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7th Annual Behavior, Energy and Climate Change Conference^{*}

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Conference Notes

The 7th Annual Behavior, Energy and Climate Change Conference (BECC) was held at Hyatt Regency Hotel in Sacramento, California on November 17th to 20th of 2013. The BECC Conference is an international conference and interchangeably takes place between Sacramento and Washington, DC. The Berkeley Energy and Climate Institute (BECI) of University of California, Precourt Energy Efficiency Center (PEEC) of Stanford University, and American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) organized the conference. Some of the major public utility, consulting and research companies were the sponsors and contributors of conference. As the name of the conference indicates, its aim to understand the individual, social and organizational behavior, decision making, heuristics and incentives of energy consumption, which would further help to “accelerate the transition to an energy-efficient and low-carbon future”. The key themes of BECC were first, to advance in behavioral research insights, and second, to expedite the innovation in energy efficiency with more appealing and better designs both in technology more practical energy programs and policies.

The conference attracted researches from economics (more attention was given to behavioral economics), psychology, sociology, anthropology, and broad approach to issues of climate change and how each field can contribute individual and interdisciplinary insights to the solution. Further, conference organizers invited decision makers such as regulators, legislators, policy makers, public officials from federal, state and local level (e.g., U.S. Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency and etc), utilities (Pacific Gas and Electric, Southern California Edison, PPL Electric Utilities, Tokyo Gas Company and etc), consultants, marketers, manufacturers, community organizations, media, nonprofits (e.g., DNV KEMA, Opinion Dynamics, Itron, BC Hydro, Research Into Action, The Cadmus Group, Center for Energy and Environment, Navigant Consulting, Opower, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and many others) are the some that both were attended, presented their contribution, and shared recent developments about these challenging issues. These 700 participants were not only from U.S., but also Australia, Canada, England, Japan and other countries. The organizers created an engaging and interactive environment among these broad range of attendees and participants (i.e., academics, policy makers and community organizers) where they could discuss,

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share and benefit from each others experiences and collaborate with each other to further address the energy challenges.

The pre-conference workshops on November 17th, by Doug McKenzie-Mohr and Paul Markowitz, focused on community-based social marketing and reaching customers through innovative community energy programs. The conference kick-off was November 18th with opening plenary and keynote speech. George Lackoff, professor of cognitive science and linguistics from UC Berkeley, shared with the audience the impact of framing of Energy and Global Warming, and its social, political and environmental implications. The conference continued with seven sessions. Each session included six parallel panels. Some of the sessions included during the workshop were titled as: Social media, Engaging employees and residents with games, incentives and fun!, Using experimental design and big data to evaluate behavior programs, Conservatives and Liberals: Political Affiliation and Marketing, Community Programs, How we understand and frame energy and environment, Reaching low-income households, Schools and many other important topics. For instance, one of the interesting presentations was done by K. Gillingham, who is from Yale University, presented the evidence of diffusion (peer effects) in solar PV adoption Connecticut. In addition, among the attendees was 2007 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ed Vine, whom I had an opportunity to meet. Ed Vine shared the prize with Al Gore.

There were also two parallel spotlight sessions, which extensively discussed role of big data in energy efficiency and behavior, and how evolving fields of behavioral economics and behavioral finance can contribute to the progresses in the energy efficiency field. Finally, there was also a poster session and reception on November 18th. During the poster session forty-one graduate students and young researchers displayed their researches. I also presented the research and findings during the poster session that was titled “Limited Attention and Heterogeneity in the Effect of Energy Efficiency Programs”. The poster sessions provided the opportunity for researchers to closely interact with the representatives of the energy industry.

In the end, the BECC conference was a productive venue for attendees for not only present and share their contributions, but also to support each other to tackle with current energy challenges. This year BECC will also take place in Sacramento, CA on October 18 -21, 2015. I urge interested researchers to participate to this annual conference.



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