

Social marketing assignment

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Discuss the effectiveness of Fear Appeal as an approach for creating effective behavior change. INTRODUCTION Fear appeal is a persuasive message that attempts to direct and motivate certain behaviors by focusing on the harmful physical or psychological consequences that can be avoided by complying with message recommendations. Fear appeals are built upon fear. Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotional state characterized by anticipation of pain or great distress and accompanied by heightened autonomic activity especially involving the nervous system. Fear evolved as a mechanism to protect humans from life-threatening situations.

As such, nothing is more important than survival and the evolutionary primacy of the brain's fear circuitry. Matter-of-fact, the brain's fear circuitry is more powerful than the brain's reasoning faculties. Due to this circuitry, fear is more powerful than reason. Fear can sometimes be evoked easily and absurdly for reasons that live in mankind's evolutionary past. For example, reacting to a non-existent threat, such as a snake that is really a stick, is not as dangerous as the other way around – failing to respond to the actual threat of a snake. The brain seems to be wired to flinch first and ask questions second.

As a consequence, fear can be easily and untruthfully sparked in such a way that is irrational and not subject to reason. Fear appeal consists of two basic components which are threat and actions. Threat Component Threats are the motivating aspect of fear appeal. This involves employing effective scare tactics in order to convince the target audience that a certain negative consequence will occur if certain positive behaviors are not performed or negative behaviors are avoided. The more fear is aroused in the audience;

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the more likely they will respond or comply with the behavior change message being emphasized.

The message should make the target audience feel vulnerable or susceptible to severe psychological or physical harm in order to have an effective threat component. When an audience can visualize the negative consequences happening to them, personal apprehension is activated and the individual is receptive to learning strategies for avoiding the feared consequence. A personal story from an individual similar to the audience heightens perceptions of vulnerability and thus makes the threat seem real, relevant, and frightening. At this stage, the audience is ready for the action component.

These are self-efficacy and response-efficacy. Again, the target audience needs to believe they have the ability to follow the message recommendations (self-efficacy), and that the behavioral strategy specified in the fear appeal can eliminate or at least reduce the threat. The threat or scare tactic should be able to remove system barriers to safe behavior and establishing a supportive recognition process, for example, increasing self-efficacy. Response-efficacy is enhanced when the presentation provides the audience with relevant examples of the message commendations actually removing the threat of injury.

Framing the Fear Appeal What kind of threat is most motivating – one that emphasizes the benefits of a certain safety or health practice or one that focuses on the costs of not complying with the recommended behaviors? The former approach is called “ gain framing,” and the latter is “ loss framing. ”

The best answer to this question is “ it depends. ” The limited research in this area has targeted public health appeals, and indicates that gain framing works best for prevention behaviors, whereas loss framing seems to be more influential for messages intended to motivate detection behaviors.

For example, audiences in Tanzania were more likely to use sunscreen consistently when fear appeal focused on positive consequences to be achieved with the prevention behavior; but women during the breast cancer campaigns were more likely to perform regular breast self-examination or obtain a yearly mammography screening when the health message emphasized the possible negative consequences of not following the recommended detection behaviors. USE OF FEAR APPEAL Fear appeals have been used for many behavior change products, services, ideas, ND causes.

Some examples include smoking, dental hygiene, personal safety, pregnancy warnings, child abuse, AIDS prevention, safe driving practices, sun exposure, climate change, social embarrassment, motorcycle helmets, anti-drug abuse, immunization, smoke detectors, cell phones, safe sex, stress, and regular health exams. Specific advertising examples of fear appeals include drug use portrayed as eggs frying in the pan,’ Mango WA condo’, Most religions and God’s punishment for sin, hand washing by Delete in order for kids to avoid germs and remain healthy. INFLUENCE FACTORS BEYOND MESSAGE

CONTENT

The influence of a fear appeal is determined by more than its content.

Factors which can facilitate or inhibit the effectiveness of Fear Appeal

include: Are the Recipients Volunteers? There is convincing evidence that

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volunteers respond differently to fear appeals than non-volunteers. People who feel compelled to listen to a safety or health message are much less affected by high fear messages than people who perceive they had messages actively refuse to follow the recommendations in order to regain personal freedom; perceived to be lost by the lack of volition in hearing the message.

How old is the Audience? Perceived vulnerability to health and safety threats increase directly with age. Fear appeals are more effective for older audiences. Younger people generally feel that unintentional injury, death, and disease happen to elders or perhaps to other younger people. In other words, the belief that “it will never happen to me” is strongest among the youth. This age factor is one reason televised public service announcements using fear appeals to reduce drug or alcohol abuse are not very influential.

They target young people who have different perceptions of invulnerability and thus are unlikely to be affected by a Fear Appeal. How anxious is the Audience? Some people are naturally tenser or generally nervous than others, as assessed by psychological measures of trait anxiety. People scoring high on these anxiety scales are no more influenced by high fear than low fear appeals. In contrast, those who are less “anxious by nature” are more persuaded by high than low fear messages. Assume the high fear appeal will usually work best because most people do not possess severe amounts of trait anxiety.

Just realize that those relatively few who are nearly anxious may not respond favorably to a high fear message. Is the Audience Ready to Change?

Receptivity to a message advocating behavior change depends upon an individual's stage of readiness for change. Five stages have been identified: 1) pre- contemplation 2) contemplation, 3) preparation 4) Action 5) Maintenance. People at Stages 2 and 3 are most likely to be influenced by a fear appeal, because they've been considering the target behavior (contemplation stage) or have actively been getting themselves ready for the behavior change (preparation stage).

The same message will have least influence on those who have never considered performing the target behavior (pre- contemplation stage), and for those individuals in Stages 4 and 5 (action and maintenance). The fear appeal cannot provoke behavior change, because these persons are already performing the desired response. What is the Perceived Response Cost? Response cost refers to the negative consequences associated with complying with a message recommendation. The physical discomfort and lost time associated with the behavior recommended in a safety message will certainly influence the amount of implicate.

This factor can sometimes be overcome by anticipating its occurrence and designing the action component with response cost in mind. For example, message could include strategies for making the behavior change, more comfortable and convenient, or it could explain how the amount of time and effort required in conducting a behavioral or environmental audit is less than one might think at first. 1. The drive-reduction model (Holland et al. , 1953; Janis, 1967; Ray and Willie, 1970) The theory conceptualizes fear as a drive state that motivates individuals to adopt commendations expected to alleviate the unpleasant state.

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The persuasiveness of fear appeals can be enhanced if the message arouses a level of fear sufficiently intense to constitute a 'drive state' and if the recipient's elaboration of the communicator's 'reassuring recommendation' was accompanied by a reduction in emotional tension. The drive-reduction model of Fear Appeal is based on two assumptions: That when fear is sufficiently intense, it motivates instrumental responding. That any cognitive or behavioral response that reduces a negative state such as fear is inherently reinforcing.

The first assumption of the theory is based on the premise that a low level of fear arousal will not sufficiently motivate the recipient to seek a method to reduce the fear. The second assumption suggests that a message containing recommendations on the appropriate cognitive or behavioral responses to reduce fear will be viewed favorably. The first assumption pertains to the relationship between level of fear arousal and persuasion; the second assumption speaks to the order of the health consequences and the recommendations. 2.

The protection motivation theory (MET) (Rorer's, 1975, 1983; Tanner, Hunt, and Upright, 1991) The theory is borrowed from psychology and has been adapted to predict people's behavioral intentions. The MET examines the cognitive processes by which fear impacts persuasion. The premise of MET is that people are motivated to protect themselves from physical, psychological, and social threats. Response to a threat is based on two cognitive processes: Threat appraisal- assessment of the individual's personal risk of harm and severity of harm.

Coping appraisal- individual's perceptions of the recommended response's efficacy and an assessment of his or her ability to carry out this response. The model focuses on the cognitive/rational reactions or coping responses to fear appeals and points out that fear may be considered a relational construct, aroused in response to a situation that is judged as dangerous and toward which protective action is taken. That is, the fearful content of the message motivates the individual to think about ways of protecting himself, and change is not driven by feelings of fearfulness alone. 3. Four-Stage Information Processing Model (Glasnost, 2001).

The model consists of four information processing stages: Pre-attention Comprehension Elaboration/assessment. The theory discusses four points in the model wherein individuals may stop intended messages from being received effectively. The first stop-point is attention avoidance or not going from pre-attention to focal attention. The second roadblock is blunting or the avoidance of comprehension which may occur when anxiety-producing words start a defensive reaction. The third hindrance is suppression or the avoidance of inference, that is, when the received information is not applied.

The fourth block is enter-argumentation which is the conscious rejection of the message content by the individual. The theory states that fear-appeal type messages will be most effective if they are interesting, attention-capturing, culturally sensitive, and cause the recipients to initially feel good about themselves; later sensitizes themselves to their own risk, and then have their myths dispelled. 4. Trans active Model of Attitude Accessibility (Rooks-Oldness, 1997) According to the theory, exposure to low or moderate fear-inducing messages can be effective in promoting behaviors.

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In particular, a message promoting the efficacy of the adaptive behavior results in more positive attitudes toward the adaptive behavior regardless of the level of threat in the message. High efficacy messages result in more accessible attitudes toward the adaptive behavior. The Trans active Model of Attitude Accessibility posits that the accessibility of the attitude toward the adaptive behavior predicts the participants' behavioral intention to perform the adaptive behavior. A high threat message appears to decrease the accessibility of the participant's attitude toward the threat.

Individuals are more likely to orient their attention to an object if they have an accessible attitude towards that object, and they are more likely to act in accord with an accessible attitude. That is, appeals that increase the accessibility of the attitude toward the behavior are more likely to strengthen intentions to perform the adaptive behavior. It should be noted that accessing an attitude may be positive or negative. If individuals access an attitude of close-mindedness or inflexibility, they may be unlikely to update their attitudes as new information becomes available.