



Understanding and changing attitudes: A consumer behaviour perspective

Expanding Conversations:
Social Innovation, Arts and Anti
Racism

Paul Harrison, PhD
Deakin Graduate School of Business
Centre for Sustainable and Responsible Organisations



Our currently held views of what is reasonable, sensible and good sense, tend to take shape in response to the realities out there as seen through the prism of human practice – what humans currently do, know how to do, are trained, groomed and inclined to do.

Adapted from Zygmunt Baumann



Some things we know about human behaviour and attitudes

- Systematic processing of information requires more than a marginal level of effort and cognitive control.
 - People must be highly motivated to process information.
 - It is effected by situational variables, such as time pressures, anxiety, lack of expertise, distractions, and personal stresses.
- People will use shortcuts, heuristics, and cues to make decisions and form attitudes.
- People seek out information that conforms with their current worldview.



The formation of attitudes

- Changes in an individual's behaviour arising from experience
 - Reinforcement, conditioning, learning, drives, stimulus, cues, responses and reward.

- Attitude – Behaviour Consistency
 - Effected by factors such as personal experience of behaviour, no social desirability bias, and attitude is based around core beliefs and values.

- Explicit and Implicit Attitudes
 - Conscious and unconscious reflection.



What factors influence how we process information?

- Cognitive efficiency
- Knowledge accessibility
- Subjective experience



So what would a marketer do?

- Segmentation
 - Design the entire program around the target groups
 - Not just advertising
 - Understand the perceived risks and potential benefits
 - Address them at an emotional and rational level
- Perpetual Priming
 - Engage target through multiple channels
 - Reinforce normalcy and legitimacy
 - Engage target market in co-creation



Positive Message Framing and the Broaden and Build Theory

- Momentary positive emotions create associations that build increased receptiveness to new ideas, possibilities and interpretations (Fitzpatrick and Stalikas, 2008).
 - *“certain discrete positive emotions ... all share the ability to broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources” (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219).*
- Positively-framed messages can facilitate desired changes by harnessing positive emotion to build enduring personal resources.
- Used in contexts such as fostering environmentally responsible behaviours (Carter, 2011) and adolescent engagement at school and with learning (Reschly et al., 2008).



“Our brain biases, discounts, misinterprets, even makes up evidence – all so that you can retain that satisfying sense of being in the right. Even the most hastily formed opinion receives undeserved safe-keeping from revision.”

Cordelia Fine, *A Mind of its Own*



Changing attitudes

- Attitudes are difficult to change, but not impossible.
 - Early intervention
 - Emotional messaging
 - Repetition
 - Consistency
 - Reward
 - Rational appeals
 - Normalisation



paul.harrison@deakin.edu.au

www.tribalinsight.com

@tribalinsight