

Case study: Segmentation & Positioning

Do citizens 'consume' policies?

TNS used segmentation and positioning research in the Netherlands to help develop public policy

Objective

The Netherlands wanted to develop a new environmental policy, incorporating the opinions of the Dutch citizens. The government therefore needed an in-depth insight into their opinions so that they could set about building a segmented marketing strategy for the various environmental issues and measures.

Background

Public opinion on this subject is notoriously difficult to measure. There is a tendency to get conflicting lists of what is socially desirable versus what individuals want to support in terms of tax money and restriction on their freedom. Basically, the public can be very hypocritical. Nevertheless, the government could not ignore public opinion otherwise there would be a lack of support for the measures when they came into practice.

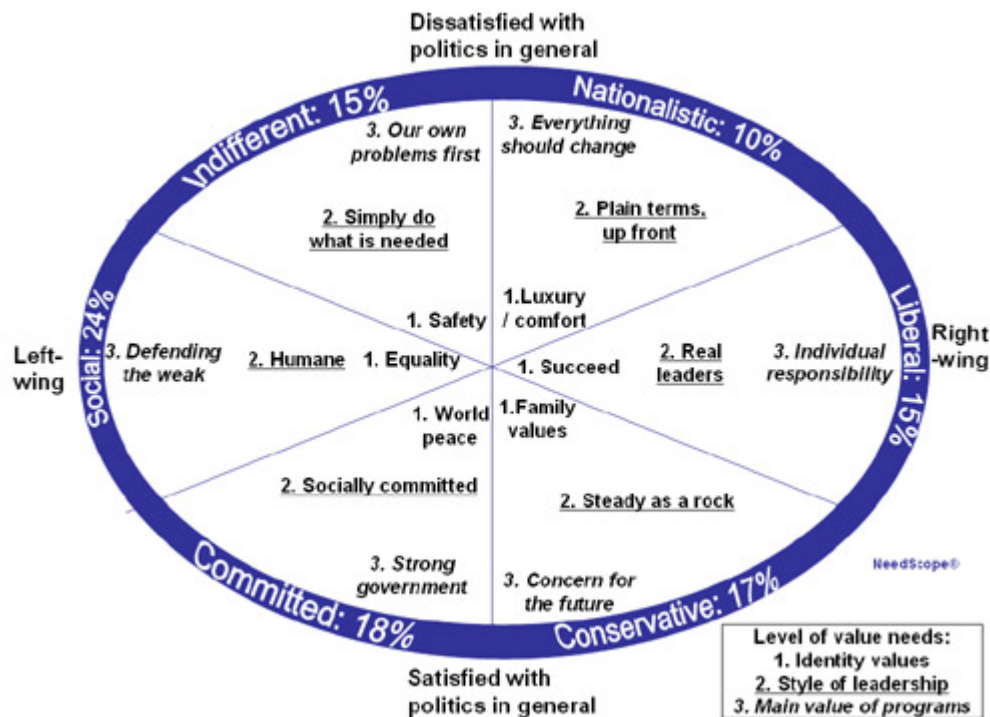
The challenge was therefore to get past the socially desirable answers to get to the population's true motives.

Actions

TNS proposed a novel research approach for policy development, using techniques more commonly applied in developing and positioning consumer brands. This consisted of the NeedScope System™, TNS' unique solution for measuring consumer needs and motivations, combined with a conjoint-based analysis, to get to what people wanted to sacrifice in terms of freedom and money for various policy measures.

NeedScope used a proven psychological framework to uncover the fundamental conscious and unconscious elements which linked the Dutch population with their political policies. The population was segmented into six groups on two underlying dimensions:

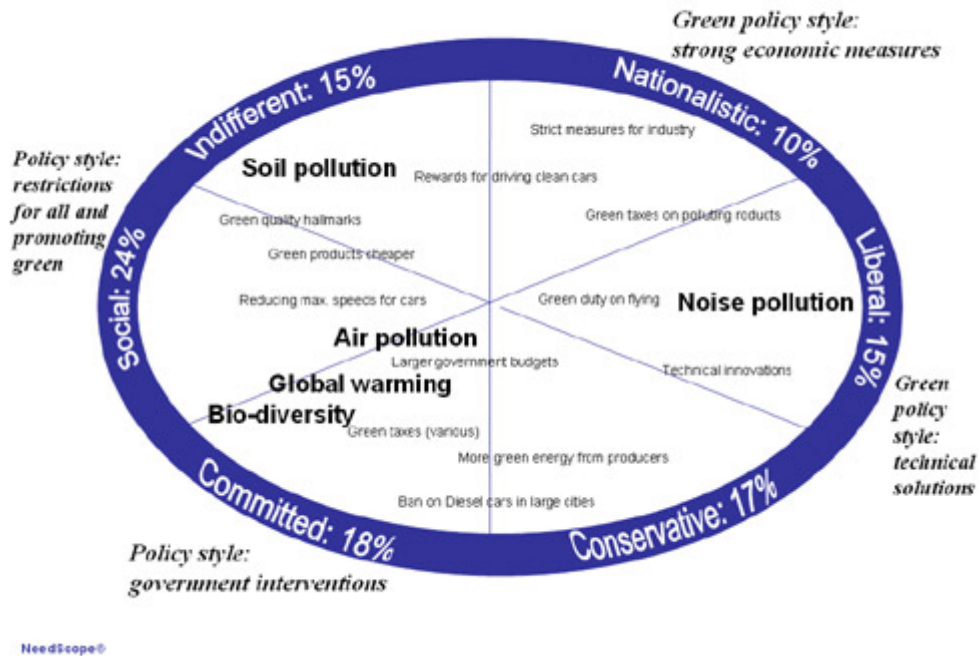
1. Left vs right wing (horizontal axis)
2. Satisfied (predominantly highly educated, high income) vs dissatisfied (predominantly poorly educated, low income) with political parties (vertical axis)



The conjoint-based analysis then forced people to make realistic choices and be aware of the personal cost of their choices.

Results

Support for the environmental issues and measures was plotted within the six segments and, depending on the type of preferred measure, the various segments preferred different styles of policy.



The 'Socially-minded' preferred behavioural restrictions, as well as the subsidising of green products. The 'Committed' were most environmentally minded and wanted strong government intervention on various levels, paid for by high taxes. The 'Liberals' and 'Conservatives' preferred solutions developed through technical innovation and the 'Liberals' in particular, did not want their individual freedom restricted by law. The 'Nationalists' expected simple, strict measures to be taken for industry, even if it made products more costly. The 'Indifferent' feared rising costs and had few thoughts on solutions.

Recommendations

TNS was able to assist in the development of a segmented communication strategy for the policy with different messages aimed at different segments, communicating on different emotional levels, using the appropriate media and other channels. Whilst environmental policies are a 'difficult sell', they are nevertheless important for public and political support and this example offers a good illustration of how marketing tools can be used in the development of public policy strategies.