



PARTNERING  
FOR A SUSTAINABLE  
SECTOR

# Inspiring Green Behaviour Through Stories

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# THE ROLE OF SCRIPTWRITERS IN TACKLING THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

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*RESPONSIBLE MEDIA FORUM: MIRRORS OR MOVERS*

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# OUTLINE

- Cultivation theory, narrative transportation and persuasion effects.
- Albert Planet Placement report
- How many planets does fictional world require?
- Positive and negative role models.
- Research with Rubber Republic on how fictional characters affect their aspirations and behaviour.
- Positive role models: Green Stories project and research on *Habitat Man*.
- Positive visions.

# ALBERT PLANET PLACEMENT REPORT

- <https://wearealbert.org/editorial/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/09/albert-subtitle-report-2021.pdf>
- Albert 'Subtitles to Save the World': how often climate change and our solutions to tackling it are mentioned on our TV screens.
- “Our research shows that during 2020, broadcasters quickly started and frequently began using relatively unknown words and phrases - such as furlough and social distancing – which helped viewers to adopt new behaviours that would protect their health as well as their household finances during the pandemic.
- “Using and discussing words and phrases such as biodiversity and carbon offsetting more frequently on screen will help households to improve their understanding of climate challenges, the part they can play in sparking change and the personal benefits they may gain as a result of improving their awareness around sustainability issues.

# STAGE I

CHECK YOU ARE NOT IMPLICITLY PROMOTING HIGH  
CARBON CONSUMPTION AS AN ASPIRATION

# HOW WE LEARN

- Rational vs hidden persuasion.
- Narrative transportation and sleeper effect.
- Cultivation theory: sustained exposure to television can affect our attitudes, aspirations and behaviours (Gerbner, 1969).
- Mainstreaming: consistent exposure by diverse groups of people to similar content can create a homogenous world view that aligns the views and aspirations of television viewers to those promoted by the television advertisers and sponsors of television mainstream (Gerbner, et al. , 1980).
- Culture is highly affected by the behaviours of fictional characters.

# CULTIVATION THEORY: EVIDENCE

- Conspicuous consumption on television has been shown to affect aspirations of viewers towards a high consumption lifestyle.
  - (Cha & Kwon, 2018; Eisend & Möller, 2007; Khancheh, Sepehr & Naseri, 2010; Kumar & Kumra, 2021)
- TV series: Gossip Girl, The City and The Hills revolve around the world of fashion. Results suggest copy cat intentions to emulate behaviour of characters.
  - Voorveld, et al (2017). "Materialistic girls watching a materialistic world: Fashion TV series and women's copy-cat intentions."
- Study finds relationship between TV viewing duration and household expenditure.
  - Kumar, A. and Kumra, R. (2021), "Television viewing and conspicuous consumption of households: evidence from India", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*
- Khancheh Sepehr, S., & Naseri, E. (2010). The Role of Media Representation of Consumption Models in Formation of Audience Consumption Behaviors and Attitudes. *Communication Research*, 17(61), 119-147.
- Stern, B. B., Russell, C. A., & Russell, D. W. (2007). Hidden persuasions in soap operas: Damaged heroines and negative consumer effects. *International Journal of Advertising*, 26(1), 9-36.
- Shrum, L. J. (1999). Television and persuasion: Effects of the programs between the ads. *Psychology & Marketing*, 16(2), 119-140.







# Any positive role models?



## Love at second sight: Pre-loved fashion sees boost following eBay x Love Island partnership



Less than a month after the series launched, e-commerce platform eBay reported a 700 per cent increase in searches for 'pre-loved fashion'. Similarly on Google, searches for 'ebay preloved clothes' rose by 756 per cent compared to the previous month, while searches for 'pre-loved' saw a 660 per cent spike.

# PLANNED RESEARCH

- Goal:
  - To raise awareness of the environmental impacts of aspirational lifestyles by portraying the carbon footprint of popular fictional characters.
  - To research impacts upon viewers.
  - We will work with [Rubber Republic](#), who specialise in creating viral images and videos for social media posts #ClimateCharacters.
- Link to website where we explain calculations and invite participants to suggest which fictional characters they identify with and reflect on how that affects their aspirations and behaviour.
- We would like to work with partners e.g. Bafta, Albert, Responsible Media Forum, Global Action Plan, Cultural Content Lab and others to help share posts to get wide reach and participation and also to help us feedback our results to the industry.

#ClimateCharacters.

If we all lived like  
**JAMES BOND**



12 x Jet  
Pack rides  
= 8 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>

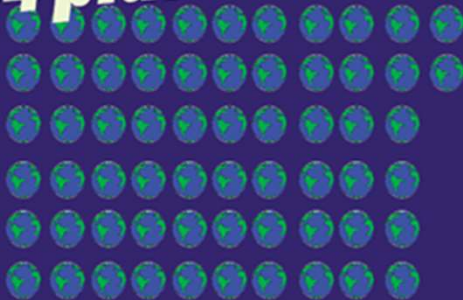


6.2litre  
Aston Martin  
= 7.4 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>



Martini  
addiction  
= 1.8 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>

we'd need  
64 planets



If we all lived like  
**FLEABAG**



43kg  
Guinea Pig Food  
= 200kg CO<sub>2</sub>



Well used  
Oyster Card  
= 0.2 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>



White wine  
addiction  
= 456kg CO<sub>2</sub>

we'd need  
2.4 planets



# CALL TO ACTION

- Avoid showing high carbon behaviour unless linked to environmental impacts.
  - I do regular workshops on such topics and am happy to help.
- Help us with our social media campaign and research:
  - share our posts across networks to maximise reach #ClimateCharacters.
  - even better, become a partner in research and contribute funding to enable us to create more content and supplement with animations/videos.
  - share our results with your networks, writers and producers.
- Please get in touch [D.A.Baden@soton.ac.uk](mailto:D.A.Baden@soton.ac.uk)

# STAGE 2

ACTIVELY USE POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

# POSITIVE ROLE MODELS VS CAUTIONARY TALES

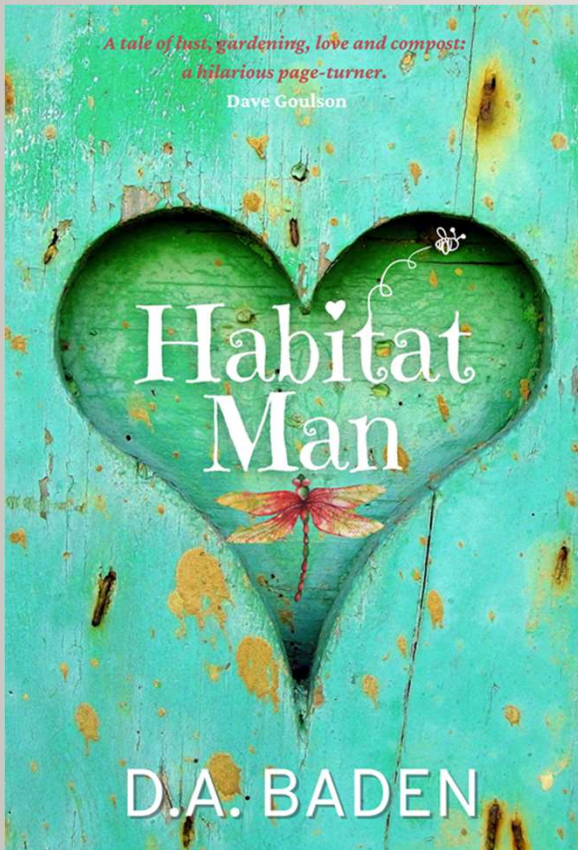
- Business ethics students exposed to positive role models of sustainable businesses or ethics scandals.
- Positive role models more likely to lead to ethical intentions.
- Cognitive science research supports the important role of role models as they tap into the way in which our brain processes information and learns:
  - “The exemplar theory suggests, however, that what moral learning consists in may not be (primarily) the learning of rules but the acquisition of pertinent exemplars or examples....A morally suitable role model may be didactically more effective than a set of behavioural maxims” (Goldman 1993: 341) .



# RESEARCH INTO RESPONSES TO SHORT STORIES WITH A GREEN THEME

- Findings indicate that solution-focused stories with a positive tone are more likely to inspire greener behaviours and a proactive mind-set to address sustainability issues than stories with a catastrophic focus.
- In particular a character that the reader can identify with engaging in activities they also feel able to emulate were the most powerful in inspiring pro-environmental behaviours.
- This seems to be because negatively framed stories can either make people avoid the subject and switch off, or leave them feeling helpless to make a difference.
  - *I felt inspired by the way the characters behaved. Made me think about what I could do.*
  - *I turned off a bit, because I felt a flood in housing was common and realistic in the news every year now, and I'd rather not think about it.*

# RESEARCH INTO *HABITAT MAN*



- Research of 50 readers shows 98% adopted at least one green alternative.
- Wildlife gardening, natural burials, composting toilets.
- Could be a series like the Detectorists, each week a different garden.
- 5 season's worth of stories. Scriptwriter expressed interest.



# CALL TO ACTION

- Commission series and films that show positive role models.
  - *Habitat Man*
  - *Green Rising*
  - Others from Green Stories project [www.greenstories.org.uk](http://www.greenstories.org.uk)
  - Christmas movie where Santa's toys come from a toy hospital (from EcoSanta competition)
- Happy to offer advice on:
  - how role models work from a psychological perspective
  - what actually constitutes sustainable behaviour (many myths)
  - Brainstorm creatively how to work this in.
  - <https://www.dabaden.com/>



# STAGE 3

SHOW POSITIVE SOLUTIONS

## Climate change: Young people worried - survey

By Roger Harrabin  
BBC environment analyst

14 September 2021



GETTY IMAGES  
Over half of those surveyed said they thought humanity was doomed and that governments were not acting adequately

A new global survey illustrates the depth of anxiety many young people are feeling about climate change.

Nearly 60% of young people approached said they felt very worried or extremely worried.

More than 45% of those questioned said feelings about the climate affected their daily lives.

Three-quarters of them said they thought the future was frightening. Over half (56%) say they think humanity is doomed.

2021 global survey illustrates the depth of anxiety many young people are feeling about climate change (10,000 between 16-25).

- Nearly 60% of young people approached said they felt very worried or extremely worried.
- More than 45% of those questioned said feelings about the climate affected their daily lives.
- Three-quarters of them said they thought the future was frightening. Over half (56%) say they think humanity is doomed.
- Two-thirds reported feeling sad, afraid and anxious. Many felt fear, anger, despair, grief and shame - as well as hope.
- One 16-year-old said: "It's different for young people - for us, the destruction of the planet is personal."

# WHICH IS MORE EFFECTIVE – POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE NEWS?

- News story on how plastic is killing animals in our oceans



- News story on a project to clean up plastic in oceans



# HARNESS AND ALLAY ECO-ANXIETY VIA VISIONS OF SUCCESS

- I have numerous stories and screenplays that have won previous green stories writing competitions that show positive visions of what a sustainable world might look like and how we might get there.
  - *Visco* by David Fell
  - *Unfrozen* by Lou Reade
  - *The Field* by Adrian Ellis
  - *No More Fairy Tales*: anthology – Green Mirror series?
- These would make great films/TV series.
- Contact me to learn more [D.A.Baden@soton.ac.uk](mailto:D.A.Baden@soton.ac.uk)
- <https://www.greenstories.org.uk/>



# CALLS TO ACTION SUMMARY

- Avoid portraying excessively high carbon consumption as aspirational.
- Help us with our research and social media campaign [#ClimateCharacters](#).
- Commission series and films that show positive role models (e.g. *Habitat Man*, *Green Rising*).
- Commission series and films that show visions of a society where we have done things right.
  - *Visco*, *Unfrozen*, *The Field*, *No More Fairy Tales* (Green Mirror series)



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Contact me:

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- Email: [D.A.Baden@soton.ac.uk](mailto:D.A.Baden@soton.ac.uk)
- Twitter: @DABadenauthor
- Happy to help e.g. as story consultant, sustainability advisor or introducing you to great stories and their authors.
- Happy to share my short story *The Award Ceremony* that captures these points.

