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**THE IMPACT OF
DOMESTIC WATER USER CULTURES ON
WATER EFFICIENCY INTERVENTIONS IN THE
SOUTH EAST OF ENGLAND:
LESSONS FOR WATER DEMAND
MANAGEMENT**

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Abstract

The impact of domestic water user cultures on water efficiency interventions in the South East of England: Lessons for water demand management

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The need for a more sustainable approach to water consumption has increasingly gained attention in the last decade. The domestic sector accounts for over half of abstracted water in the UK and, as such, has become a major target for water efficiency interventions. Current research and water efficiency interventions are dominated by a positivist approach, focusing on a limited range of factors that can be quantitatively measured. This thesis questions the dominant approach and argues that a more holistic overview of water efficiency can be achieved through the consideration of socio-technical and behavioural theories.

Taking a more constructivist approach, this research draws on four theories from socio-technical and behavioural fields and combines them to create a framework for the analysis of water efficiency interventions. The framework is applied to two case studies, exploring water users' perceptions of water, water supply, personal water use, and their responses to the water efficiency interventions. The case studies were selected to provide examples of current mainstream approaches to water demand management. Research methods used included semi-structured interviews and observation.

The research findings support the argument that the current dominant approach to domestic water efficiency interventions is limited and, in some cases, ineffectual. Issues of trust, knowledge, motivation and the relationships between water users and water companies were raised. The thesis concludes that the use of a constructivist perspective could help to provide a more effective approach to understanding and improving water demand management.

Keywords

Domestic water use, water metering, efficiency, perceptions, behaviour change, socio-technical systems

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