

# The Image of Cycling in Britain

## Project details

**Full project title:** The image of cycling in Britain

**Sponsor:** South Gloucestershire and Bristol City Councils

**BSMC team:** [Alan Tapp](#), [Sara Bird](#) and [Fiona Spotswood](#)

## Project summary

### Background

This was a multi-stage research project exploring the image of cycling in the UK as part of the Bristol Cycling City initiative to encourage more people to cycle. The research team looked at image themes and the socio-cultural landscape of cycling to explore people's decisions against choosing to cycle for utility trips like travelling to work and going shopping. Our project sought to get to the heart of the prime motivations that inspire people to get on their bikes.

## The research

### Phase 1

The first phase of the project was a large scale survey aiming to identify a UK wide view on cycling and associated images of cycling. This initial phase was not designed to repeat existing work on identifying the 'standard' triggers and barriers to cycling (safety, infrastructure, work facilities, hills, weather, "too busy", multi-purpose journeys). These are well understood. Instead, the focus was on the marketing/communications solutions to the current rather flawed image of cycling in the UK. One of the objectives of this phase of work was to create a solid platform of understanding that would feed into brand building and marketing communications to promote cycling.

### Phase 2

The second phase of the research was qualitative and explored key image perceptions of cycling amongst current, lapsed and non-cyclists. The research found that people who regularly make small trips by bike are primarily motivated to get on their bikes by the sense of freedom, relief from stress, the opportunity for a bit of 'me time' and feelings that bring about memories of childhood. Irrespective of current cycling status, respondents were excited by the pure physical pleasure of cycling and being in charge of your own propulsion.

The promotion of cycling is generally based around the practical benefits of cycling, like benefits to health or cost savings. Promoting cycling based on the positive feelings people get may be a more effective means of inspiring people to cycle.

### Phase 3

The third phase of the research involved testing a set of creative concepts which award winning local agency [Stuff](#) generated based on the research findings. The aim of this stage was to use a

new cycling brand as a mediator between the attitudes and the behaviour, so that the attitudes may be changed to become more positive towards cycling.

Our belief is that branding could form part of an integrated social marketing intervention to increase levels of commuter cycling.

## Results

The campaign was launched across Bristol and South Gloucestershire on key cycle routes. Posters of the final designs focused on the emotions of Freedom, Stress Busting and Me Time which were the strongest themes in concept testing. These were distributed on bus backs, bill boards, bus shelters and on leaflets for door drops. In an evaluation of the campaign, the "Freedom" campaign depicting a girl on a bike going downhill with the wind in her hair and the words 'Freeeeeeeeeeee' flowing behind her was recalled most often and was considered by those asked to be the most likely to encourage them to cycle.

## Project outputs

The campaign won a bronze award in the best 'Ad on Mobile Medium' category for the 'Freeeeeeeeeeee' bus side at the Cream Awards 2011. See a copy of the '[Freeeeeeeeeeee](#) better by bike advert'.

- Project [press release](#)
- [Overcoming the self-image incongruency of non-cyclists](#) article (Journal of Social Marketing)

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