumers want to engage in the identified sustainable behaviour? What are the possible barriers to adoption of the product, service or behaviour? The best way to answer this question is to first look at existing research – does it have anything to say about barriers in your specific domain? The second step is to ask your current or desired customers. Different techniques, such as observation, surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc., could be used for this purpose.

**A)** What has your research told you about the wants and needs of your target market?



**B**) Based on your research, what does your target market see as the benefits of adopting the given sustainable product, service or behaviour?



C) Based on your research, what does your target market see as the barriers to adopting the given sustainable product, service or behaviour? Also, what are the barriers to giving up the existing behaviour?



# STEP

**SELECT TOOLS** that make sense given the **behaviour and the context**, **the target and the specific barriers and benefits** 

associated with behaviour change. Please turn to Section C of this Workbook for an in-depth examination of the SHIFT framework and the different tools.

Given what you have identified in Steps 1-3, what elements of the **SHIFT** model (Social influence, **H**abit formation, the **I**ndividual self, **F**eelings and cognition, and **T**angibility) are most relevant for you? There are different ways you can go about selecting specific strategies, but here are some ways of doing it.

A) Given what you uncovered in Steps 1–3, is there an element of the SHIFT framework that would be particularly compelling for your selected target audience/ behaviour/context? For example, perhaps given that your target market is teenagers, you might determine that social factors are important.



**B**) Given the barriers to behaviour change that you have identified, are there elements of the SHIFT framework that are particularly relevant? For example, if the existing negative behaviour is very habitual in nature, you might want to consider habit tools. If it is clear that social norms are dictating current behaviours, you might want to think about ways to change perceptions of social norms. List any potential factors that are linked to barriers here.



**C**) Given the benefits to behaviour change that you have identified, are there elements of the SHIFT framework that are particularly relevant? For example, if one of the benefits a new product is offering is a health benefit, in addition to a sustainable benefit you might consider communicating this to a relevant target audience. List any potential factors that are linked to benefits here.



D) Taking all of a-c together and considering the description of the SHIFT framework in Section C of this Workbook, are there relevant strategies that can appeal to the target market, while also considering the behaviour, the context, the barriers and the benefits? It can be worth thinking about strategies that might at the same time resolve two or more important barriers or that might resolve a barrier and highlight a benefit at the same time.



We provide examples of the strategy of appealing to the primary and secondary barriers in Figures 8 and 9. In Figure 8, we give examples of different desired sustainable consumer behaviours as a function of the primary barrier to behaviour change and the secondary barrier to behaviour change. And in Figure 9, we draw on examples of how the different behaviour change tools might be used in response to each combination of primary and secondary barriers. Note that these are examples only and that different consumers and different target markets will have different barriers to behavioural change. Thus, it is very important to understand your target market before selecting specific tools.

E) Thinking about a-c above, which aspects of the SHIFT framework make the most sense for you? What overall strategy makes sense for you?



F) How might you use specific tools/tactics to implement your strategy? Think about the pros and cons of different alternatives.





**YOU CAN CONDUCT** a small-scale test of the effectiveness of your chosen behaviour change tools. This pilot test can help you understand the reasons behind success or failure and you can use the data collected to try to uncover why and go back to one of the previous steps as necessary.

**A)** Record any notes on the pilot test and possible corrections to the behaviour change plan here:





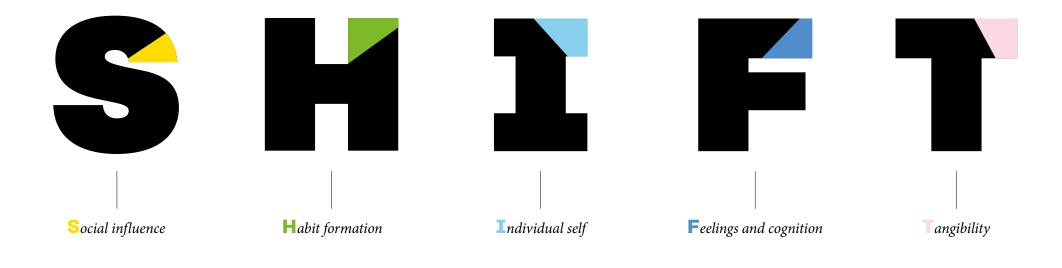
#### **ONCE YOU HAVE A STRATEGY**

that works well in initial tests, this can be implemented on a larger scale and the overall outcomes can be evaluated. Monitor and measure your outcomes. Consider using alternative tools if your objectives have not been met.

**A**) Record any notes on the implementation of the behaviour change plan here:



#### FIGURE 2. THE SHIFT FRAMEWORK FOR INFLUENCING ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS



С

# Outline of the SHIFT framework

**THE SHIFT FRAMEWORK** has been developed through a systematic review of the literature on encouraging sustainable behaviours and it draws upon academic research in marketing, psychology and economics. Our review of the literature can be distilled down to five key principles – Social influence, Habit formation, Individual self, Feelings and cognition, and Tangibility – that can be leveraged to influence sustainable consumer behaviours. Within each of these categories we highlight the key modes by which each principle operates and highlight tools that can be used to foster ecologically sustainable consumer behaviours.

# Social influence

SOCIAL FACTORS have been shown to have a powerful influence on whether consumers engage in sustainable behaviours. Put simply, making a behaviour seem more socially approved of, more commonly engaged in by one's peers or socially desirable in some way makes it more likely to be adopted.

In our review, we highlight three different tools for harnessing the power of social influence: social norms, social desirability and social group memberships. Social norms refer to the notion that people are influenced to engage in sustainable consumer behaviours when other people are doing the given behaviour (descriptive norm) and when the social expectation is that the sustainable behaviour is the appropriate or right thing to do (injunctive norm). Social desirability refers to the notion that people are more likely to

engage in sustainable behaviours when they are viewed positively by others and they are public in nature. And finally, we are more likely to engage in behaviours that are linked to important social group memberships.

Consider if social influence might be important in terms of your behaviour, context, target market, barriers and benefits. Is social influence likely to be relevant in your case? Social factors are more likely to be relevant in cases where the behaviour is observable to others. when the behaviour/product/ service conveys information about the self to others, when the behaviour is viewed as socially desirable or when the behaviour can be linked to group memberships that are important to the self. Social factors may also be more relevant for given target markets, such as millennials.

## FIGURE 3. TOOLS: SOCIAL INFLUENCE



- Use social norms to communicate what others are doing and approve of the desired sustainable consumer behaviour.
- Show relevant others or in-group members using the product or service, or engaging in the sustainable action.



- Have the desired action be something that is performed in social contexts, especially if it is viewed positively by others.
- Create socially desirable (and avoid undesirable) associations with the product, service or pro-social action.

TOOL
Social group
membership

sustainable product, service or behaviour with a positively viewed in-group.
Consider fostering healthy competition between groups to encourage sustainable actions.

• Associate the



A) Please consider the reasons why social influence tools are (or are not) relevant for your behavioural change plan here. Are there particular social influence tools that might be best in your case?





# **H***abit formation*

#### THIS SECTION DISCUSSES the

notion that if ecological consumer choices, usage and disposal of products and services can become habitual, these actions are more likely to be adopted and continued into the future. We first address the nature of habits and then draw upon work in psychology, marketing and economics to outline factors that can break bad habits (discontinuity and penalties) and build positive habits (making the task easy, using prompts, using incentives and giving feedback).

Habits form slowly over time through repeated action. They are then likely to recur automatically without much conscious control or effort in stable contexts, such as the same location or time of day. For instance, most people brush their teeth every single morning without really thinking about it or putting much effort into it. The habits people develop are likely to be carried with them for the rest of their lives and repeated consistently over time. However, for many people the habits they have developed are not in line with notions of sustain-

able behaviour and consumption. We highlight two ways of breaking bad habits - discontinuity and penalties. Then we turn to tools to help with positive habit formation, such as making it easy, providing incentives, using prompts and giving feedback. Generally speaking, habit formation techniques work best when the behaviour is repeated over time, rather than being a one-time action. Moreover, habit formation tools work best with actions that are relatively simple and easy to perform, in ways that can become automatic over time. However, they should be applied carefully in ways that do not undermine intrinsic motivation. Consider using habit formation tools based on elements of the behaviour, the context, the target and the barriers and benefits. For example, if the barrier is forgetting to do a behaviour (such as turning one's car engine off while waiting or bringing a reusable bag for grocery shopping), then prompts are highly effective. If the barrier is clearly linked to complexity and inconvenience, then thinking about ways to make the behaviour easy to do can be very effective.

## FIGURE 4. **TOOLS: HABIT FORMATION**

#### **TOOLS TO BREAK BAD HABITS**

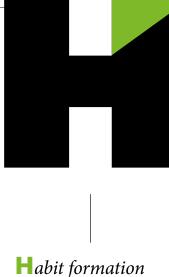


**Penalties** 

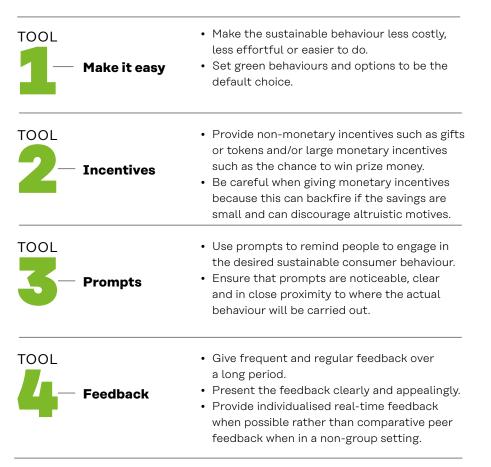
TOOL

- Ask people to change their habits during context shifts.
- Big moves such as house relocation, starting a new job, etc. are a good time to try to get people to start new habits.

• Consider using penalties only if you can monitor and enforce the programme. • If you use penalites, don't use penalties that are considered to be extreme or unfair.



#### **TOOLS TO FOSTER GOOD HABITS**

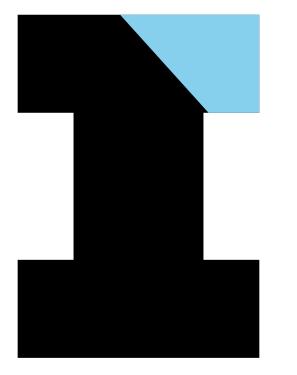


A) Please consider the reasons why habit formation tools are (or are not) relevant for your behavioural change plan here. Are there particular habit formation tools that might be best in your case?





**H***abit formation* 





#### THIS SECTION HIGHLIGHTS the

importance of the individual self when attempting to shift people towards engaging in sustainable consumer behaviours. The tools highlighted in this section include the self-concept, personal norms, self-consistency, selfinterests, self-efficacy and individual differences.

It can be worth considering personal norms and individual differences in cases where the given behaviour/ product/service is likely to appeal to a given type of consumer (e.g., a consumer with strong personal norms around sustainability). In terms of self-interests, it might be worth overcoming key barriers in ways that appeal to the self. For example, if product performance or price are seen as barriers to buying a product such as an electric car, one means of appealing to self-interest is to offer an option that overcomes these barriers (a relatively affordable and highperformance electric vehicle). Moreover, in cases where consumers are not clear on their ability to make a difference, it can be relevant to highlight self-efficacy.

## FIGURE 5. TOOLS: INDIVIDUAL SELF

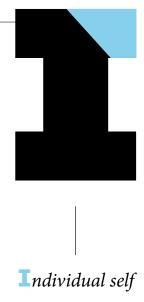


- Appeal to those with strong personal norms related to sustainability.
- Activate relevant personal norms by reminding consumers of moral or pro-social obligations to act in a sustainable manner.

#### TOOL

Positivity — of the selfconcept

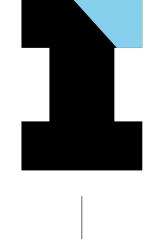
- Allow the behaviour or product to have positive associations for the self.
   Connect the celf concept to the product
- Connect the self-concept to the product, service or behaviour in some way.



TOOL Self- consistency	<ul> <li>Encourage consumers to engage in sustainable consumer behaviours that are consistent with their own beliefs, values and previous actions.</li> <li>Encourage commitments to engage in sustainable behaviours.</li> <li>Avoid licensing effects by asking for meaningful commitments and linking behaviours to deeply held values.</li> </ul>
TOOL Self-interest	<ul> <li>Appeal to self-interest, especially in ways that overcome barriers related to the sustainable product, service or behaviour.</li> <li>Combine appeals to self-interest with other tools.</li> </ul>
TOOL 5 — Self-efficacy	<ul> <li>Make consumers feel that they can engage in the desired sustainable consumer behaviour.</li> <li>Highlight how the desired behaviour can make a meaningful impact.</li> <li>Consider the interplay between self-interest (degree of consumer compromise) and efficacy (confidence in being able to make a difference).</li> </ul>
TOOL <b>Individual</b> <b>differences</b>	<ul> <li>Take into account individual differences in terms of personality, values and demographics.</li> <li>Appeal to consumers who are oriented towards sustainability, but also to those for whom the product, service or behaviour will resonate.</li> </ul>

A) Please consider the reasons why individual self tools are (or are not) relevant for your behavioural change plan here. Are there particular individual self tools that might be best in your case?





Individual self

# Feelings and cognition

#### IN THIS SECTION, the

importance of communicating in terms of both feelings and cognition are reviewed. Emotions that can be used to sway consumers to engage in sustainable behaviours include fear and guilt, as well as pride and hope. In order to use emotions effectively it is important to understand people's perceptions and appraisals of different aspects of sustainability and the behaviour you are proposing. For example, if consumers already feel that the negative effects of climate change are out of their control, using fear appeals can lower this sense of control even further and make people feel their actions will have little effect. In this case, hope might be a more appropriate emotion to use.

On the other hand, if the target audience is not really considering the negative effects of climate change, fear appeals might be a reasonable strategy.

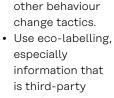
In addition, people's cognition (or thoughts) should be considered. Providing information can be helpful in encouraging sustainable consumer behaviours and using eco-labelling, especially from third-party sources, can make the organisation seem more transparent and trustworthy. It might make more sense to use cognition when the choice or behaviour is high involvement and it might make sense to use third-party eco-labelling if consumers have concerns about the attributes of the product or about the trustworthiness of the company.

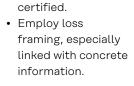
## FIGURE 6. TOOLS: FEELINGS AND COGNITION

TOOL <b>Feelings</b>	<ul> <li>Activate individual feelings of guilt but do so in subtle ways to avoid reactance effects.</li> <li>Be aware that explicit guilt appeals can backfire.</li> <li>Activate feelings of fear and negative affect, but also highlight a sense of self-efficacy and what steps people could take next.</li> <li>Use anticipated and collective guilt to motivate actions.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Encourage consumers to feel a sense of pride in their positive past behaviours.</li> <li>Focus on actions that reduce the danger to activate hope and minimise fear and anger.</li> </ul>
TOOL	Provide information



 Provide information to consumers, in concert with using







A) Please consider the reasons why feelings and cognition tools are (or are not) relevant for your behavioural change plan here. Are there particular feelings and cognition tools that might be best in your case?



Feelings and cognition

# *angibility*

#### **BY THEIR VERY NATURE**,

sustainable consumer behaviours involve putting aside more proximal, immediate, individual interests in lieu of actions that confer benefits that are more remote, future-focused and other-oriented. Indeed, environmental appeals often ask people to engage in behaviours that are very tangible and costly in the present, but their long-term consequences are far off in the future, psychologically distant from the self and ill-defined. Thus, sustainability is a concept that can seem psychologically distant, abstract and difficult for consumers to grasp.

Thus, making ecological problems and solutions very clear and tangible can be important. We outline some solutions below - matching temporal focus, communicating local impacts, concrete communication and encouraging the desire for intangibility. Considering tangibility is most important when the action or outcomes seem abstract or distant from the self. Tangibility also becomes relevant when consumers are low in outcome efficacy (they are uncertain about whether their behaviours can have a meaningful impact).

## FIGURE 7. TOOLS: TANGIBILITY

#### TOOL

- \_\_\_ Future benefits
- Remind consumers to be more future-focused, to match the future focus on sustainable actions.

# TOOL

- Frame sustainable actions as local and proximal. Refer to local (versus global) impacts of actions and outcomes.
- Highlight the specific outcomes and steps consumers can take.

# TOOL

TOOL

Concrete

Local impacts

of acting and not acting in ways that are self-relevant

• Use analogies to communicate

• Highlight the impacts

to the consumer. • Use vivid imagery.



. Desire for

intangibles

• Encourage the desire for intangibles such as experiences, services and digital goods over the ownership of material goods.

impacts and outcomes.Use clear graphs to display issues and outcomes.

A) Please consider the reasons why tangibility tools are (or are not) relevant for your behavioural change plan here. Are there particular tangibility tools that might be best in your case?





#### FIGURE 8.

Primary Behavioural Barrier

# EXAMPLES OF DESIRED BEHAVIOURS AS A FUNCTION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY BEHAVIOURAL BARRIERS

Tangibility Social Habit Individual self **Feelings and** formation cognition Recycling **Decreasing air travel Decreasing disposable** Composting (driven by social norm (driven by social norms (driven by spending water bottle use and habit) and inconvenience time with family and (driven by social norms to the self) positive feeling of the and tangibility original action) of outcomes) Using a reusable Using alternative Driving more efficiently **Turning down** coffee cup transportation (driven by habit and the thermostat (driven by habits (driven by habit and feelings associated with H (driven by habit and and social norms) self-interest) driving inefficiently) clarity of outcomes) Using a reusable Being vegetarian Purchasing an electric car **Purchasing offsets** (driven by individual prefeshopping bag (driven by perceived when travelling rences/norms and what (driven by perceived costs to self and by feelings (driven by personal cost to self and habit) of autonomy associated family and friends do) norms to self and with driving) perceptions of clear outcomes) Purchasing **Riding a bike to work** Purchasing energy-**Choosing a green** sustainable cosmetics efficient appliances energy provider (driven by feelings of (driven by cognition guilt and responsibility (driven by thoughts about (driven by cognitions about the social desirability and by habit) attributes and by perceived about attributes and of product ingredients) self-benefits) clarity of outcomes) Purchasing sustainable/ Switching to Purchasing sustainable/ **Purchasing organic food** used clothing washable diapers fair-trade products (driven by clarity of (driven by perceptions (driven by perceptions of (driven by clarity of effectiveness and of outcomes and what outcomes and habit) effectiveness and beliefs cognitions about health other people will think) about self-benefits) and sustainability)

**Secondary Behavioural Barrier** 

### FIGURE 9. EXAMPLES OF SELECTED STRATEGIES BASED ON THE SHIFT FRAMEWORK

Social	Habit formation	Individual self	Feelings and	Tangibility
	Tormation		cognition	
*	S: Show others engaging in the desired sustainable behaviour in public settings + H: Give individual or comparative peer feedback on performance	S: Communicate about relevant descriptive and injunctive social norms + I: Prime individuals to think of the self as part of a collective	S: Communicate new ways/ norms around spending time with family + F: Show that special moments/positive emotions can occur on "staycations" too	S: Communicate new descriptive and injunctive norms + T: Make behaviours and outcomes very tangible and clear
H: Shape positive behaviours using rewards + S: Make the action positive and observable to others	*	H: Use discontinuity to break bad habits (e.g., change tran- sport for one week) + I: Highlight benefits to the self in ways that overcome barriers	H: Shape positive behaviours with rewards and feedback + F: Subtly activate feelings of guilt	H: Use prompts and feedback to shape habit + T: Make behaviours and outcomes very tangible and clear
I: Make the action appealing to self-interest + S: Communicate positive norms around the behaviour	I: Increase convenience to the self + H: Use rewards and prompts to shape the desired behaviour	*	I: Decrease perceived costs to the self + F: Create positive feelings around the new option/ behaviour	I: Activate personal norms and values + T: Communicate clear and tangible outcomes
F: Communicate the benefits of product ingredients + S: Increase the social desirability of the option	F: Subtly activate guilt by activating self-standards + H: Use rewards to shape desired behaviours	F: Create cognitions by educating on sustainable attributes + I: Highlight the self- benefits of purchase	*	F: Create cognitions via education + T: Communicate clear and tangible outcomes
<b>T:</b> Communicate clear and tangible outcomes +	<b>T:</b> Communicate clear and tangible outcomes +	T: Communicate clear and tangible outcomes +	<b>T:</b> Communicate clear and tangible outcomes +	
S: Communicate positive social norms	<b>H:</b> Use rewards to shape positive behaviours	I: Highlight either benefits to self or personal norms around helping	F: Create relevant cognitions about attributes	*

Secondary Behavioural Barrier

What should I say to someone to convince them to install solar panels in their home? How can I persuade someone to consider vegetarian food? What are the challenges in getting someone to buy fewer clothes?

Everyday sustainable practices can be easy, simple activities. Even seemingly small changes are effective, especially when shared by many people.

Innovative solutions require appropriate ways of marketing them to consumers. It is imperative to find the right arguments, those that will resonate with the consumer and address concerns they may have. This report and the accompanying workbook provide the practitioner with the right tools for this job.

This workbook is a companion to the report SHIFT – A review and framework for encouraging ecologically sustainable consumer behaviour (Sitra Studies 132). The workbook presents a set of tools that practitioners can use to foster ecologically sustainable consumer behaviour.



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ISBN 978-952-347-046-0 (PDF) www.sitra.fi

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