

Three-country comparison of customer motivation

Project details	
Title	Consumer preferences for smart homes: a comparative study between the UK, Germany and Italy
Participants	Policy Studies Institute, University of Westminster, London, UK Cardiff University, UK Ecologic Institute, Germany Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development
Timescale	2012
Key aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of customer attitudes to Smart Homes in the UK, Germany and Italy • Assessment of how countries' cultures and households' socio-economic characteristics affect perceptions about Smart Home technologies • Drawing out implications for marketing and business purposes.
Location	Germany, Italy and UK

Emerging European markets for Smart Home technologies are being studied by an international team of scientists to give customers and utilities a clear focus on the new era of energy supply for homes and small businesses.

Funded by E.ON's International Research Initiative (IRI), experts from four countries are carrying out a 'deep dive' analysis of how customers in the UK, Germany and Italy will respond to the new ways of managing energy.

In each country, the researchers will analyze barriers and drivers towards early take-up of Smart Home technologies and assess them against the background of their national energy framework, policies and regulation.

The results will allow a detailed comparison between countries and similar customer groups in different locations. In particular it will highlight Europe-wide recurring themes related to Smart Homes and issues in specific countries.

Final outcomes will be insights into the contrasts between customer expectations, incentives, concerns and barriers in the three countries.

This project is led by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) at the University of Westminster, London. It will work with the Cardiff University (CU) School of Psychology, Germany's Ecologic Institute think tank and the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA).

The main research team consists of more than 10 academics from the four

organizations. They include Dr. Nazmiye Ozkan, a Senior Research Fellow at PSI; Dr. Lorraine Whitmarsh, a lecturer in psychology at CU; Max Grünig, a Fellow at the Ecologic Institute; and Dr. Oscar Amerighi, a Researcher at ENEA Research and Strategy Central Unit.

Four areas of work will take place:

- **Defining the concept of a Smart Home in terms of its technologies, energy management systems, and products and services.**

This will include communication and control for appliances and devices, heating and ventilation units and security systems.

Among the issues are:

- Is a minimum level of 'smartness' required?
- Do new and current homes require different concepts?
- Can customers' existing appliances and devices be made smarter?

Extensive literature reviews will provide some of the answers in these areas, supported by up to ten interviews in each country with business and industry experts. A suite of Smart Home concepts, visions and imagery will be developed to help utilities develop marketing options and to inform focus groups later in the project.

- **Summarizing and contrasting customer perceptions of Smart Homes, based on qualitative and quantitative data.**

One of the main aims in this area will be to bring together two themes which have often polarized thinking about Smart Homes: the technological capabilities and



the social and behavioral aspects.

- **Using focus groups to understand how real-world customers feel about Smart Homes.**

Here the researchers will pinpoint Smart Home preferences and willingness to accept the technologies and their delivery routes. They will also gauge how attitudes change as customers are made more aware of the concept's capabilities.

Public deliberative workshops with around a total of 40-60 participants will take place simultaneously in the UK, Germany and Italy.

- **Drawing out the implications for Smart Homes strategy and marketing. In recommending steps for Smart Homes implementation, the report will identify whether issues could be resolved on a sector, national or European level, and the issues' relationship to institutional and market structures.**

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